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# An Introduction To The Bible

(Translated from the French)

To write an introduction to the Bible seems to me a deeply serious and difficult matter. To take up a Book which is the harmonious whole of all God's thoughts, of all His ways with regard to man, and of His determinate purpose as to the Christ, and as to man in Him; wherein also is set forth the revelation of what God is, of man's responsibility, and of what God Himself has done for man, as well as of the new relationships with God into which man enters through Christ;—a Book which reveals what God is in His nature morally, and the dispensations in which He glorifies Himself in the sight of the heavens and their inhabitants; which lays bare the secrets and the state of the human heart, and at the same time unveils before it things invisible; which begins where the past touches eternity, and leads us on through a development and a solution of all moral questions to the final point where the future merges in eternity, according to God;—which fathoms moral questions in the perfect light of God revealed, and makes known to us the groundwork of new relationships with Him, according to what He is, and what He is in infinite love… to undertake, I say, to open up the path (in as far as it may be given to man to be the instrument for it, for God alone can do it effectually) so that the mind of man may understand the ways of God as He has revealed them, is a task that may well make one recoil before its difficulty and seriousness, when we reflect that we have to do with God's thoughts as revealed by Himself.

How marvellous indeed is this divine parenthesis in the midst of eternity, in which the febrile activity of the fallen creature displays itself in thoughts which all perish, urged on by him who wields his power as a liar and a murderer; but in which also the nature and the thoughts of God, His moral being and His determinate purpose, until then eternally hidden in Himself, are, while testing man and manifesting what he is, revealed and fulfilled through the Son, that they may in their final result appear in an eternity of glory to come, in which God, surrounded by blissful creatures who know Him and understand Him, will manifest Himself as Light and Love in the full results of His own eternal and imperishable thoughts; but where also all that has been wrought by His grace and wisdom throughout the things that are seen here below, will be displayed in its glorious and eternal fruits; where God— Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—known of Himself before time was, will be known by innumerable blessed beings—known by them in their own happiness when time shall be no more. And this world is the wonderful sphere where everything is made to work to that end; and the heart of man the scene wherein all takes place and is morally wrought out, if so be that God, in whom and by whom and for whom are all these things, dwell in him by His Spirit to give him intelligence; and if Christ, who is the Object of all that is done, be his sole Object. The Bible, then, is the revelation which God has given to us of all this wondrous system, and of all the facts which relate to it. Is it surprising that one shrinks from the task of opening up such things? But we have to do with a God of goodness, who delights to help us in everything that may conduce to an intelligent apprehension of the revelation which He has been pleased to give us of His thoughts.

There are certain great principles that mark this revelation, which we would notice before going into the details.

The first great idea that stamps its character on the revelation of God, is that of the two Adams:—the first man and the Second; the responsible man, and the Man of God's counsels, in whom God, whilst confirming the principle of responsibility, reveals Himself, as well as His sovereign counsels and the grace which reigns through righteousness. These two principles predominate throughout the contents of the Bible. But although, in the ways of God, His goodness shewed itself continually until His Son came, yet grace, in the full force of the term, was only prophetically revealed, and withal veiled so as not to interfere with the then subsisting relations of man with God, and often in forms which can only be understood when the New Testament has furnished us with the key to them.

This brings me to two other principles which are found revealed and developed in the Scriptures. The one is God's government in the scene of this world, a government sure and certain, though long hidden, unless indeed on a small scale in Israel, and even then obscured in the eyes of men, because iniquity prevailed (Psalm 73), and because God had ways of deeper moment as well as greater blessings in store for His own in the midst of this government,—ways, in which, for the spiritual good of His people, He made use of the evils He permitted to arise. The history contained in the Bible unfolds to the spiritual man the course of these ways; the Psalms give reflections upon them by the Spirit of Christ in His own, rising betimes in their expressions up to the experience of Christ Himself, and thus becoming

directly prophetic. But I am anticipating a little. The other divine principle is sovereign grace, which takes up poor sinners, blots out their sins, and places them in the same glory as the Son (become man for this), "conformed to the image of his Son," effecting this according to the righteousness of God, by means of Christ's sacrifice, by which He has fully glorified God in respect of sin. Some features of this sovereign grace are found in God's government, and are displayed when the result of His government is brought out; but it is fully disclosed in the heavenly glory.

Intimately connected with this government of God is the Law; it establishes the rule of good and evil according to God, and founds it upon His authority. The Lord furnishes us with the expression of it, in drawing from various parts of the Pentateuch principles, which, were they established and operative in the heart, would lead to obedience, and to the accomplishment of God's will, and would be productive of human righteousness. The Ten commandments do not create duty, the existence of which is founded on the relationships in which God has set man.

There is this difference between the principles of the law as laid down by Jesus, and the Ten commandments, that the principles drawn by Him from the books of Moses comprehend absolute good in all its extent without question of sin, whilst the Ten commandments suppose sin to be there, and, with one exception, are prohibitory of all unfaithfulness to the relationships of which they treat. It is important to notice that the last of these commandments forbids the first motion of the heart towards the sins previously condemned: "the sting is in the tail." Moreover, the various relationships were

the basis of duty, the commandments forbidding men to fail in them. But the principle of law, of any law, is this: that the approbation of Him to whom I am responsible, my reception in favour by Him who has the right to judge of my faithfulness to my responsibility, or of my shortcomings—in a word, my happiness—depends upon what I am in this respect, upon what I am towards Him. For the relationships are established by the Creator's will and authority, and when I fail in them, I sin against Him who established them. Although the sin may be directly against the person I am in relation with, yet as the obligation was imposed by the will of God and is the expression of His will, I in fact despise His authority and disobey Him. The principle of law is that the acceptance of the person depends upon his conduct; grace does what it pleases in goodness, in conformity to the nature and the character of Him who acts in grace.

There was another important element in the ways of God, contrasting with the law, and that is the promises. These began with the Fall itself, but as a principle in the ways of God, with Abraham, when the world was already fallen, not only into sin, but into idolatry, Satan and demons having taken possession of the place of God in man's mind. Now Abram's election, his call, and the gift of the promises made to him, were all connected with grace. Thus Abram followed God1 towards the country that God pointed out to him, but in it he possessed not whereon to set his foot. This introduces another vital principle, that of living by faith, receiving God's word as such, and counting upon His faithful goodness. The promise evidently depended upon grace; it was not the thing given, though this was assured by the word of God; and faith counted upon the promise, and more or

less clearly introduced the thought of blessing outside the world; otherwise, he who had faith obtained nothing by his faith. The consciousness of God's favour was doubtless so far something, but it depended upon faith in His fidelity as to what He had promised. But in connection with promises there is an important point to notice: there are unconditional, and there are conditional promises. The promises made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, were unconditional; whereas those made at Sinai were conditional. God's word never confounds them. Moses calls to remembrance the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Israel (Exod. 32:13); Solomon, what came in under Moses (1 Kings 8:51-53); Nehemiah 1, refers to Moses; Nehemiah 9, first to Abraham as the source of all, then to Moses, when it becomes a question of God's ways. It is of this difference that the apostle speaks in Galatians 3:16-20. Under the law, when there was a Mediator, the enjoyment of the eifect of the promise depended upon the faithfulness of Israel, as much as upon the fidelity of God; but then all was lost from the outset. The fulfilment of the simple promise of God depended upon His fidelity; in this case, all was sure. We learn further, by the passage alluded to in the Epistle to the Galatians, that it is to Christ, the Second Man, that the promises made to Abraham were confirmed, and they will be fulfilled surely—all of them Yea, and all Amen—when His day, which the prophets had ever in view, shall come. But here the difference, already pointed out, between the government of this world and sovereign grace, again finds its application. The grace that sets us in heaven is not prophesied of at all; prophecy belongs to what is earthly, and so far as relates to the Lord Jesus, contains the revelation of what He was to be upon the earth at

His first coming; and then continues with what He will be upon the earth when He comes again, without alluding to that which should take place in the interval between those two events. Still, the facts as to the Person of the Lord are announced in those Psalms which reveal to us more of His personal history; His resurrection (Psa. 16), His ascension (Psa. 68), His session at the right hand of God (Psa. no); and as to the Holy Spirit, they teach us that Christ would receive it as man—that the gifts are not only gifts of God, but that Christ would receive them "in Man," that is, as Man in connection with mankind. On the other hand, except the desires of David in Psalm 72 and 145, where the subject treated of is what concerns the Lord's Person, the Psalms do not take up the state of things that shall follow His return: whilst in the prophets, this future state is amply described in the fulfilment of the promises made to the Jews, and its consequences for the Gentiles. There is another point that may be noticed: when the prophets on God's part give encouragements to faith for the time then present, and to meet trying circumstances, the Spirit of God uses this to penetrate into the future, when God will interpose in favour of His people.2 But I am going, perhaps, too much into detail.

Finally, when sin had already come in, when the law had been broken, and when too the prophets sent by God had in vain recalled the children of Israel to their duty and claimed fruit for God from His vine,—the promised Messiah came with proofs of His mission so evident that human intelligence could, and in fact did, recognise them (John 2:23; ch. 3:2). God spoke in the Person of the Son (Heb. 1), the great promised Prophet. But at the same time the Father was revealed in the Son, and man

would not have God. The Son of God was delivering man from all the outward evils sin had brought into the world, and from Satan's power in this respect; but this manifestation of God in goodness did but bring out the hatred of man's heart against Him; the Jews also lost all right to the promises, and man rejected God manifested in goodness here below. The history of responsible man was closed; for we are not here speaking of grace, except so far as God's presence in grace tested man's responsibility: not only had sin come in, and the law been broken, but men could not endure God's presence when He was in their midst in goodness, not imputing to them their sins. All relation of man with God was impossible on the ground of what man is in himself, notwithstanding the miracles accomplished by Jesus, which were all goodness,3 and not merely power; it was as He Himself said (John 15:22-25): "They have no cloke for their sin … they have both seen and hated both me and my Father" (the expression always used by John when he speaks of God acting in grace). Yea, and this is a solemn statement, man's history morally is ended. But, blessed be God, it is in order to open the door of infinite grace to Him who reveals Himself as the God of grace in the Son (John 12:31-33). The cross of Christ said, Man will not have God, not even when come in grace (2 Cor. 5:17-19); but it said also, God is infinite in grace, not sparing His own Son, in order to reconcile man to Himself.4 I turn back now to trace the ways of God briefly, and historically, in connection with man's responsibility. It is striking to observe in man's history, that whatever good thing God set up, the first thing that man ever did was to ruin it. Man's first act was an act of disobedience; he fell into sin, and broke all relation between himself and God; he was afraid of Him who had

filled his cup with blessings. Noah, escaped from the deluge which had swallowed up a whole world except his own family, becomes drunken, and authority is dishonoured and lost in him. Whilst the law was being given, before Moses came down from the mount, Israel made for themselves a golden calf. Nadab and Abihu offer strange fire on the first day of their service, and Aaron is forbidden to enter into the most holy place in his robes of glory and beauty, and indeed in any robe at all, except on the great day of atonement (Lev. 16). In the same way Solomon, David's son, falls into idolatry, and the kingdom becomes divided. The first head of the Gentiles, if we go on to speak of him on whom God conferred the ruling power, made a great image, and persecuted those who were faithful to Jehovah. Nor has the external or professing church escaped the common law of disobedience and ruin any more than the rest.

If we now consider God's ways as to man in the interval of time between Adam and the Christ, we find first of all, man in a state of innocence placed in the enjoyment of earthly blessings, without trouble of any kind; evil having no existence. Responsibility was set forth in the prohibition to eat of a certain tree. This prohibition or law did not suppose evil: Adam might have eaten of the tree, as of any other tree, if it had not been forbidden; it was purely a matter of obedience. Man yielded to the temptation; he lost God, hiding himself from His face, before he was driven out; then he was judicially driven out of the garden where he could enjoy God's presence, who in fact came to seek him there in the cool of the day: and he acquired a conscience; he learned, and that in spite of himself, not by an imposed law, but inwardly, to make the distinction between good and evil. No

doubt, conscience may be dreadfully hardened or misguided, but still it is there, in man; when a man does what is wrong, his conscience condemns him. God's law is the rule of the conscience, but it is not itself the conscience which makes use of this rule. But from that time forth man was fallen; he had disobeyed, and renounced his allegiance to God, dreading Him, hiding from Him if that had been possible; and then was driven out of the garden, deprived of all those blessings through which he had enjoyed God's goodness and was able to own Him and even to enjoy His presence, for God came to walk in the garden. Self-will and lust had entered into his nature, guilt and the dread of God into his position; and then, too, he was judicially driven out from a place which was no longer suited to his condition, and, morally, out of God's own presence. What a horrible thing, if he had been able to eat of the tree of life, and fill the world with immortal sinners, having no more fear of death than of God! God allowed it not.

But there are some very interesting circumstances to note in connection with the judgment under which man had fallen. We have seen that Adam fled from the presence of God. The judgment pronounced upon him, upon Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:14-19) is an earthly judgment, not a judgment of the soul. Adam, and Eve also, are placed in a state of misery, and under the yoke of suffering and death. Before being driven out, Adam, by faith, as it seems, recognises life in the place wherein death had entered (Gen. 3:20); but there is more; there is the promise made to the woman, of the seed which should bruise the serpent's head: the Christ, seed of the woman by whom evil entered into the world, was to destroy all the power of the Enemy. Then as sin had

destroyed innocence, and given, through the shame of nakedness, a conscious sense of its loss, God Himself, by causing death to intervene, clothed Adam and his wife, and covered their nakedness (Gen. 3:21). Before this, there was unconsciousness of evil; now evil is known, but is covered by God's own act. Man had sought to hide his sin from himself; but when he hears God's voice, his fig-leaves are nothing worth; they are of no avail to an awakened conscience in the presence of God: "I hid myself," he said, "for I was naked." So also before driving him out, God did not restore his innocence, which indeed was impossible; He did better: He clothed Adam and his wife, so that He might see His own work, that is, what was suited to Him in the state in which they were, accomplished by Him in His grace, besides the crushing of him who had led them into evil. Still man was driven out of the garden, where he had enjoyed all God's blessings without faith, to till the ground, to die, and until death to be separated from the God who before had walked in the cool of the day in the garden where he had dwelt. Man, thenceforth, knew God only by faith, if faith was in his heart—a new, all-important principle: he had lost God, had acquired a conscience, and, if he could, must live in painful toil to gain a temporal subsistence; he must find God, if he could; but he was from thenceforth outside the precincts which God frequented, and where His abundant blessings were dispensed without suffering or labour. Man had fled from God's presence, and God had driven him out. Adam was no longer in the relation in which God had formed him to be with Himself, either as to the state of his soul, or judicially: he was in sin. I repeat, man had fled from the presence of God, and God had driven him from the position in which He had placed him when He created

him; he was estranged from God with a bad conscience, knowing God just enough to be afraid of Him, having learned however that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head, and being clothed by the grace and the work of God in a garment that bore witness to death, but which, as coming from God, covered, and that perfectly, the nakedness, the consciousness of which was the expression of man's fall and of his state of sin. Man was now outside—could he enter, anywhere, into God's presence to adore Him, to be morally with Him whom he had forsaken?

This fresh question now arises in Adam's history.

Abel offered a sacrifice, which cost him nothing, so to speak; but he offered it by faith, owning that he was a sinner, outside the garden, at a distance from God, and that death had come in; but recognising in God the grace that had covered his parents' nakedness, and drawing nigh to Him by a propitiatory sacrifice, which alone could take away sin, and through which alone a sinner could draw nigh to God in virtue of the death of another. God's character in love and righteousness, and on the other hand, the state of Abel, were recognised in his offering: he offered it by faith, and God accepted it, as He accepted Abel himself with it, bearing witness to his gifts (Heb. 11:4). Abel was accepted of God according to the value of his gifts, that is, of Christ. God Himself covered Adam's nakedness; Abel comes acknowledging his position, and the expiatory sacrifice by which alone he could enter into God's presence. Cain, on the contrary, presents himself with the fruit of his hard labour. Man, since he was out of God's presence, must draw near to Him to worship Him: all who are not openly apostates, not only from Christ but from God,

acknowledge this. Cain acknowledges it, but how? He thinks he can come just as he is. And why not? As to sin, he thinks not of it. The fact that God had driven man out of paradise made no change in his thoughts; he presents himself as though nothing had happened; and, morally blind and insensible, he offers the fruit of his own work, it is true, but which was in itself the sign of the curse that was then lying upon the earth. He neither recognised what he was himself, nor what God was; neither sin, nor the curse that was lying on his work, as the fruit of sin. Once outside paradise, man had to approach God; and God Himself tells us for all ages, in this treasury of great principles laid up in Genesis, how this can be done. All these histories contain the groundwork of our relations with God, while shewing at the same time the state of man.

Sin becomes complete: we have already had sin against God; sin against a brother follows. Cain was irritated because God had refused him, and murder comes in: Cain kills his brother. God puts the question to him, not now saying as before to Adam: “Where art thou?” for Adam ought to have been in the presence of his God full of joy, and “Where art thou?” involved his actual position; but God says: “What hast thou done?” First of all, however, God addresses Cain on the subject of his relations with Himself. “If thou doest well,” He said, “shalt thou not be accepted?” and: “unto thee shall be his desire,5 and thou shalt rule over him” — “if thou doest not well, sin, or a sacrifice for sin (the Hebrew word has both meanings) is ready to hand” (literally, “is lying at the door”)—that is, there is a remedy. It is parenthetical, but these are the general principles of our relations with God. If a man does what is good, he is

accepted of God, and if he does what is evil, there is a sacrifice for sin which the grace of God has set at the door. Notice here that Abel's sacrifice was not a sacrifice for sin: neither Cain nor Abel came before God with the conscience oppressed by a known transgression. It is the state of each of them that is in view, the state of man before God: the one, the man who owns himself driven out from God's presence, and who draws nigh to God according to grace; the other, the natural man, insensible to sin. In God's answer to Cain, the subject is positive transgression, and this confirms the idea that in the passage (v. 7) a sacrifice for sin is meant, and not sin itself. But Cain, as I said, becomes guilty of sin against his brother; he fills up the measure of sin in its second character, which for Adam was impossible. God pronounces sentence upon Cain, who, cursed in his labour, fugitive and vagabond, abandoned himself to despair; then, leaving altogether the presence of God, who spoke with him, he proceeds to establish himself in the land where God had made him a vagabond ("Nod") and the world begins. Cain builds a city, and calls it after his son; his children grow rich, they invent working in metals, and the refinements of the arts are introduced; they make themselves as happy as they can without God. I have no doubt, that besides the general truth, we have in Cain a type of the Jews as having slain the Lord: they carry their mark on their forehead. Lamech follows the bent of his own will, and takes two wives, but he is, I think, a type of Israel in the last days; Seth is the man after God's counsels—Christ. The two families are established upon the earth; but already the hatred of the one against the other shews itself in Cain and Abel. (Compare 1 John 3:11, 12.) In the meantime we have God's testimony: Enoch, who announces the coming of

the Christ in judgment, and Noah, who passes through the judgment of the earth, and, as it were, comes to life again for a new world.

I have enlarged somewhat on this part of the history, because it gives us the state of fallen man, and the principles according to which he is in relation with God, without religious institutions, though not without testimony on God's part. Eternal life is also shewn figuratively in Enoch, as in Abel the sacrifice by which fallen man can approach God, and in Adam and Eve (in the state of judgment in which man is), sovereign grace, which clothed them before driving them out; then, in Noah, the end of the age is announced, and the judgment is gone through. We find all this in its main principles in grace, recalled in Hebrews 11:1-7. But fallen man grew worse and worse; Noah alone remained, whom God saved when He destroyed the world.

We should note carefully as to the facts thus far recorded, that although far deeper principles, eternal in their nature and their effect, are contained in them, the history of this epoch of judgment upon Adam and of the judgment of the world, is a history of this world, and that the judgments are governmental, and belong to the course of things here below.

A new world begins with Noah. It begins with sacrifice; and here "burnt-offerings" are expressly named; they were acceptable to God. God would no more curse the earth, nor again smite every living soul, but the seasons should follow in their course, according to God's established order, as long as the earth lasted. But man is no longer, as he was before in paradise, the authority

that in sovereign right gave names to the animals in peace: the fear of man was to keep them in awe; man might eat them, but blood, the sign of life, he was not to touch. Then magisterial authority was established to restrain the violence that had broken loose. He that should take man's life must lose his own: God would require blood at the hands of him who shed it; and man was invested with the authority necessary to enforce this law. And God gave the bow in the cloud as a sign of His covenant with the whole creation, in witness that there should no more be a deluge.

It is under this order of government that we live now on the earth. But Noah, in the enjoyment of the blessing granted to him, failed to maintain his position, became drunken, and was dishonoured. The world is divided into three parts: one in relationship with God; another, a cursed race, named in view of Israel's history; thirdly, the mass of the Gentiles. Man seeks to become great upon the earth, and to centralise the power of the race, yet one; but God confounds their purposes with their language: then imperial power is set up on the earth in Nimrod. Babel and the land of Shinar begin to be conspicuous: this is our world.

Another important element now stands out in the history: the introduction of idolatry. Not only does Satan, as tempter, make man wicked, but he makes himself into a god for man, in order to help him to satisfy his passions. Having lost God, with whom, nevertheless, he had been in relation, and had made a fresh beginning in Noah, man made a god of everything in which the power of nature shewed itself, making of it a plaything for his imagination, and using it to satisfy his lusts. It was all he had. Even that part of the race that was in relationship

with Jehovah (Gen. 9:26) is specially noticed as having fallen to that depth (Joshua 24:2). Terrible fall! Although man could not free himself from the consciousness that there was a God, a Being who was above him, and though he feared Him, he created for himself a multitude of inferior gods, in whose presence he would seek to drive away this dread, and obtain an answer to his desires, hiding that which always, in reality, continued to be an “unknown God.” Everything took the form of’ God’ in man’s eyes; the stars, his ancestors, the sons of Noah, and members of the human race still more ancient and less known, the power of nature, all that was not man but acted and operated without him—the reproduction of nature after its death, the generation of living creatures. The true God he had not; yet needed a God, and in a state of dependence and wretchedness, he made gods for himself according to his passions and imagination, and Satan took advantage of it. Poor mankind without God! Then God interposed sovereignly, reducing also, as we may note in passing, the length of man’s life by half after the flood, and by as much again hi Peleg’s time, when the earth was methodically divided.

But, as I have just said, the universal influence of idolatry led to an intervention on God’s part which stamped its character on His most important ways: He called Abraham, and caused him to come out from the surrounding corruption, in order to have him as the stock of a people that should belong to Him. In him, the father of the faithful, are shewn forth three or even four great principles: God’s sovereign will, otherwise called election, then God’s call, the promises, and continual worship by a man who was a stranger on the earth. This

last circumstance, the possession of the promises with the non-possession of the things promised, drew out the affections and hope to that which was outside this world, though still indeed in a vague way; but other revelations were added. These principles have characterised the people of God from that day forth.

This, then, is the sum of these new ways of God: the world having given itself up to idolatry, God called out a man to belong to Him, outside the world, making him the depositary of His promises. There had been faithful men before, but not the stock of a race (as Adam was of the fallen race); but Abraham is the head of a race, for even we ourselves, as being Christ's, are the seed of Abraham.

Nothing can be more instructive than the life of Abraham; but here we can only notice that which characterises the ways of God. Abraham declared that he was a pilgrim and a stranger; he erected an altar to God when he came into the land which God had given him, but in which he possessed no place whereon to set his foot; he had nothing but his tent and his altar. He pitched his tent, and built his altar, wherever he dwelt. He failed, and without consulting God, went down into Egypt. God preserved him, but Abraham had no altar from the time of his leaving the land of Canaan, until his return to it. A numerous posterity (Israel) to whom the land was to be given in possession, was promised to him; besides that, all the nations of the earth were to be blessed in him. After the son, in whom were the promises, had been offered to God, and he had received him again as risen, the promise of blessing to the Gentiles was confirmed to the seed—that is, to Christ. (Compare Gal. 3:16.) The promises are without

condition, that is, they belong to God's determinate purpose. Israel will be blessed through them in the last days; Christians, not to speak of other revelations and things fulfilled that are of infinite importance, enjoy them already. Sarah desired "the seed," according to the flesh, before the time. But all had to be on the ground of promise: it is grace, faith and hope; for at that time nothing was fulfilled (and this still remains true as to the glory, except in regard to the Person of the Christ), only God was the God of Abraham, as also of Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise. In Isaac, we have the type of the relations of Christ to the church; in Jacob, we descend into the sphere of the earthly people.

Afterwards, when Jacob had come into Egypt, the Israelites were subjected to the yoke of slavery, to the hard bondage of the Egyptians, as we are to sin in the flesh. This introduces another deeply important principle, that of redemption, and in connection with it yet another, the existence of a people of God upon earth, in the midst of whom God dwelt (Ex. 3:7, 8; ch. 6:1-8; ch. 29:45, 46). It is sovereign grace that considers the affliction of the people, and hears their cry; but the Israelites were in sin as well as the Egyptians: how could God deliver them? He found a ransom; the blood of the Paschal lamb, figure of Christ, was sprinkled in faith on the lintel and two sideposts of the door, and God, who was smiting in judgment, "passed over" the people sheltered by the blood. Israel ate the lamb that had been sacrificed, and had secured them from judgment; they ate it with bitter herbs and unleavened bread—with the bitterness of humiliation and truth in the heart, their loins girded, their staff in their hands, their sandals on their feet; they left Egypt in haste. Then

follows the deliverance of the people when they were come to the sea: “Stand still, and see the salvation of Jehovah.” Egypt’s power falls under executed judgment; Israel is out of Egypt, delivered and brought to God: redemption is complete, and the people shall no more see the Egyptians for ever (Ex. 14 and 15).

There was also a life that God cherished: Israel had to drink of the bitter waters of death (Marah), which Christ underwent in its reality for us. They were fed with the manna (Christ), were made to drink of the water from the rock (the Spirit of God), and were sustained from on high in conflict. But all is grace; God acts in grace and is glorified where man fails; man too is with God, for redemption brings us to God (Ex. 19:4); only the journey under grace, in order to attain this, is added in its great principles. The Sabbath is established: the redeemed people had their part in God’s rest; this is connected with the manna, Christ, as is conflict with the water from the rock.

Some verses of chapter 15 of this Book of Exodus here claim our attention. We find on the one hand: “Thou by thy mercy hast led forth the people that thou hast redeemed; thou hast guided them by thy strength unto the abode of thy holiness” (v. 13); but on the other hand, we read in verse 17: “Thou wilt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, the place that thou, Jehovah, hast made thy dwelling…” That is, they are brought to God Himself; their redemption is absolute and complete; but they were also to be introduced into the promised inheritance. The reader will notice, that it is no question of the wilderness, either in Exodus 3 or Exodus 6, or here, Exodus 15:1-21: the work of redemption being perfect, the wilderness is not

necessary: the thief was fit to be with Christ in paradise, and so are we (Col. 1:12). The wilderness forms no part of God's counsels, which, so far as we are concerned, refer to redemption, and the inheritance; but it does form part of God's ways. See Deuteronomy 8:2, 3, etc.; God proves us, that we may know ourselves, and know Him. Those who make a profession are put to the test on the ground of an accomplished redemption: if they have not life, they fall on the way, whilst true believers persevere to the end. Then again, the state of the people is tested, and they are chastened (Deut. 8:5, 15, 16). In this position we are, in principle, under the law; it is what we are before God in respect of His government; but it is under the rod of the priesthood we are led. (The death of Aaron ends this part of the type; and the "red heifer" is a special provision for the defilements which are contracted in the wilderness.) It is otherwise when justification is the subject: then, at the end of the wilderness journey—our life of probation here below—it is said: "According to this time (that is, at the end of the wilderness) it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought?" All through the wilderness, the question was, What had Israel done?

As the Red Sea, in type, was the death of Christ for us, so the Jordan represents our death with Him; then comes our warfare, as God's host, with spiritual wickedness in heavenly places. But before this, there is Gilgal, the application of our death with Christ to our state of soul, in practical detail. The camp was always at Gilgal: the remembrance, by faith, of our identification with Christ in death (in the Jordan), is at Gilgal; then, the manna, the provision of a Christ come down here below, for the wilderness, is replaced by the old corn of

the land, a heavenly Christ; and the Captain of Jehovah's host comes forward.

Success in warfare, and blessing in the wilderness, depended upon the state of those who were in close connection with God Himself: He blessed them, but He ruled in the midst of His people. These two things, the wilderness and warfare— the warfare waged by Israel as Jehovah's host—are found not indeed at the same moment, but during the same course of human life. But salvation, that is, redemption, is at the Red Sea; deliverance, as a thing experienced, is at the Jordan. The rod smote the sea; and the sea was no more, unless indeed as a safeguard for the people: the ark remained in the Jordan until all had passed over. It is well to notice that conditions and "ifs" do not refer to salvation, but to the wilderness journey; then, for those who have faith and life, there is, together with the "if" the promise of being kept until the end, so that there is no uncertainty for faith; but here it is a matter of relations with a living God known experimentally, and not an accomplished work.

As to Israel historically, they had accepted the promises at Sinai, on condition of their own obedience. That is the first covenant established by means of a Mediator, which supposes two parties; the enjoyment of the effect of the promise, depending as it did upon the faithfulness of man quite as much as upon the fidelity of God, was not more sure than the weaker of the two parties; and in fact the golden calf had been made even before Moses came down from the mountain. The new covenant will be established with Israel and Judah as the old one was. It will be when the Lord shall return and forgive their sins, not remembering them any more, and

accomplishing His work in writing His law in their hearts, and not upon tables of stone. But the fact is of all importance that the people, at Sinai, consented to receive blessing on the condition of precedent obedience: this changed and aggravated the character of the sin, inasmuch as not only were the things themselves evil, but they amounted to a breach of the law, which formally connected God's authority with the obligation of the relationships which it forbade to violate. The relationships and obligations existed already, but the law made the breach of the latter a positive transgression against God's express will: under it, not only was human righteousness at stake, but also God's authority. The last commandment, "Thou shalt not covet," etc., as we have said, did not deal with actual sin, even in the flesh, but with its first motions, and, for a soul born of God, led to the discovery of the root of sin in the flesh. But if all were fulfilled, it was never anything more than human righteousness.

Another great truth already noticed now found its realisation: God dwells on earth in the midst of His people. God had set up His throne in the midst of Israel: two things were in connection with it—first, the direct government of God, known by faith as the God of all the earth, and next, it was there that God was approached. God did not reveal Himself, He was hidden behind the veil; but there the sacrifices were presented: all the relations of religion (or at least of worship) of the people with God were carried into effect and centred there. There God's dwelling was purified yearly; there Israel's sins were blotted out by sacrifices that were figures of the sacrifice of Christ. At the same time the tabernacle was the expression of heavenly things j only the veil

which closed the entrance into the most holy place was not yet rent, and man could not enter the most holy place, save only the high priest once a year. Such was the state of the people. They had accepted the law, as the condition, from that time forth, of the fulfilment of the promises; God's presence was in the midst of the people, but inaccessible, behind the veil, and God's government was carried on in the midst of the people, and for their good. But the tabernacle and all its ordinances were only a shadow, and not the "very image" of the things: and this is the reason why we have more of contrast than of comparison in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Let us notice, in passing, God's grace and condescension in His ways with His people. Was Israel in bondage? God came as Redeemer. Must the people wander as pilgrims in the wilderness? God also dwelt in a tent in their midst. Must they wage war in Canaan? God appeared with a drawn sword, as Captain of Jehovah's host. Were they established in peace in Canaan? God had a dwelling built for Him like to the palaces of the kings.

The journey through the wilderness accomplished, a few words require to be said on Deuteronomy, which is a book by itself. This will give me the opportunity of noticing the character of the entire Pentateuch; but my remarks shall be short.

Genesis lays the foundation and all the great principles of the relations of man with God,' there we find creation, Satan, the fall, sacrifice, the separation of the saints from the world, the judgment of the world, government to put a check upon evil, the call of God when idolatry set in, the promises, the seed of God; those that were

His, pilgrims and strangers, but with a regular worship —otherwise no religious institutions; then the resurrection, in Isaac; the Jews, the earthly people, in Jacob. In Exodus we have redemption, the law, the tabernacle, a people of God, the presence of God on His throne on earth, the old covenant, the priesthood. In Leviticus, the detail of the sacrifices, ceremonial purity, and particularly that which concerns leprosy, the great day of atonement, the feasts, the Sabbatical year, and the jubilee, when every one returned into his inheritance; and prophetical denunciations in case of disobedience. In Numbers, the numbering of the people, the separation of the Levites, the law of jealousy, Nazariteship, the history of the journey through the wilderness under the leading of the cloud and under the priesthood, and, together with the history of the conduct of the children of Israel during this journey—the red heifer; the people, except two men and the little children, perish in the wilderness: the judgment of God is pronounced, according to His sovereign grace, by Balaam. We find also in this book the details of the sacrifices for feast days and especially for the feast of tabernacles, vows, the taking possession of the land on the eastern side of Jordan, the brazen serpent, the Levites' inheritance, and the cities of refuge. Though there be history in all these books, the history itself, not only the rites and ceremonies, is typical of spiritual things: "All these things happened to them as types," says Paul, "and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come," 1 Cor. 10:1-13. We have no proof that, with the exception of Leviticus 8 and 9, one single sacrifice was offered in the wilderness, unless to Moloch and Remphan. The Book of Deuteronomy occupies a place by itself: it supposes that

the people are in the land; it reminds them of their disobedience, and insists upon obedience: its object is to keep the people in close connection with Jehovah. A place was to be appointed in the land, where the ark and worship should be set up, where all the feasts were to be celebrated, and all offerings and tithes brought, except that which was given in the third year, to the Levite, in the place where he dwelt;6 the priests are scarcely mentioned; it is the people in direct relationship with Jehovah: blessing would rest upon obedience, and judgment upon disobedience. The book concludes with a prophetical song, announcing the apostasy of the people and the judgment of God, a judgment which would fall upon the nations that should oppress Israel. In Exodus and Leviticus, the point is approach to God; here, in Deuteronomy, the enjoyment of Jehovah's blessings (and that, too, in a spirit of grace toward those who should be in need), both as directly under the hand of Jehovah, and in faithfully keeping the law given by Him. Several ordinances, relating to feasts and to the cities of refuge, are repeated; but the distinguishing character of the Book is a people without king or prophet (although the priests are named, they hardly ever appear) put in possession of the land to serve Jehovah, who had given it to them. God, however, raised up, when necessary, at the time to which this book refers, extraordinary men to re-establish the affairs of the people, when they were fallen into decline through their sins; but it was, essentially, Jehovah and the people.

The taking possession of the land of Canaan is related in the Book of Joshua. The people's responsibility is clearly brought out, but, on the whole, God was with them, and

no enemy could stand in war against them. God was with Joshua as long as he lived, and this continued during the life of those who had been eye-witnesses of the marvellous works of Jehovah.

But immediately afterwards (in Judges), the people fell into idolatry. Having failed to exterminate the nations upon whom God was executing judgment by their means, the children of Israel learned their wicked and idolatrous ways, fell under the judgment of God, and were given over into the hand of divers tyrants and persecutors. God raised up a judge from time to time, and there was relief and blessing during his life; but after his death, the people fell again into the same disobedience, and were afresh given over to their enemies.

At length in time, the ark was taken, and the relations of Israel with God on the ground of their own responsibility, were at an end. God, however, continues His ways, and the taking of the ark becomes the occasion of making them evident: Christ is the centre of them; He is Prophet, Priest, and King. The high priest was the point of contact between the people, as responsible, and God; the ark, the place where this contact was maintained: but the ark was taken. There could henceforth be no more day of atonement, no more throne of God in the midst of the people, no more sprinkling of blood according to the order of the house of God! Where was He who sat between the cherubim? He failed not to smite the false god with His mighty power, only He did it not in Israel, but in the Philistines' land. All was over for Israel on the ground of their responsibility; but God's sovereignty and His supreme goodness could not be set aside, nor limited. God

intervenes by a prophet, and raises up Samuel, as He had in bygone days brought the people up from Egypt, before the ark was with them. The prophet sent by God in His sovereignty, is the link between the people and God. God Himself was the King in Israel; but the people wished to be like the Gentiles, and to walk by sight, and not by faith, and they set up a human king, Saul. He was in general successful; but being abandoned of God through his disobedience (which was that of Israel), he fell by the hand of the enemies for whose destruction he had been raised up. But God, in view of Christ, would have a king, and David was this king. The priest, the prophet, and the king reveal God's thought as to the Anointed. But the son of David, blessed as he was, failed, as man has ever done, and the kingdom was divided.

Some remarks should be made as to royalty itself. Royalty is properly effective power in action, and, in the kingdom of God, it is God's power, the king who reigns for God in Israel, the intervention of God in power. We have had the walk of responsible man under the priesthood, and side by side with that, the prophet who acted on God's behalf, by the word; this in itself was grace: but now the power is joined to grace to accomplish God's designs. God knew well how to deliver and avenge Himself of false gods, without man; but He was minded to reign in Man: this is the third character of Christ. As Prince of peace, it is indeed Solomon who is the type of the Lord; but the exercise of His power is shewn characteristically in David as a sufferer and deliverer: this will be the means of the re-establishment of Israel, in the last days. In Psalm 72 we have the king, and the king's son. It is David who brings back the ark

from Kirjath-Jearim, but he does not place it again in the tabernacle where the outward form of worship existed, but upon Mount Zion, which God had chosen to be the seat of royalty. (See Psa. 132; 2 Sam. 7; 1 Chron. 16:34.) Then, for the first time (for here it was grace, and grace exercised in power), David institutes the singing of the hymn: “For his mercy endureth for, ever.” This hymn was again sung under Nehemiah, a striking occasion for it, and we hear it already, as prepared for the last days, in Psalms 106, 107, 108, 136. Although royalty was historically placed on the footing of responsibility, the great and unfailing principle of grace acting in power was now established—the sure goodness of God toward Israel, in the Person of the Christ: “For his mercy endureth for ever.” An unfailing posterity and house were promised to David. (2 Sam. 7:12-16; 1 Chron. 17:11-14.) The Christ, the true Son of David, had a place clearly defined and determined by God, although for the time being, the house of David was set under responsibility, and failed forthwith (2 Sam. 23:5; compare Heb. 12:18-22). The temple built upon Mount Moriah, although surely the habitation of God, had not this promise of enduring for ever.

Joshua, beginning with death at Gilgal, gives us the spiritual power of Christ, the Chief and Leader of His people. The Book of Judges shews to us the people’s fall, but the intervention of God in grace; then comes Samuel, the last of the Judges, and then Royalty.

Israel, that is the ten tribes, soon abandoned Jehovah, though priding themselves in His name; Judah’s decline was less rapid. This is the history related to us in the Kings and Chronicles, the last being written, or at any rate finished, after the return from Babylon. The Book of

Kings is (after the division of the kingdom) especially the history of Israel, and that of the intervention of Jehovah by means of Elijah and Elisha; but the history of Judah is continued, up to the captivity. The Book of Chronicles is the history of the family of David.7 Israel severed themselves from the temple, and in fact from Jehovah, by setting up the worship of the golden calves. Responsibility is attached to the kingly functions, but Israel never departed from their false position. But whether for Israel or for Judah, this period is characterised by prophets sent of God. God thought of the faithful in Israel, when the prophet could find none, a touching testimony of His grace! Great as was the prophet, who did not even pass through death, Elijah found but himself alone where God knew seven thousand. But the prophets in Israel, and those that bore testimony in Judah, had very distinct characters. A large portion of the Book of Kings relates to us the history of Elijah and Elisha: their testimony referred to Jehovah's rights in the midst of an apostate people, and served to maintain, in the heart of the faithful hidden in the midst of this people, faith in Him whom the people had abandoned. There was no testimony as to the coming Messiah,8 nor as to God's ways in general; but there were miracles that we do not find (except a sign given to Hezekiah) in the prophets of Judah, because in Judah, the profession of the worship of Jehovah still existed. Elijah and Elisha kept up in their persons the testimony of Jehovah in the midst of an apostate people, and, as did Moses in setting it up, performed miracles to maintain this testimony personally. The prophets in Judah insisted upon faithfulness in the midst of a people that professed to serve the true God and to possess His temple, and encouraged personal faith, not by miracles

which declared that Jehovah was mighty, but by promise, which belonged to the people according to the love of God and His unfailing faithfulness.

Israel was lost amongst the nations, led captive by the Assyrians, but not for ever (the Messiah, when He comes, will find the ten tribes again), whilst the public ways of God were pursued in the history of Judah. The ministry of the prophets continued until, as Jeremiah says, there was no remedy, that is, up to the Babylonian captivity, and even after it. But the Babylonian captivity was of immense import, as regards the earth: the throne of God ceased to be upon earth, there was no longer any throne of God upon it: the times of the Gentiles, of the power of the Beasts in Daniel, had begun, and will continue until the last Beast be destroyed by the power of the Lord Jesus, at His coming. Only the Christ had to be presented to them as King: this is the history of the gospel as far as concerned the Jews, thenceforth vagabonds upon the earth, although not lost, as was Israel, amongst the Gentiles, but having God's mark upon them to preserve them for the days of blessing that await them when they shall repent—a remnant at the least—and shall look upon Him whom they pierced. The expressions: "God of the heavens," and "God of the whole earth," are never confounded in prophecy. The history of Israel under the old covenant, under which blessing depended upon man's obedience, was at an end; but promise still remained,—the promise, that is, of the Messiah and of the new covenant. Then God, in His goodness, put into the heart of Cyrus, who had not given himself up to the gross idolatry of Babylon, and hated idols, to cause at least a remnant of Israel to return to the land of promise, and further, to help to re-establish

the temple of the true God, and His worship. Thither the promised Messiah came in His time, but for purposes yet far more glorious, putting man, nevertheless, to a last test. Come in humiliation in order to be near to man, shewing at the same time by His words and His works who He was, that He was over all, but come in goodness and grace towards man, accessible to all, abolishing all the effects of sin, He encountered sin itself manifested in its true character in man, in the rejection of God thus present.

Man, then, was tried in his innocence by the Enemy, and fell; he was tried without law, and sin reigned; under the law, and he transgressed it; afterwards, when man had become a sinner and transgressor, God came in goodness, not imputing his sins to him, and man would not have God. The history of responsible man was ended from that time forth; Israel also had lost all claim to the fulfilment of the promises, otherwise unconditional,—having rejected Him in whom this fulfilment was to be found.

It only remains for me to give some idea of the prophecies, in order to facilitate the understanding of these revelations of God; and then to pass rapidly the Hagiographa in review.

Of all the prophets, Isaiah takes in the most extended horizon. As long as Israel is owned of God, the Assyrian is the enemy. It will be thus in the last days, and whilst that which the prophets say of him encouraged the faith of their contemporaries, what they announced will not have its complete fulfilment until those days. A brief analysis of Isaiah will furnish us with the entire compass of prophecy, the other prophets giving us details that

require but few words. The first four chapters form a preface which shews the moral ruin of Judah and Jerusalem and the judgments which should fall upon her, and her restoration, bringing in peace and turning to nought man and his glory, and revealing Christ the glory of the remnant. The judgment in chapter 5 is founded upon the people's giving up what God had made them at the beginning; in chapter 6, it is based upon their incapacity to stand in the presence of God, who was about to come;—these are the grounds of the judgment of man, of Israel, and of the church: but there was to be a remnant in the midst of the blindness of the people. Then we find Immanuel, the Son of the Virgin, the sure foundation of the confidence of faith; and the Assyrian, the rod of God, but also (until the end of chap. 9:7) the effect of the presence of Immanuel, a stone of stumbling for the people, from whom God hides His face, but yet a Sanctuary, and finally the Restorer of the people in glory. Chapters 7, 8, 9:1-7 are a parenthesis to introduce Christ. Chapter 9:8 resumes the thread of the people's history with its different phases, verses 8-12; 13-17; 18-21; ch. 10:1-4; then comes the Assyrian, through whom the chastisements are brought to an end. Chapters 11 and 12 depict the full blessing at the end: the Holy One of Israel is again in the midst of the people. This completes the review of the great elements of the prophecy. Chapters 13-27 announce the judgment of the Gentiles, of Babel where Israel was captive, the characteristic city of the times of the Gentiles and Israel's captivity. The judgment of the Assyrian comes after that of Babylon, shewing that the last days are in question, for in history, Babel's greatness and empire were founded upon the fall of the Assyrian. After Babylon come the other countries; only, in chapter 18,

we have Israel brought back to their land, but despoiled by the Gentiles just at the moment when they seemed about to flourish. Jerusalem and its head undergo judgment; then the whole world is convulsed, and the Lord comes, whom the faithful were awaiting. The powers of evil, on high, are judged, and the kings of the earth, upon the earth (chap. 24:21). The veil which hindered the Gentiles from seeing shall be taken away, the reproach of the people shall be abolished, and the first resurrection will take place; the power of the Serpent among the peoples will be destroyed; Jehovah will care for Israel as a vineyard in which He finds His pleasure (chaps. 25-27). In chapters 28-33 a series of special prophecies portray the last assault of the Gentiles against Israel, in which the Edomite and Assyrian are conspicuous, but each of these prophcies ends with the full blessing of Israel, and the presence of the King (Christ). Then come four chapters containing the history of Sennacherib, which furnished the occasion for the prophecy, but in which Hezetriah healed—figure of Christ risen—and the deliverance from the attack of the Assyrian, prefigure the events of the last days. From chapter 40 to the end, we find the controversy of Jehovah with Israel, because the latter had forsaken Him for idols, and, with this, the judgment of Babel, the great vessel of this idolatry upon earth, which Cyrus (called by name) captured— in a word the judgment of idolatry; and then the rejection of the Christ. The first part reaches up to the end of chapter 48; then Christ is the subject from chapter 49 until the end of chapter 57: God will have righteousness. Then, after some reproaches addressed to Israel, we have their glory in the last days.

I have enlarged a little upon Isaiah, because the whole range of prophecy, at the time when Israel was owned, is contained in it, as well as the thoughts of God. Daniel, on the other hand, gives us the history of the “Beasts,” when the Jews are in captivity, and, consequently, outside God’s direct government in Israel. The other prophets take up details: Jeremiah, the ruin of Judah, the state of things within; Ezekiel, Israel already rejected.

Jeremiah insists upon the iniquity that had brought on the ruin, but in chapter 31 he announces grace and a new covenant with Judah and Israel, and in this chapter, also, and the two following, full blessing upon Judah and Israel; after which is the judgment upon the nations.

Ezekiel introduces Jehovah Himself, executing judgment upon Jerusalem, when, at the same time, He quits His throne which is there no longer; thus Judah and Israel are in the same position before God, and Ezekiel speaks of them both. In chapters 34-37, Israel is restored by God, and purified, Judah and Israel are joined together to be separated no more; Christ (David) is there, and the tabernacle of God is with them. In chapters 38 and 39, the northern power, Gog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, rises up to lay waste the land, making known by the judgment that Jehovah then executes upon him, the name of Jehovah, and that Israel had been in captivity on account of their iniquities. Then Ezekiel gives the plan of the new temple.

To Daniel, captive at Babylon, but keeping himself pure from all defilement, are confided all the events of the history of the four Gentile monarchies. The first six chapters of this prophet relate the histories of these

empires as belonging to the world: Daniel is but an interpreter. The last six chapters shew us the same empires in their relations with captive Israel. As always, Israel's deliverance and the judgment of their oppressors come at the end. Daniel shall have his part in this joy.

Hosea predicts the transporting of the ten tribes, and then he announces that by the captivity of Judah there would no longer be a recognised people of God upon earth, but that at the end they should set up for themselves one only Head (Christ): and the day of blessing should be great. Israel should remain a long time without the true God and without false gods, without sacrifice and without idols, but would own Jehovah and David (Christ) in the last days: their repentance is depicted in the last chapter.

Joel foretells, on the occasion of a famine, the destruction of the northern army, and then the gift of the Spirit to all flesh before the terrible day shall come.

Amos, after having threatened judgment that should be executed upon different nations of Canaan, declares that the patience of God will no longer bear with the iniquity of Israel, but he sets forth also (as do all the prophets) die return and blessing of Israel, adding that they shall never more be rooted out of their land.

Obadiah is a prophecy against Edom, whose jealousy of Jerusalem and implacable hatred are often spoken of; then he announces the day of Jehovah for the judgment of the nations, and the deliverance of Zion, as always.

Jonah has a special character; if Jehovah had chosen Israel to be a people set apart to preserve the knowledge of His name upon the earth, He is none the

less the God of the Gentiles, and a God of goodness and mercy. When privileges put into the shade the knowledge of what God is in Himself, the possession of these privileges becomes a stern party spirit: this was clearly shewn in the Jews, It is remarkable that in Jonah the testimony of divine mercy is addressed to the great enemy of God's people. We see also in this prophet, the ways of God when repentance is manifested; furthermore, in some respects Jonah is a well-known type of the Saviour. The subject of chapter 4 is in contrast with the special blessing upon the Jews at the end; God is likewise the God of the nations.

Micah resembles Isaiah in many points, but the development of God's plans is much less complete in his book, while he appeals more to the conscience of the people; but the promises made to Abraham and to Jacob will be fulfilled.

In Nahum, God's indignation is aroused against the pride of human power and dominion, and Nineveh (the Assyrian) is destroyed: the race will never be reinstated, and Judah is finally delivered.

Habakkuk is the expression of faith in Jehovah, in spite of everything, and of God's ways in the history of the people. The prophet complains of the iniquity that surrounds him in Israel: God shews to him the Chaldeans, whom He is bringing to visit the land in judgment because of this iniquity; then the prophet's affection for the people is awakened, and he complains of the Chaldeans; and God shews him that he must live by faith: He will punish these violent enemies, whose passions He had used as a rod to chasten Israel; but the man of faith must wait. The day of Jehovah shall come,

and the earth shall be covered with the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah as the waters cover the sea. The prophet recalls the former deliverance of Israel, and rejoices in Jehovah, although no blessing from Him be apparent.

Zephaniah announces a judgment upon the land, which will allow no iniquity to escape,—the day of Jehovah, a day of wrath, of trouble and of anguish, when the land shall be devoured by Jehovah's wrath. The meek will have to seek Jehovah to be "sheltered" (chap. 2:3); first of all Israel, then the Gentiles shall be judged, the Assyrian being their head (for here Israel is owned); then comes that which concerns Jerusalem, as though God had said, She will repent; but she became corrupt, going from bad to worse. The prophet takes this opportunity to call the remnant to wait upon Jehovah who was about to gather all the nations to judge them in His anger. Then, everything would be changed: all the nations would call upon Jehovah out of a pure heart, and Israel should be brought back to Him in hearty repentance, iniquity would be found in them no longer, and they should be for a people of renown and glory amongst all the nations of the earth; a fitting conclusion to all God's ways spoken of by the prophets.

The prophets that follow, prophesied after the return from Babylon, and have another character.

Haggai is full of interest, though simple and short. He would have the people to think of Jehovah and not of their worldly interests; he would have them to set to work again to build the House, whose progress the enemies had interrupted, and that they should do it, trusting in Jehovah, and without waiting for the leave of

the king of Persia: the Jews did so, and in fact, when they acted by faith, Providence helped them by the king's authorisation. But for faith, God undertook all for them, and He controls the hearts of kings. It is the order of faith acting according to God's word, here given by the prophets Haggai and Zechariah. At the same time this furnishes the prophet with the opportunity of announcing that God was going to shake the heavens and the earth, so that all human power, as well as the spiritual powers in the air, should be set aside. Then will be fulfilled that which the children cried by inspiration when Jesus entered Jerusalem: "Peace in heaven" —and the power of Christ, the Head of Israel, will be established, identified with that of Jehovah.

Zechariah takes up the re-establishment of Jerusalem at that time, but giving the history of the city until the first coming of the Christ, and even until the second. He speaks, indeed, of the destruction of the nations who laid Jerusalem waste, but of this only incidentally. Jerusalem is justified, then blessed by the administration of grace, according to perfect and divine order; the wicked are segregated, and find their place with Babylon; and Christ is brought in. There is a second prophecy beginning with chapter 7, and which, in chapter 11, introduces the rejection of Christ at His first coming; and Israel is given up into the hands of a wicked shepherd. Then Jerusalem will be the place where the nations shall be judged, and the spirit of repentance shall be poured upon the people because of the death of the Man who is Jehovah's fellow. Jerusalem will be taken, but Jehovah shall come forth to judge her enemies, and everything in her shall be sanctified.

Malachi shews us the moral decay of the people after their return from Babylon; but there will be a remnant. John the Baptist's mission is predicted, the day of Jehovah is coming, and the advent of Elijah is announced, the people are brought back to the law. Notice carefully that Christianity does not appear here, but the Christ and His rejection; the Shepherd (Zech. 13) is smitten and the sheep are scattered, then follows the judgment. It is easily perceived that, in these three prophecies uttered after the return from Babylon when one of the "Beasts" had already fallen, although the nations be necessarily alluded to (for it was their time—they possessed the world), the range of prophecy grows considerably narrower, and we find much more direct detail in relation to the Christ. The great actors amongst the nations are there, and there they find themselves judged; they are there awaiting the last judgments, to make way for Babylon and the Beasts, whose history we have in Daniel, all associated with the captivity of the Jews in that city, for this captivity characterised the position. Up to that time there had been the Assyrian, but the throne of God had been in the midst of the people at Jerusalem; now, though the captivity under the dominion of the Gentiles still subsists and is recognised, the horizon, I repeat, gets narrower, and the scene is more filled with Christ Himself, and details in connection with restored Jerusalem; then comes the great day of Jehovah.

It remains for me to say a few words on the Hagiographa.

Daniel is reckoned among the latter by the Jews. We have spoken of his book as a book of prophecy, although it has a distinct character, the throne of God having

disappeared from off the earth, and the prophet being at Babylon; but still it partakes of the character of the other Hagiographa, which are moral discourses, histories of detail, when Israel was rejected— the expression of the Christ's affection for Israel: we find God's relations with man in them, and the providential care He takes of His people, when He had no relations with them as a people, and did not own them as such.

The Book of Job9 shows us man under trial (put to the test). Will he be able, as renewed by grace, as we should say with our actual knowledge—man just and upright in his ways—will he be able to possess in himself righteousness, and be able to maintain himself before God in the presence of the power of evil? Such is the question raised in this book. One sees in it also the ways of God for sounding hearts, and to give them the knowledge of their true state before Him. This subject is all the more instructive in that it is presented to us outside of all economy—of all special revelation from God's side. Job is a pious man, as one descended from Noah could well have been, one who had not lost the knowledge of the true God at a time when sin was propagating itself afresh in the world and where idolatry was beginning to establish itself, albeit the Judge was ready to punish it.

One sees also in Job a heart, which, though in rebellion against God, depends on Him; a heart which turns towards God, whom he finds not: a heart which because it knows God, though insubject, claims for Him qualities which the cold reasonings of his friends know not how to attribute to Him; nevertheless he is complacent in his own integrity of which he makes a covering for himself

in self-righteousness which hides God from him and which also hides Job from himself.

Elihu reproaches him with these things, at the same time explaining to him the ways of God. Finally God reveals Himself to Job and his heart is broken. Then God heals him, lavishing blessing upon him in peace.

This book also furnishes a picture of the ways of God towards the Jews as well as the Spirit's teaching regarding the part Satan plays in the ways and government of God on the earth.

The Psalms exhibit this state of things more completely than any other book whatever. Two principles lay the foundation of the entire Book (Psa. 1, 2): the first, that there is in the midst of the wicked a God-fearing remnant; the second, that Jehovah and His Anointed meet with opposition from the people and the Gentiles. Then we have the counsels of God in the Anointed, Son of God, and King in Zion, and then Ruler over all the earth: if He is rejected, His people must suffer, take up their cross (Psalms 3-7). In Psalm 8 He is the Son of man set over all the works of God's hand. With Psalm 9 the history in the midst of Israel begins. Some principles may here be useful, as a clue to facilitate the reading of the Book. It is well known that the Psalms are divided into five Books, as follows: Psalm 1-41; 42-72; 73-89; 90-106; 107-150. The form of the Book in general lays down a basis of thought, then provides expressions for the experience of the remnant in the circumstances given as the basis. Thus Psalms 9 and 10 lay the basis; the Psalms following, until the end of Psalm 18, are the expression of the sentiments that are in connection with them: only the last three more directly present Christ.

Psalm 18 is remarkable in that it connects all the history of Israel, from Egypt until the end, with the sufferings of Christ. Psalms 19, 20 and 21 are the testimonies of God; the Creation, the Law, and Christ, Psalm 21 introducing Christ in glory. Psalm 22 presents Him, not in connection with the Jews, but made sin before God. Prior to Psalm 25, we do not find confession of sins. It is more a question of the Christ personally in this first Book; the remnant, too, if at Jerusalem, but in presence of the power of the wicked. In the second Book the remnant is outside Jerusalem. In Psalm 45 the Messiah is introduced, and thenceforward the name of Jehovah. When we meet with the name of Jehovah, faith recognises the relationship. (Compare Psalms 14 and 53.) I may here remark that the first verse or verses of a Psalm habitually give the thesis, and the following verses describe the path by which this point is reached. In this second Book the afflictions of Christ are fully described, and then the desires of David for the establishment of his Son in His millennial kingdom. The third Book, whilst mentioning Judah and Zion, takes in the whole of Israel, and thus goes back and reviews the people's history, following it up to the sure covenant made with Abraham and with his seed. The fourth Book, after recalling Moses, and how Jehovah had been the God of Israel in all times, and after speaking of the Messiah and of the Sabbath, introduces the reign of Jehovah, and describes its progress from above until He shall be seated between the cherubim and the nations called to worship before Him. We have there the principles of the reign of Christ, His rejection, His divinity, and the duration of His days as the risen Man, the blessing of the people and of the world by His presence: God remembers His promise to Abraham.

Israel has been unfaithful, but God, in grace, remembers them. The fifth Book goes on to the end; it sets forth the principles and ways of Jehovah, the return of the people to their land (the Psalms of Degrees), Christ in the meantime having sat down at God's right hand, Lord, as Son of David. The goodness of Jehovah endureth for ever, the law is written in the heart of Israel which had been astray. Then, after the Psalms of Degrees, and the judgment of Babylon, comes the great "Hallel" or Hallelujah, a series of hymns of praise. The only Psalms which describe, even prophetically, the kingdom itself are 72 and 145. The Book begins by a rejected Christ; then, introducing His return to set up the kingdom, it speaks of the ways of the people, and their return to their land. Note also that you never find the Father in the Psalms, nor the feelings that belong to adoption. Confidence, obedience, faith in the midst of difficulties, devotedness (as in Psalm 63), faith in the promises, fidelity, all these things we find, but never the relation of son with a father. Through not paying attention to this point, the character of the piety of many sincere souls has been lowered by the very reading of this precious Book.

The Preacher, or "Ecclesiastes," inquires whether it be possible to find happiness under the sun. All is vanity in man's efforts; but there is a law, the perfect rule of man's conduct, and every work shall be weighed at the judgment of God. There is no positive relationship with God in this book; we find it in God the Creator, and man in the world such as it is—not Jehovah, still less the Father.

In the Proverbs it is otherwise; they present to us the wisdom of that authority which restrains man's will,

corruption, and violence, the satisfying of self which is man's danger; then the counsels of God, in that the Wisdom of God (Christ), the Object of God's good pleasure, finds its delight in the sons of men, and that before the world was (chap. 8). All here is either Jehovah or God who has made Himself known and acts by means of an authority confided to man, to parents, etc. Then God supplies us in this Book with that which teaches a man to avoid the snares laid in this poor world, without being obliged himself to learn all its iniquity.

In Ezra and Nehemiah we find the nationality of Israel doubly reinstated, religiously and politically. Ezra comes after Joshua and Zerubbabel. In the latter we see men who act by faith: in the midst of their enemies, they erect an altar to be a defence against them; they count upon God (Ezra 3:2). The prophets Haggai and Zechariah encouraged the Jews on God's behalf, and God answered their faith. Later on comes Ezra, a faithful man, devoted and confiding in God: instructed in the law, he brings order into their walk. Yet it seems to me that under the influence of the natural soil of the human heart, this order degenerated into Pharisaism. For the moment, faithfulness on their part demanded that they should keep themselves separate as the people of God, require a known Jewish genealogy, especially so in the case of the priests, and that they should send away the strange wives. Nehemiah restores the walls and the city: he is a faithful and devoted man, but one who likes to talk of his faithfulness; for the word presents these two things as they are.

The Book of Esther tells us in what manner God in His providence, whilst hiding Himself, takes care of Israel. It has often been remarked that God is not named in this

book: this is just what is fitting, for the subject is God's providence when God does not openly shew Himself.

The Song of Songs is, I believe, the renewal of the relations of the Son of David with the faithful remnant of Israel in the last days, when that remnant shall be for Him Hephzi-bah, "my delight is in her," Isa. 62:4. We may remark that He always speaks to the Shulamite when He speaks of her; she speaks of Him as the object of her affections, but not to Him. The church's affection is calmer than that which we find here, because the church already enjoys the love of Christ as a known thing, being in a well-established relationship, although the consequences of it be not all accomplished. Individually the believer can enter more fully into it.

There are two little portions of the Hagiographa that in our Bibles are detached from them; they are: The Lamentations of Jeremiah and Ruth. The touching story of this latter, which reveals the most primitive customs, and, at the same time, the most delicate and beautiful incidents of character, bearing unmistakably the stamp of reality, is important as retracing the genealogy of David, and consequently that of Christ, a Gentile woman being admitted into it. The Lamentations have that character of sorrow which is imparted by the feeling that God has smitten His people, overthrown His altar, and destroyed His house. For the time being, under the old covenant, it is all over with Jerusalem and the people of God. Jeremiah sees, as with the eye of God from within, and there is no longer any remedy! Now, it will be remembered that the books of Ezra and Nehemiah relate the return of a Jewish remnant, brought back by the mercy of God, in order that there might be a people

to whom grace could present Him who had been promised.

The responsibility of man, as man, as being answerable for his own conduct, had been fully put to the test without law, and under the law; but the goodness of God from the time of the fall, before man had been driven out of the garden of Eden, had given the promise of a Saviour, who was to crush the serpent's head. Except that which was necessary to replenish the new world, the flood made an end of the fallen race plunged in corruption and violence. In this new world all soon fell into idolatry. Then grace called Abraham, and the formal promises of the Seed were given to him. Four hundred and thirty years later, the race, separated for God, was put under the law, a perfect rule of what man ought to be, if we take into account the prohibition of lust. The prophets recalled the law to the people's conscience, but at the same time they sustained the faith of those who remained true in the midst of general unfaithfulness, recalling, confirming, and developing the promise of the Seed, and of the coming of the great and terrible day of Jehovah. See, as an instance, the last words of Malachi's prophecy (chap. 4). The promise of the Seed was repeated by the prophets constantly, and the appeal to conscience, until there was no longer any remedy. Yet God fulfilled the promise in sending the Christ, the seed of David. This was grace—faithfulness to His promise, without doubt, on God's part, and in this sense righteousness in God (this is the force of 2 Peter 1:1), but it was not a question of man's responsibility to keep a rule that had been imposed upon him, but of receiving the Christ. There was more: Christ was the Word made flesh. God Himself was in Christ, reconciling the world

to Himself, not imputing their sins to them. But He came to His own, and His own received Him not; the world would not have Him, it knew Him not; His own did not receive Him; yet the Father was manifested in the Son, in His words and in His works, and the world knew Him not: “They have both seen and hated,” said the Saviour, “both me and my Father.” Thus the Jews lost all right to the promises in rejecting Him in whom they were being fulfilled. But what is much more, not only was man disobedient, he was that already, but whilst thus disobedient he shewed his hatred against God manifested in grace. On the side of man’s responsibility, all relationship with God was impossible. The cross was the public manifestation of this rejection, of this enmity against God; but it was at the same time the manifestation of the love of God for man such as he was. But more than this, it was the accomplishment of a perfect work of propitiation— a sacrifice to take away sin, an entirely new basis of relationship between man and God, depending, not upon man’s responsibility—on this ground man was lost—but on the infinite grace of God that spared not His own Son, who, by the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God, so that grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. The promises will be fulfilled; and the believer possess eternal life, and will possess it in glory, made like unto the Son of God, re-entered as man into the glory, in order that the heart of God may be satisfied in love, and His holy righteousness manifested and honoured, and that His Son who left the glory for us and humbled Himself in obedience unto death, may be fully glorified, according to the glory that is His due. Thus we have entered upon the ground of the gospel.

The New Testament, as we readily perceive, has a very different character from the Old, in that, if the latter gives us the revelation of the thoughts which God communicated to those who were the instruments of this revelation, and makes us adore the wisdom that is there developed, yet God Himself in the Old Testament remains always hidden behind the veil. In the New Testament God manifests Himself; there we find Himself, gentle, meek, human: in the Gospels, God upon earth,—and then God enlightening by a divine light in the subsequent communications of the Spirit. Formerly God had made promises, as He had executed judgments; He had governed a people upon earth, and had acted towards the nations in view of this people; He had given them His law, and had bestowed on them, through the medium of the prophets, a growing light which announced as nearer and nearer the coming of Him who should tell them all things from God. But the presence of God Himself as Man in the midst of men had the effect of changing everything, where man ought to have received Him in the Person of the Christ, as the crown of blessing and glory—Him, whose presence was to banish all evil, and develop and bring to perfection every element of good, furnishing at the same time an object and a centre for all the affections rendered perfectly happy by the enjoyment of this Object. Or else, in rejecting this Christ, our poor nature must manifest itself as it is, enmity against God, and must prove the necessity for a completely new order of things, in which the happiness of man and the glory of God should be based upon a new creation. We know what happened. He who was the image of the invisible God, had to say, after the exercise of a perfect patience: “Righteous Father, the world hath not known thee “; and alas! yet

more than that: “they have seen and hated both me and my Father,” John 17:25; ch. 15:24.

This condition of man, however, has in no wise prevented God from accomplishing His counsels; on the contrary, this wretched state gave Him the opportunity of glorifying Himself in fulfilling them. God would not reject man until man had rejected Him; as in the garden of Eden, man, conscious of sin, unable to bear God’s presence, withdrew from Him before God had driven Him out of the garden. But now that man, on his side, had entirely rejected God come in goodness into the midst of his misery, God was free—if one may venture to speak thus, and the expression is morally correct—God was free to carry out His eternal purposes. But here God does not execute judgment, as in Eden, when man was already alienated from Him: it is sovereign grace, which, when man is evidently lost and has declared himself the enemy of God, carries on its work for the shewing forth of His glory before the whole universe in the salvation of poor sinners who had rejected Him. But in order that God’s perfect wisdom should be manifested even in the details, this work of sovereign grace, in which God revealed Himself, must be seen as having its due connection with all His previous dealings revealed in the Old Testament, and also as leaving its full place to His government of the world.

From all this it results that, apart from the main idea which predominates throughout, there are in the New Testament four subjects which unfold themselves to the eye of faith. The grand subject, the fact above all others, is that the perfect light is manifested: God reveals Himself. But this light is revealed in love, the other essential name of God.

Christ, who is the manifestation of this light and love, and who if He had been received, would have been the fulfilment of all the promises, is then presented to man, and particularly to Israel looked at in their responsibility, with every proof, personal, moral, and of power,—proofs which left this people without excuse.

Secondly, Christ being rejected—a rejection by means of which salvation was accomplished—the new order of things (the new creation, man glorified, the church sharing with Christ in heavenly glory) is put before us.

Thirdly; the connection between the old order of things and the new one upon earth, with respect to the law, the promises, the prophecies, or the divine institutions on earth, is set forth. This is done, whether in exhibiting the new order as the fulfilment and setting aside of that which had grown old, or in making evident the contrast that exists between the two, or in demonstrating the perfect wisdom of God in all the details of His ways.

Finally, the government of the world on God's part is prophetically unfolded; and the renewal of God's relations with Israel, whether in judgment or in blessing, is briefly but plainly stated, on the occasion of the rupture of these relations by the rejection of the Messiah.

It may be added that everything that is necessary for man, as a pilgrim upon earth, until God shall accomplish in power the purposes of His grace, is abundantly supplied. Come forth, at the call of God, from that which is rejected or condemned (and not yet put into possession of the portion which God has prepared for him) the man who has obeyed this call needs something to direct him, and to reveal to him both the sources of

the strength he requires in walking towards the mark of his calling, and the means by which he can appropriate this strength. God in calling him to follow a Master whom the world has rejected, has not failed to supply him with all the light and all the directions requisite to guide and encourage him in his path.

The Gospels relate to us the history of the Lord's life, and present Him to our hearts, whether by His actions or by His discourses, in the various characters which make Him in every way precious to the souls of the redeemed, according to the measure of intelligence vouchsafed to them, and according to their need. These characters together form the fulness of His personal glory, so far as we are capable of apprehending it here below in these our earthen vessels, saving always that which concerns the relations t>f Christ with the church; for, except the fact that Christ would build a church upon earth, it is only by the Holy Ghost, sent down after His ascension, that He made known to the apostles and prophets this priceless mystery.

The Lord, as is evident, had to unite in His Person upon earth, according to the counsels of God and according to the revelations of His word, more than one character for the accomplishment of His glory, and for the maintenance and manifestation of the glory of His Father. But in order that this might take place, He must also be something, whether we consider Him as walking down here on earth, or from the point of view of His real nature. Christ must needs accomplish the service which it behoved Him to render to God, as being Himself the true servant, and that as serving God by the word in the midst of His people, according to Psalm 40, verses 8-10 for instance, Isaiah 49:4, 5, and other passages.

A multitude of testimonies had announced that the Son of David should sit, on the part of God, upon His Father's throne; and the fulfilment of God's counsels as to Israel is connected, in the Old Testament, with Him who should thus come, and who on earth should stand in the relation of Son of God with Jehovah God. The Christ, the Messiah, or, as is but the translation of this name, the Anointed, was to come and present Himself to Israel, according to the revelation and the counsels of God. And this promised seed was to be Immanuel, God with the people. The expectation of the Jews scarcely went beyond this character of Christ, Messiah, and Son of David; and they looked even at that in their own way, merely as the exaltation of their own nation, having no sense of their sins, nor of the consequences of their sins.

This character of Christ, however, was not all that the prophetic word, which declared the counsels of God, had announced about Him whom even the world was expecting. He was to be the Son of man, a title which the Lord Jesus loved to give Himself, a title of great importance to us. The Son of man is, it appears to me, according to the word, the Heir of all that the counsels of God destined for man as his portion in glory, of all that God would bestow on man, according to those counsels. (See Dan. 7:13, 14, and Psa. 8:5, 6; Psa. 80:17; Prov. 8.) But in order to be Heir of all that God destined for man, Christ must be a Man. The Son of man was truly of the race of man (precious and comforting truth!) born of a woman, really and truly a man, and partaking of flesh and blood, made like unto His brethren, sin excepted. In this character He was to suffer, and be rejected, that He might inherit all things in a wholly new estate—raised and glorified. He needed to die and rise

again, the inheritance being defiled, and man being in rebellion against God, the co-heirs of Christ as guilty as the rest.

Jesus, then, was to be the Servant, the great Prophet, though the Son of David, and the Son of man, and therefore truly a Man on the earth, born under the law, born of a woman, of the seed of David, Inheritor of the rights of David's family, Heir to the destinies of man, according to the purpose and the counsels of God. But in order to this He must glorify God according to the position man was in as fallen in his responsibility, meet that responsibility so as to glorify God there; but, while here, bearing a prophet's testimony—the faithful Witness. But who should unite all these characters in one person? Was it to be only an official glory which the Old Testament had said a man was to inherit? The condition of men, manifested under the law, and without law, proved the impossibility of making them, as they were, partakers of the blessing of God. The rejection of the Christ was the crowning proof of this impossibility. And, in fact, man needed, above all, to be himself reconciled to God, apart from all dispensation and the special government of an earthly people. Man had sinned, and redemption was necessary for the glory of God and the salvation of men. Who could accomplish it? Man needed it himself: an angel had to keep and fill his own place, and could do no more; otherwise he would not have been an angel. And who amongst men could be the heir of all things, and have all the works of God put under his dominion, according to the word? It was the Son of God who should inherit them; it was their Creator who should possess them. He, then, who was to be the

Servant, the Son of David, the Son of man, the Redeemer, was the Son of God, God the Creator.

To these different aspects of Christ is due not only the special character of each of the Gospels, but also the difference that exists between the first three Gospels and that of John. The former present Christ to man, in order that man may receive Him, and they shew His rejection by man; whereas John, on the contrary, has this rejection as the starting-point of his Gospel, a Gospel which is the display of the divine nature, and that in presence of which man and the Jew were, and which they rejected: “He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not…”

But let us go back a little. Matthew is the fulfilment of promise and of prophecy. We find in his Gospel, Immanuel in the midst of the Jews, rejected by them, who thus stumble at the stone of offence; and then Christ is presented as being really a Sower; fruit-seeking was in vain; then come the church and the kingdom, substituted for Israel blessed according to the promises that they refused in the Person of Jesus; but after the judgment, when they shall receive Him, the Jews are recognised as objects of mercy. We do not find the ascension in Matthew; and we believe that it is for this very reason that Galilee, and not Jerusalem is the scene of the interview of the Lord with the disciples after His resurrection: Jesus is with the poor of the flock who owned the word of the Lord, there where light had sprung up to the people sitting in darkness. The commission to baptise goes forth hence, and applies to the Gentiles. Mark gives us the Servant-Prophet, the Son of God. Luke presents the Son of man, the first two chapters affording a lovely picture of the remnant in

Israel. John, as we have said above, makes known to us the divine and incarnate Person of the Lord, the foundation of all blessing, and a work of atonement which is the basis even of the sinless condition of the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness; at the end, the gift of the Comforter: and all this in contrast with Judaism. Instead of tracing the Lord's pedigree up to Abraham and David, the stocks of promise, or to Adam that, as Son of man, He might bring in blessing to man, or of relating His service in ministry as the great Prophet that was to come—John brings into the world a divine Person, the Word made flesh.

Paul and John reveal our being in a wholly new place in Christ; but John is mainly occupied with revealing to us the Father in the Son, and thus life by the Son in us; whilst Paul presents us to God, and reveals His counsels in grace. If we confine ourselves to the Epistles, Paul alone speaks of the church, except that Peter (1 Pet. 2) gives us the building of living stones, an edifice not yet completed; but Paul alone speaks of the "body."

The Acts give us the account of the founding of the church by the Holy Ghost come down from heaven, and then the labours of the apostles at Jerusalem or in Palestine, and of other free labourers, especially the work of Peter, and afterwards that of Paul, the scripture history ending with the account of the rejection of the latter apostle's gospel, by the Jews of the dispersion.

To expound even summarily the contents of the Epistles would lead us too far: we will confine ourselves to a few words on their chronological order, merely noticing that they develop the efficacy of Christ's work, and the Father's love revealed in Him.

We must place in the first rank those whose date is sure: 1 and 2 Thessalonians; 1 and 2 Corinthians; the Epistle to the Romans, those to the Ephesians, Colossians, Philip-pians, Philemon, the last four written during Paul's captivity. The Epistle to the Galatians was written between fourteen and twenty years after the call of the apostle, and after he had laboured for some time in Asia Minor, perhaps when he was staying at Ephesus, although it was not long after the founding of the assemblies of Galatia. i Timothy was written on the occasion of the apostle leaving Ephesus, at what time exactly is not clear; 2 Timothy must be placed at the close of the apostle's life, when he was about to suffer martyrdom. The Epistle to Titus is connected with a journey of Paul to Crete, though we do not know when this journey took place (it has been thought that it was perhaps at the time of the apostle's sojourn at Ephesus); it is morally synchronous with 1 Timothy, for it was not God's purpose to give us chronological dates: divine wisdom was not pleased to give this, but the moral order is quite clear, as we already see in the way in which the second epistle to Timothy is connected with the ruin of that the order of which was established by the first.

The Epistle to the Hebrews was written at a relatively late period, in view of the judgment that was going to fall upon Jerusalem: it called the Jews who had become Christians to separate themselves from that which God was about to judge.

The Epistle of James belongs to a time when this separation had in nowise taken place; Jewish Christians are there looked upon as still forming a part of that Israel which was not yet finally rejected, only owning Jesus to be the Lord of glory. Like all the Catholic

Epistles, that of James was written in the last days of the apostolic history, when Christianity had gained a wide entrance into the midst of the tribes of Israel, and judgment was about to close the history of the Jews.

In 1 Peter, we see that the gospel had spread widely amongst the Jews; this Epistle is addressed to the Jewish Christians of the dispersion. The second Epistle, of course, is later, and belongs to the end of the apostle's career, when he was about to put off his tabernacle and be separated from his brethren; he would not leave them without the warnings that apostolic care would soon no longer furnish: hence, like the Epistle of Jude, it contemplates grievous departure from the path of godliness on the part of those who had received the faith, and a mocking of the testimony that the Lord was coming.

In 1 John, the apostle insists on its being "the last time": apostates were already manifested, apostates from the truth of Christianity, denying the Father and the Son, as well as, with Jewish unbelief, denying that Jesus was the Christ.

Jude comes morally before John; in his Epistle, we find false brethren who had furtively crept in amongst the saints, the scene extending itself, however, to the final revolt and judgment. It differs from Peter's second Epistle in viewing the evil, not simply as wickedness, but as departure from first estate.

The Apocalypse completes the picture by shewing Christ judging in the midst of the candlesticks, the first church having left its first love, and being threatened that if it did not repent and return to its original estate, its candlestick would be removed, the final judgment being

found in Thyatira and Laodicea; and then it shews the judgment of the world and the Lord's return, the kingdom and the heavenly city, and the eternal state.

The general character of apostasy and of ruin which is stamped on all the later books of the New Testament, from the Epistle to the Hebrews to the Apocalypse, is very striking. Paul's Epistles, except 2 Timothy, which affords individual guidance in the midst of the ruin, whilst announcing beforehand this state of things, express the labour and the care of the wise master-builder. The interest of their dates is in connection with his history in the Acts; but the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Catholic Epistles, and the Apocalypse, all shew the predicted departure already set in (Peter's first Epistle which least of all bears this character, tells us that the time was come for judgment to begin at the house of God), and consequently the judgment of the professing church, and then, afterwards, prophetically that of the world in revolt against God. This closing character of the Catholic Epistles is very striking and instructive.10 J. N. D.

1 He only partially did so at the outset; but I speak here of the ways of God.

2 This is connected with what is said in 2 Peter 1:20, 21. The circumstances of the moment do not explain the full bearing of the prophetical scriptures; what is said forms part of the great system of God's ways.

3 The only exception was the cursing of the fig-tree, which was the expression of this state of things, at the close of the Lord's course here below.

4 The rejection of the Christ, come as the promised Messiah, and being at the same time God manifested in

flesh—the end of God's ways with His people, and the manifestation of man's hatred of God coincided; and Israel's forfeiture of all right to the promises, and man's condemnation in his natural state, on the ground of responsibility, took place simultaneously.

5 Compare the sentence pronounced upon the woman (Gen. 3:16).

6 This may be seen, historically, in the Apocryphal Books. (See Tobit 1:6-8.)

7 There is a great difference between the David of Chronicles and that of Samuel. The king in 1 Chronicles is the David of grace and blessing according to the counsels of God. The king in Samuel is the historical David exercised in responsibility. In Chronicles we do not find the matter of Uriah nor that of Solomon. It is a question of God's mind: no evil is reported, save that which is necessary to make us understand the history. Even Joab with all his crimes, who is not cited in 2 Samuel 5 and 23, is here mentioned because he took the stronghold of Zion. This shews what value Zion has in the eyes of God, and in what way the Chronicles regard the history. In the Book of Kings, it is the history of Israel and the conduct of the kings under responsibility.

8 I have no doubt that we have, for the spiritual eye, a hidden testimony in their persons. Elijah places again, so to speak, the violated law in Jehovah's hands, in Horeb; then he follows each step of Israel: Gilgal, where they were set apart for God; Bethel, the place of the earthly promise made to Jacob; Jericho, the place of the curse; then the Jordan, or death; and Elijah goes up to heaven. From thence Elisha passed through death again, and enters upon his career of service. But Elijah's

miracles are miracles of judgment; Elisha’s, except the second, are miracles of goodness and grace.

9 From the French Edition, but omitted in the English Editions.

10 [It may be of interest to note, that all that concerns the Old Testament in this Introduction was writted by the author (in French) in October, 1881, namely, as far as page 34. The remainder was compiled for the French Bible which appeared early in 1885, from other writings of his that had already been published, especially from the Introduction to the Synopsis (New Testament), and the Preface to his translation of the New Testament (French).

The above translation of it was carefully compared throughout with the author’s original French MSS., and with the latest editions of the other writings referred to, one note on 1 Chronicles being added from Collected Writings, Vol. 20.]

# Notes On The Epistle To The Galatians

Editor's Note11

## Introduction

The occasion of the Epistle to the Galatians was the evil effect of the activity of certain Christians, who contended for the permanency of the Jewish law, asserting that true faith in Christ was not sufficient for salvation. Thus they taught, that, after having abandoned paganism and idolatry, and after being baptised—thus linking themselves with the Christian assembly—those who believed must be circumcised, and must observe all the precepts of the law of Moses, otherwise they could not be saved. (See Acts 15:1.) To this false and evil teaching was added the rejection of the ministry and the apostleship of Paul, who, said they, had not been sent by Peter and the other apostles. They insisted upon apostolic succession, as is so much done in these days.

Now Paul did not retreat before this attack, an attack, moreover, which he encountered everywhere. But in this case all the Galatians were led away by the evil, and Paul presents the point of the sword to the enemy—for it was indeed the work of the enemy of souls—in order that the truth of the gospel might remain with these poor deceived ones. He insists that it is impossible to combine the law and the gospel, although the latter fully confirms the authority of the former, as given of God. He who is under the law must needs fulfil it, and do all that it requires, but then it follows that Christ is dead in vain.

Moreover, he declared apostolic succession to be a fable, that ministry has not its source in a mission of men, nor by men, but, is, on the contrary, derived immediately from Christ Himself, and from God, by the power and operation of the Holy Ghost. Paul boasts in his independence of Peter and the other apostles, with which they reproached him, as though he lacked something, refusing his apostolic authority, which Paul drew immediately from the Lord. It is thus he begins his epistle.

It is remarkable that Paul was more troubled when considering the state of the Galatians, who were putting themselves under law, than he was as to the Corinthians, who were walking very badly. He would not go to Corinth, but he said all the good he could of them, in order to recall them to a walk becoming Christianity. But here he at once sets himself against the evil into which the Galatians had fallen, without one gracious word (if we except the blessing with which he began all his epistles), without salutations at the close, without one word of affection, which nevertheless filled his heart: all is dry and severe. Was it because the apostle's love had grown cold? On the contrary, it was because he was full of love: he clearly shews it, for he was ready to travail in birth again with them, and he does it. Moses had not been able to bear the burden of the people, and had refused the thought of having begotten them even once.

The Galatians were abandoning the foundations of the Christian faith, with respect, at least, to the means of applying its efficacy to the soul. They had not forsaken the truth as to the Person of Christ, nor the faith which owns Him; but, as regards the justification of the soul, they had totally abandoned the ground of faith. They did

not believe in the sufficiency of the work of Christ, without adding to it the observance of the law of Moses —source of all the corruption that has been introduced into the church, not perhaps, under the same form, and openly, but the same in its governing principle. According to this principle, works are necessary for justification, and blessing is obtained through ordinances.

And the difference is a fundamental one. The one system makes life flow from the operation of the Spirit of God by means of the word, the other from ordinances and works of man. The one presents man as a sinner who needs to be born again, which is effected by the Spirit of God and by the word; it shews that, having been called by the grace of God, the believer finds himself perfectly and for ever justified through the blood of Christ, that is to say, through the work that He has accomplished on the cross, and is accepted in Him before God—a new man, created in Christ unto good works, which manifest the fife he has received. The other system teaches that sinful man is born again in the ordinance of baptism, and is forgiven when as yet he has committed no sins: then he receives grace through various ordinances, is from time to time pardoned afresh through the sacrament of penance for some small venial sins, and also when he receives the host, and finally, goes into purgatory to be punished, so that God may be satisfied by the amount of suffering, according to the sins committed.12 In this system life is obtained by one’s own works, with the help of sacraments. The other teaches that the believer has a perfect justification before God, through the work of Christ, in whom he believes, and partaking of the divine life, and being

sealed by the Holy Ghost, he has peace with God, and he awaits the coming of Christ to take him to be in heaven with Himself, where He has gone to prepare a place for us. The apostle insists upon this truth of justification by faith, and that there is in us a new creation, a new life, asserting that if anything is added to Christ, salvation being sought by one's own obedience, Christ is dead in vain. It is another gospel, which cannot be gospel. But let us attentively examine what he says.

## Chapter 1

He begins, as I have said, with the history of his call to the ministry—the way in which he had been made an apostle. He announces himself at once, and boldly to be an apostle (which they denied), but an apostle not of men, neither by man—not by Peter, nor by any other, whoever it might be, but—which was far better—by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who had raised Him from the dead, the true source of all blessing and all authority. It is always the way of those who do not love the truth to ask by what authority it is proclaimed. The Lord Himself was asked this; so were the apostles, and the same thing is done in these days. Ecclesiastical authority, as such, as established by means of ordinances, is always the enemy of the truth. When its ministers lean upon authority, they are accredited as of God, but they do not allow God Himself to work outside those ordinances which give them their importance.

Paul would own no other source of his ministry but God Himself and the Lord Jesus Christ, who had chosen and also prepared him for this service, who had called him, and had afterwards formally sent him by the Holy Ghost, giving him the proofs of his apostleship in its success, as

also in the miracles which he had performed. Now the faith of believers ought to rest upon the power of the Holy Ghost, which had been manifested in him, and had been efficacious in their own hearts by the power of God. God was free to send His gospel to the Gentiles, causing it to reach them by whatever means seemed good to Him. He chose Paul, proving this by the power of the Holy Ghost. The fruit manifested the tree. This is the only true ministry, though all are not apostles.

Verse 2. Paul linked with himself all the brethren who were with him. In accepting Judaism, the Galatians were placing themselves in opposition to all Christians who had been enlightened by heavenly truth, and who, through grace, enjoyed true Christian liberty. The Jews might indeed seek to subject souls to a system which had been abolished by the death of Christ, in order thereby to maintain their own glory; but the time was passed. It was a question of the freedom of the word of God, that is, of God Himself, who certainly was free to send His gospel, His salvation, wherever He would, and by the means He Himself chose. What is His will He always performs; and the Porter (the Holy Spirit and the providence of God) opens the doors, as was the case with the Lord, the sole Head of all true ministry.

Now miracles are not wrought to prove ministry, even as no miracles were wrought by John the Baptist or the prophets amongst the Jews. The word, and the fruit which it bears, are the evidence of the reality of the ministry: the word by the truth itself, and the fruits by their character and power. There may be opposition and persecution, but that is nothing new; the Lord and the apostles encountered it, in spite of the mightiest miracles. God will accomplish His own purposes, and

His word will not return to Him without prospering in that whereunto He sent it.

The law applies to man in this world: it supposes that man belongs to this world, and it furnishes him with a rule, by which he ought, as a child of fallen Adam, to direct his steps. It is the duty of man, in all the relationships in which he finds himself, both with God and with his neighbour; and to this is added the prohibition of lust, a prohibition which judges not only the outward conduct, but also the inward movements of the heart. A man might possibly keep all the external commandments, and think himself righteous, but the flesh being evil and sinful, he cannot fail to detect lust in his heart. An outwardly righteous walk may produce self-righteousness: but before God who searches hearts, the presence of lust, which is always sinful in His holy eyes, constitutes us sinners, and makes us unfit to enter heaven.

We have not only committed sins, we are sinners; and therefore false Christianity does not allow that lust in the baptised is sin: it has no true remedy for the evil tree, the law does not furnish one. It judges sins: where God is working it can discover sin; but it does not take it away; it cannot justify the soul if it finds sinful acts or sin. It cannot give a new life; that is not the work assigned to it. It is the rule of God, invested with His authority over the children of Adam, as responsible in this world; consequently they are lost, for no child of Adam is without lust, or even without actual sins. Now the law pronounces a curse upon those who have sinned, and it likewise forbids lust; it must needs do so, as the perfect law of God. Grace, on the contrary, Christ, the Son of God, comes to redeem us, and to set us free from

the condition in which, both through Adam's sin and our own sins we are found. Christ gave Himself that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father (v. 4): and if we profess to be Christians, we profess to be dead with Christ, and no longer of the world, which has rejected Him, no longer in the flesh, which was crucified with Him.

Verse 6. But the apostle begins abruptly, as has been said, rebuking the unfaithfulness and inconstancy of the Galatians. They had abandoned the truth of the gospel which they had received from the apostle—that is, grace revealed in Christ— in order to give themselves to another gospel, which in reality was not another, or different one, but was the corruption of the gospel of Christ. Moreover, it was the giving up of the only true gospel, to put themselves under law—they who had been called by grace—for there were some who troubled them, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. There is, and there can be, but one gospel; God has given one gospel alone for the salvation of sinners.

Through His infinite grace, and His grace alone, He gave His only-begotten Son, to become a man and to die for us. The only source of all was His love: no one suggested it to Him, or persuaded Him thus to have compassion upon sinners. None could feel it divinely but God Himself, none but a divine Person could accomplish what was needful. The Father prepared a body for Him, and He, the Son, came to fulfil His will, to save. Thanks be to God, the Son has fulfilled the work that was entrusted to Him, and the Holy Ghost has announced this gospel—that the love of God has been manifested in the gift of His Son, and that He, having finished His

work, sits as Man, at the right hand of God—and with this gospel He leads souls to repentance.

God Himself has not, and cannot, have another gospel. He cannot forget the work of His Son, in which He has found complete satisfaction, in which He has been fully glorified. He cannot set forth another gospel, or add something on man's part, as though the work of Christ were imperfect, and lacked something to complete it. Christ, as Man, sits at God's right hand, because He has accomplished the work of salvation for all believers, having by Himself purged their sins. And when He had sat down on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, the work which saves us was announced to be finished. And then all teaching that requires anything else, that assumes to add something of man to complete it, denies the perfection of the work of Christ—that is to say, denies that He has completed the work of redemption. That the Spirit of God works in the heart to produce in us the sense of our guilt before Him, and our need of the sacrifice of Christ—that we need to be born of God in order to enter into His kingdom, and further, that the Holy Spirit, who dwells in the Christian, brings forth the fruits which suit the new life in which we participate through grace—all that is true; but for the work of redemption, for the putting away of sin, and cleansing us from it, for making us divine righteousness in Christ, God will have nothing else but the death of Christ. God has shewn that He has accepted His death, in that He has raised up Christ from among the dead, and has set Him as Man at His right hand in the glory which He had before the world was. He will not allow man to add anything to that work; whatever it might be,

it would deny, in so far, the sufficiency of the work of Christ.

These heretics do not say that Christ has not finished the work; nor did the false judaizing teachers among the Galatians say it. But they insisted that man must on his part add his works, the law, circumcision. They said God had done His part, and now it remained for man to do his. This is always the way of a man who does not know himself, does not own that in himself he is but a miserable lost sinner who ought to have kept the law, who was responsible to do it, but that he has failed, that his flesh is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

Man feels his responsibility; but instead of saying, alas! I have failed, I am lost and guilty, I cannot satisfy the demands of the law; he seeks to work out a righteousness when it is too late. False teachers who know not the grace of God, or the value of the work of Christ, use the law for self-righteousness. As conscience cannot be pure, satisfied and quiet before God, nor make itself so, men have invented various means which man can accomplish, in order to quiet the conscience without cleansing it. Thus they do the devil's work, hindering conscience from feeling the depth of that sin, to which man has become accustomed, and which reigns in the flesh. This is always done by means of ordinances; 13 these, man can fulfil; but make the flesh holy he cannot. A new life is received from God in Christ, who came that we might live through Him. But man likes to do his own pleasure and will not submit himself in heart to Christ. He feels his responsibility, and in order to quiet his conscience, he accepts these means at the hands of men, who pretend that these human expedients

come from God, and have His authority, while they only seek, as the apostle says, to glory in the flesh of those who listen to them, and for their own advantage, to hold them under their authority.

Zealous and ardent (if you believe them) for the glory of God, and for the authority of His commandments, they take possession of that authority through the rules they impose upon others, wielding it at pleasure over the conscience, and thus over the man himself; as the Lord Jesus said, “they annul the commandments of God by their traditions.” Thus did the Pharisees, who were so strongly condemned by the Lord. Thus also do those who in this day follow not the word of God, who will not allow Christians to be taught by the word, the scriptures, which are addressed to them by God Himself, and which therefore, they are bound to obey; they would not, I say, that others humbly learning by the help of the Spirit of God, which belongs to all believers, should follow the precepts of that word, and enjoy the blessing which is found in the pure faith, there presented to us.

They always place souls under the law, to which they add traditions, which, together with the interpretation of the word of God, they hold in their own hands, and thus they can teach what they like. Let believers remember, that if a master—and God is master over every conscience—had given commandments and directions to his servants, or a father to his children, and another prevents those commandments or directions from reaching the servants or children directly, and as they were given, he would hinder the exercise of the master’s or father’s authority, and moreover would deprive the servants or children of their rights.

Now the whole Scriptures are in fact addressed either to the Jewish people, or (if we except three short epistles) to believers who are now sons of God by faith; and no one has the right to prevent those to whom they are written, from knowing what revelations have been made to them, and what precepts have been addressed to them. He who does so opposes himself to the authority of God, who has made these revelations, and has placed all His own under obligation to obey the precepts contained in them.

God can give gifts for the purpose of helping believers to follow His precepts. Paul was thus helping them in this very epistle; but the true servants of God have never sought to take from His children's hands, His word which He has given them, which is their blessing and their light, and by which He Himself speaks to their souls, shewing that in His infinite grace He has desired to speak to them, and to communicate to them amid the darkness of this world, the knowledge of His love and of His will, to shew them the path in which they may walk in simplicity, in spite of the enemy of their souls, and enjoy—immense happiness! the love of God and the light of His countenance. What unbounded grace, that God should deign in such a world to communicate to us His own thoughts, divine light in the darkness; and how terrible to take away these divine communications, and hide them from the eyes of His own. Alas! man is but too readily disposed to neglect them; yet to take them from souls who desire to have them, is iniquity, it is open opposition to the sovereign grace of God which has given them. Those who seek to rule over souls in God's stead, take from them the revelation He has made to them. They are then free to preach and teach what is not

according to the word of God, and to impose the yoke of the law and traditions, as well as their own authority upon the necks of man.

The forms of this departure from the truth may differ, but the principle is always the same; that is, the law and human traditions, imposed upon souls, and the authority of men. Here among the Galatians, it was openly the Jewish law and circumcision, by which they were held to observe the whole Jewish system, and submit to the authority and tradition of the scribes and Pharisees. In this day, it is still the law and traditions of men and then clerical authority, and that, in place of the direct authority of the word of God.

But it will be said, were there not men appointed of God to teach others? Yes. God has by the Holy Spirit given various gifts; the evangelist, the teacher, and the pastor; these gifts are exercised through the grace of the Holy Spirit, under the authority of the Lord Jesus. The difference between the various gifts of God and the clergy is this. The gifts which are really of God, are exercised by applying the word of God to the conscience, and the word always retains its supreme and absolute authority over the soul. Everything is referred to that authority. The clergy place themselves between the soul and God, as if possessing His authority; the word of God disappears, and does not act directly on the part of God; the soul does not go to God, is not subject immediately to Him, but to man; God’s own light does not shine into it, the conscience does not find itself in the holy presence of God, the heart is not irradiated by the beams of His love. Servile fear takes the place of confidence and joy. God is not a Saviour and a Father for the heart, but a God of judgment, who

exacts the last farthing. The grace of God is unknown, the law is unfulfilled, and the heart full of terror submits to a poor sinner like itself. Man degrades himself, instead of being at once elevated and humbled by the presence of God, and by communion with Him. If he commits sin, his conscience is quieted by a human being, without being cleansed, and at last disgusted with everything, he neglects and entirely abandons religion and the fear of God.

The gospel of grace to every creature under heaven had been committed especially to Paul by the Lord Himself, as was the gospel among the Jews to Peter. Paul maintained this gospel in its purity as being of God Himself. An angel even had no right to alter it; and he pronounces an anathema and curse upon any who might have preached a different gospel. How shall we know what he taught? The answer is simple. Read what he has written, which remark, he addressed to the whole Christian people, even as to those who were forsaking the truth.

The ardent words of the apostle are very remarkable. The Holy Ghost has given us God’s own testimony, that if an angel came to teach what the apostle had not taught, he would be under the malediction of God—he would be anathema. It little mattered who he might be, if he contradicted the testimony of God. Paul well knew that he had received it from God Himself, and he who opposed or falsified it, opposed the authority of God, and the truth which He in His grace made known.

Let Christians take heed to the solemn words of the apostle. We possess them in this Epistle, as well as in others which he wrote. They are the touchstone for all

teaching; and we need to study them in order to know if he who speaks tells us the truth of God. So solemn was this point, so deeply was it felt by the apostle, that he again repeats what he had before said—that whoever should preach any other gospel than that which the Galatians had received from himself, should be anathema. He did not seek to please men in what he announced, or to satisfy man. If he sought to please men, he would not be the servant of Jesus Christ. It was He and He alone whom he ought to seek to please; to abandon the gospel would not be the way to do it.

Verse 11. He begins then by declaring that the gospel which he preached was not after man. He had not received it from man, neither from Peter nor from any other. It was not by man, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. He had not learned it from any man, he held it immediately from the lips of the Lord, when He revealed Himself to him in glory. Among the Christians at Jerusalem, he had been an enemy and a persecutor. Jesus Christ Himself had taught him the gospel, and had revealed the truth to him. He might well hold it firmly, refusing all else that man might add to it, whatever might be their pretext for teaching better than the Lord Himself—whether they sought to add the law to the gospel, or assumed to know a better way of producing holiness, than the means employed by God.

It is not usually the knowledge of what is right that is lacking among men, so much as the power to resist and overcome lust, subduing the flesh and being filled with motives which lead us in the way of God, in which the heart loves to please Him. Christ is all this, as power, as motive, as way, if we follow His steps. From Him we receive the Spirit, who causes us to desire to know His

will, and gives us power to do it. The law gives neither life, nor strength, nor an object to attract us. If we walk by the Holy Spirit we keep the law, and in no other way.

Verse 13. The statement that he had not learned the gospel from man, leads the apostle to relate the history of his life, a history which the Galatians had already heard—but he repeats it afresh, because in that history was found the source of the authority which he possessed from Christ, for announcing the gospel as it had been committed to him by Christ Himself, whose heavenly glory he had seen, and who had sent him to preach it. And he had even been a persecutor, zealous of the law, and had sought to get rid of the name of Christ from the earth! He had been a Pharisee, living according to the straitest sect of his religion, persecuting the church of God with all his strength, and wasting it. Moreover he had excelled many, his equals in his own nation, in the knowledge and observance of Judaism, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of the fathers. He was ruled by the law and traditions.

We see in Saul a zealous and religious man; one too, who was unblameable in his conduct. And now God, who had in fact separated him from his mother's womb, came in, and called him by His grace, revealing His Son in him, that he might preach Him among the Gentiles. The ways of God as to this call for utmost attention. He first prepares a vessel—a man full of energy, courageous, bold, ready to undertake all things, full of zeal for the cause which he espoused, and having moreover, nothing as to his life with which to reproach himself touching the law, with a powerful mind, that could enter into the highest subjects, and yet know how to come down to occupy itself with the smallest details, and to think of

individual circumstances, with a heart full of affection. Taught of God, he could, through grace, understand the greatest and most glorious truths, and at the same time he could fully enter into the relations of a poor fugitive slave with the master from whom he had fled. Naturally independent, he had enough greatness of heart, to submit himself to all who held a position, entitling them to exercise authority, and honouring also each one in his place. It is the mark of greatness of mind to despise none, if not wicked men assuming to exercise authority against that which is good; but even in such, to recognise the authority of God, in the position in which God has set them.

But all these fine qualities were marred and hidden by the activity of a will, which sought only to please itself, and to increase its own glory in upholding the honour of the sect, and the traditions of the fathers, making use of the name of God for this end, and carrying on persecution, even to strange cities: so that the energy that characterised him was but the means of satisfying the malice and passions which sought to destroy the name of Christ.

But God had used Saul's energy and ardent will, to separate him from Jerusalem, where the apostles were, who had been already called by the Lord and sealed by the Holy Ghost. At Jerusalem it would have been difficult for him to be entirely independent of the other apostles; he would have come into the Christian assembly under their authority and directions; it must necessarily have been so. But his energy, under the hand of God, had led him away from a position, which was not in accordance with God's thoughts. He had asked for letters from the

High Priest, to bind and bring prisoners to Jerusalem, all who in strange cities called upon the name of the Lord.

And thus he found himself on the road to Damascus, accompanied by his travelling companions. But the Lord had His eye upon him; and suddenly, as he drew near to the city, there shined round about him a light from heaven. They all fell to the earth; they all saw the sudden light; Saul alone saw the Lord. All heard a sound, but not the voice of Him who spoke to Saul. They were to be witnesses that the heavenly vision had appeared to Saul, but it was for him alone to receive the revelation from the Lord. He was to be an eye witness of the glory of the Lord, and a testifier of the words which He had personally spoken to him. For him, it was a revelation of the Lord and of His will, a direct and personal revelation; he must be able to say, “Have I not seen the Lord? “(i Cor. 9:1). But it was the glorified Lord. He had not known the Lord in His humiliation, he was to begin with the glory.

The other apostles had known the Lord in humiliation, as the earthly Messiah, in His life of grace and patience. They had followed Him to Bethany, had seen Him go up into heaven, they knew that He was set down on the right hand of God, but they saw Him no more after His ascension. Saul appears for the first time, as taking part in the death of Stephen; that moment when the Jews shewed themselves to be enemies of the glorified Christ, as they had already shewn themselves to be the enemies of the humbled Christ; for the testimony that Stephen gave, was that he saw the Son of man in glory at the right hand of God. It was the end of all God’s relations with the children of the first Adam. They had already rejected Christ humbled upon the earth, sin was

complete: but Christ had interceded for the Jews upon the cross; God had heard His prayer, and the Holy Spirit answered by the mouth of Peter (Acts 3), announcing to them the glad tidings, that God had set Christ at His right hand, according to Psalm no, and that if they repented of their sin, He would return. They took Peter and shut his mouth. And finally, when Stephen had plainly declared His heavenly glory, they rose up with fury and stoned him. The Christ in glory was rejected, even as Christ in grace had already been crucified upon the earth.

And here we find Saul, helping on Stephen's death by word and deed. Spurred on by these events, and still breathing out threatenings and slaughter, he asked and received from the high priest, who was prompt to help him in his zeal against Christ, letters for the prosecution of warfare against Him. Thus engaged, the Lord took him up, the apostle of the hatred of the human heart, and of God's chosen people against Him and against His Christ, in order to make him the apostle of His sovereign grace, which in his own person he had experienced, as also of the glory of Christ which he had witnessed.

What grace in God; what a change in the man! It is the same grace towards all who are saved, but Saul was a marvellous testimony to it: a testimony which would make it plain and manifest to all, as says the apostle himself: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern of them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting," 1 Tim. 1:15, 16.

The way in which the Lord prepared the two chief labourers among the Gentiles and the Jews is remarkable. Peter, cursing and swearing, declared that he knew not Christ. Paul sought to destroy His name from the earth. Neither the one nor the other could have opened his mouth, except to declare the sin of man and the sovereign grace of God.

But we shall do well to examine what the revelation made to Saul was. First, as has been said, it was the revelation of the heavenly glory of Christ, the Son of God, who still was man. The twelve had followed the Saviour till the cloud received Him; beyond that, they could not be eye-witnesses. Saul had not seen the Lord, except beyond the cloud: his knowledge of Him began when Christ was in the glory. He was to declare the gospel as he had received it. A Messiah living down here was for the Jews. A Christ who had died and been glorified after having been rejected by man, became the Saviour of the world. He had died for all men, and thus His work was complete. God had owned Him taking Him up to His right hand, into the glory which He had with the Father before the world was. And yet He was the same Jesus, the Nazarene (Acts 22:8), marvellous truth! who had before walked upon the earth among men.

Moreover He said: “I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.” But how? If He were in heaven, Paul could not persecute Him. But He esteemed His own as Himself: they were united to Him, so united by the Holy Ghost, that they were members of His body. He loved them as a man loves and cherishes his own flesh. The Head and the members were but as one person before God. These are the two great principles of Christianity as Paul taught it; a Christ glorified after all had been accomplished, and

Christians united to a glorified Christ, were the germs of all Paul's teaching; Christ, a man beyond death, beyond the sin which He had borne, beyond the power of Satan and the judgment of God against sin, redemption being complete.

Saul having left Jerusalem, bold and full of confidence, is arrested in the way, when on the point of carrying out his purpose. He falls terror-stricken to the earth, at the sight of the Lord. He heard a voice calling him, and discovering that it was the Lord, all is at an end as to his own will; he surrenders himself to the will of the Lord, and is sent by Him into the city, that he may there humbly learn what is that will. In other words, he at that moment submitted himself to Christianity in the ways of Christ's will. But he was blind; that so the inward work might be perfectly accomplished, and the immense change in his soul, might be experienced before God, in its true power, without any hindrance or interruption from man. Also, he neither ate nor drank for three days. But although he was to go into the city in order to learn what he was to do, yet many and great things depended upon the revelation that had been made to him.

First, the glory of the Lord had appeared to him, the Lord Jesus of Nazareth, rejected of men but declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead. Immense truth! A man was in heaven, a man, the Son of God; but He was there because the sacrifice for sin had been accomplished and accepted by God, a sacrifice so perfect, that He who had presented it was set down in His own Person at the right hand of God in His glory, and that, according to the righteousness of God.

Man, at the same time, was shewn to be wholly evil and corrupt, for he had rejected God when He was present in perfect goodness, in the midst of men. Israel had forfeited all their privileges and their right to the promises by rejecting Him in whom all the promises are Yea and Amen; and not only the dispensation of the law had come to its end by the coming of Messiah, the Head of the dispensation that was to follow that of the law, but the title to the promises was lost by His rejection; and thus He being rejected, all God's relations with the people to whom He had given the law were at an end. The Gentiles had never had it; they had never been in relationship with God; they were outside the promises made to Israel, and they had fallen into the most complete darkness. (See Romans 1) There no longer existed any relationship of men with God, if not that of sinners and rebels with their Creator.

But on the other hand, the sovereign grace of God had been manifested to the greatest sinner in the world; to the apostle of rebellion and rejection of the Christ of God, apostle of the enmity of man against God manifest in grace, against Christ exalted in glory. Important moment in the history of man! when redemption being accomplished, and love being free according to righteousness and divine glory, God rose above all the sin and enmity of man to work in sovereignty according to His grace; not only to manifest love—that, He had already done at the coming of Christ down here—but to cause grace to reign through righteousness, unto eternal life through Him: righteousness which had placed Christ, as Man at the right hand of God, because, as Man, He had perfectly glorified God. (John 13:31, 32; ch. 17:4, 5.)

But there was yet more in this revelation of the Lord. We have spoken of the dispensation of grace which was founded upon this revelation. It was needful that the soul of Saul should be in a state suited to the service of God in the dispensation that began by that revelation. And this is what took place. First, all the things in which he had trusted were utterly condemned: judged by God Himself, they no longer had any value. His own heart was all upset: all that he thought to be of God, and which was so until the cross, was set aside. His conscience—for he thought he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus—had deceived him. His confidence in the law as given of God, and by which he had hoped to obtain a righteousness before God—the authority of the heads of the Jewish religion, their fathers—in a word, all these things had but led him to find himself in open enmity against the Lord; there was nothing left upon which his soul could rest. He was the enemy of the Lord Himself, boldly seeking to destroy those whom He loved. Saul was all this in the presence of the Lord!

What a revolution! Saul himself, instead of having an externally pure conscience, found himself to be the chief of sinners, the enemy of the Lord, the apostle of that hatred against God, which had rejected from the world the Lord of glory, the Son of God, and which was still rejecting the testimony rendered by the Spirit after He had been glorified. The old dispensation, the law, the promises made to Israel, had disappeared; and instead of these, the Lord of glory, alive in heaven, is revealed by sovereign grace to him who sought to abolish the memory of His name. Eternal life is communicated to him, eternal salvation through the work of Christ is

presented to his heart, in the glorified Man who had borne his sins, and was now making the work effectual by the operation of the Spirit of God. The Son of God is revealed in him.

This is true conversion, true faith. Sovereign grace reveals the Son of God in us, a glorified Man, and—if we have already understood the truth—a Saviour who has borne all our sins. But it is the revelation of Christ in us. In Saul's case, this revelation was also in order that he might preach Him among the Gentiles.

Thus, he who had been exceedingly mad against Christ and against the Christians, persecuting them even to strange cities, is sent forth with these remarkable words from the Lord Himself. "For I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them that which are sanctified by faith that is in me," Acts 26:16-18.

Thus, Saul was taken from among the Jews (it is the real force of the words), separated from his nation, to belong to Christ; but he did not therefore become a Gentile. The starting-point of his new life was a glorified Christ, for the announcing of that which he had seen, and by the power of grace had received in his heart, besides other revelations which were afterwards made to him: always, however, of a Christ rejected by the world and glorified by God. Knowing by the experience of Christ revealed to

him and in him, that the mind of the flesh was enmity against God, as was also his religion, and his past fife, Christ glorified was thenceforth his all: a Christ who had wrought redemption for him, and who had cleansed him from his sins: a Man in heaven for whom he waited, as the Fulfiller of the glorious hope of His own who were already united to Him, and were esteemed by Him as Himself.

Called by such a revelation of the Person of the Lord and by the words of His mouth, it was not the moment to go and consult others, whoever they might be; but he does not go. His mission was from the Lord Himself, from a Lord who had not been thus revealed to others. He was the Lord, it was the same salvation; but it was a special revelation which stamped its character upon the whole ministry of a servant, who knew Christ Himself no more after the flesh; that is, no more as the Messiah of the Jews upon the earth.

But it was needful that all should be wrought as experience in his soul; he was therefore made blind, in order that he might be separated from every external thing which could distract him, and that he might be entirely occupied with the change that had taken place in him, and that this revelation of the Lord, this total revolution in the state and relations of his own soul, might without interruption be felt, and might work within. It was needful that the condemnation of the law, the sin of having persecuted the Lord of glory in the persons of His people, the glory of His Person, the perfect grace which had called him, should be realities for his soul; that the new man should be formed by this means.

Thus he is left to himself. He does not think of seeking the rest of the apostles at Jerusalem; the Lord Himself had called him to Damascus, and Saul had received his mission from Him. He had not to consult the apostles, for the Lord had taken him for Himself. He was the servant of Christ immediately dependent upon Himself. He goes into Arabia and returns again to Damascus. After three years he goes up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and stays with him fifteen days. He did not see the other apostles. He also visited James, the Lord's brother. He is careful to recount all these details, that the Galatians might understand that his apostolic relation was directly with the Lord Himself, that he owed nothing to the other apostles.

Thus he, who but a little time before, had been a persecutor, advanced in Judaism beyond many his equals in his own nation, is now laid hold of by sovereign grace, in the midst of his greatest activity against the name of the Lord—an apostle sent directly by the Lord to the Gentiles, sent by a glorified Jesus.

But though chosen and called, he must await the positive direction of the Holy Ghost for entering upon the field of his apostolic labours; this was afterwards given at Antioch. It is a most important principle; we need in order to work according to the Lord, not only the call of the Lord, but also the positive direction of the Holy Ghost.

Saul immediately confessed the Lord as a Christian; he did not delay, he waited for nothing: his faithfulness in publicly confessing Him is at once manifested.

This done, he all but disappears until the time when the Holy Spirit sends him as a witness for Christ into the

heathen world. Only those things which shew his perfect independence of the apostles and of men, are here recalled. He gloried, as in an honour, in that with which his enemies and the enemies of the truth reproached him. He did not hold his mission or his authority from any man, nor by means of man, neither of Peter nor of the other apostles, but from Jesus Christ Himself. We shall see that Peter had no share in the mission to the Gentiles.

Paul was not known by face to the churches of Judea; when he afterwards visited Syria and Cilicia, they had heard only, that he who persecuted them in times past, now preached the faith which once he destroyed, and they glorified God in him. This was the truth, as in the presence of the Lord. Later, he was sent to the Gentiles, not from Jerusalem, but from Antioch, by the Holy Spirit, as we read in Acts 13. Neither Peter, nor the apostles, nor the church at Jerusalem, had anything to do with it; it was a wholly independent mission: they knew not even what was being done. He carried on the preaching of the gospel among the Gentiles (always, however, evangelising the Jews where he found any) taking with him various brothers, whom grace had prepared for the work, as we find it stated in Acts. But this is not the place to speak of such details.

## Chapter 2

After fourteen years he went up again to Jerusalem, precisely on account of the Judaising Christians; false brethren, unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out the liberty, which the Gentiles had in Christ Jesus, that they might bring them into bondage. It is probably this to which Acts 15 refers. Barnabas

accompanied him and he also took Titus with him. Paul and Barnabas had greatly withstood these false brethren, who had come down from Jerusalem; But God had not allowed them to succeed, in order no doubt, that it might be Jerusalem and the apostles as linked with the assembly at Jerusalem, who should recognise the liberty of the Gentiles. There would otherwise have been two churches; a church bound by the law at Jerusalem, and a church free from the law at Antioch. Thus, by the wisdom of God, it was Jerusalem itself who declared Christians from among the nations, to be not subject to the law, and thus all remained united.

But we find here other important points relating to the subject treated of by the apostle, important for us also. First, we see that Paul (such had now become his name) went up by revelation. In Acts, nothing is spoken of, but the decision to which the Christians at Antioch had come. We may often accept and follow the advice of others, though if we are keeping near enough to the Lord and learning of Him, our decision may depend upon the communications that are made to us by Him. In this case, it was a direct revelation; but the principle is the same for us. I do the thing because I know the will of God, although I may do that which is the fruit of the counsels of others. Paul went as sent of God, and this inspires confidence, and gives firmness in the path. We feel that we are doing the will of God.

Moreover, Paul speaks of it here, to shew that he went up only because it was the will of God, not because it depended upon the authority of those at Jerusalem. As however, the gospel itself was in question, he was content to communicate to the others what he himself had preached; but privately to those who were pillars,

lest in any way he should have run in vain. But neither was Titus who was with him, being a Greek, compelled to be circumcised: he would not yield to them, not even for a single moment, as though he were subject to them, whether at Antioch or Jerusalem, in order that the truth of the gospel might continue with the Gentiles.

Besides he had received nothing from those who seemed to be pillars in the assembly at Jerusalem: “whatsoever they were,” says Paul, “it maketh no matter to me; God accepteth no man’s person.” And again, those who were in the greatest esteem among them, had added nothing to him. For him, God was all; Christ had sent him, he had learned the truth by revelation; all the rest, for him, were but men—beloved brethren indeed, each one of whom he owned in his special place, but he drew his authority from Christ alone: independent of all men in order to obey Jesus, yet necessarily through love to Him, at the service of all men. But we find yet more.

These brethren of Jerusalem, pillars of the assembly, James, Peter, and John, saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision, that is of the Gentiles, had been committed to Paul, as the gospel of the circumcision, that is of the Jews, was to Peter. For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in Paul toward the Gentiles; they gave therefore to Paul and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that they should go to the heathen, while they themselves went to the circumcision. We find here facts and principles of the highest importance.

He puts James first among the pillars, as we see in Acts 15. He held the first place at Jerusalem; when he speaks

of gifts and the apostleship he only names Peter. Apostleship in the work of the gospel depended upon the gift of God. Now as God had wrought among the Gentiles by means of Paul and Barnabas, He had likewise wrought among the Jews by means of Peter. He had wrought powerfully in the one toward the Jew, and in both, though chiefly in Paul, toward the Gentiles; and owning the grace of God in the work, they agreed that each should labour according to their gifts, in the spheres entrusted to them of God. Paul thus became the apostle to the Gentiles, to whom Christ had sent him: Peter, to the Jews only, among whom God had blessed him. Peter had however, begun the work with the twelve, and God had used him at the first, to open the door to the Gentiles; but he did not continue to labour among them, and renouncing the commission given to him in Matthew 28, he left the apostleship of the Gentiles wholly to Paul and Barnabas, who had been sent to that work, and blessed in it by the Lord.

This latter—Barnabas—soon disappeared; he was too much linked with Mark, his kinsman according to the flesh, and Paul remained as apostle of the Gentiles throughout the whole world, and of the assembly of God which united both Jews and Gentiles in one—a subject of which he alone spoke—the assembly composed of true Christians, united to Christ by the Holy Spirit, the body of Christ, in which there is neither Jew nor Greek; for the two have become one assembly, one body, united to Christ the head of the body, and members one of another. Such is the apostle to the Gentiles: with them Peter had nothing to do.

It is evident that these facts are of great importance in the history of the church of God. How often have we not

heard Peter spoken of as head of the church. That Peter, ardent and full of zeal, began the work at Jerusalem, the Lord working mightily by his means, is certain; we see it plainly in Scripture. But he had nothing to do with the work carried on among the Gentiles. That work was done by Paul, who was sent by the Lord Himself, and Paul entirely rejected the authority of Peter. For him, Peter was but a man; and hej sent by Christ, was independent of men. The church among the Gentiles, is the fruit of Paul's, not of Peter's work: it owed its origin to Paul and to his labours, and in no way to Peter, whom Paul had to resist with all his strength, in order to keep the assemblies among the Gentiles free from the influence of that Spirit which ruled Christians, who were the fruit of Peter's work. God maintained unity by His grace; had He not kept the church, it would have been divided into two parts, even in the days of the apostles themselves.

It is marvellous that so many should hold as head of the church among the Gentiles, Peter, who was the apostle of the circumcision, and who openly left the work amongst the heathen to Paul—who had already laboured in it independently for more than fourteen years, sent and blessed by the Lord and by the Holy Ghost, without any reference to Peter, and who had, moreover, expressly rejected Peter's authority, which the false brethren sought to impose upon the Gentile churches. Peter, though greatly blessed by the Lord, is the apostle of the circumcision and of the circumcision only: Paul, of the uncircumcision, that is, of the Gentiles. Paul alone among the apostles, speaks of the church, the body of Christ: this truth was confided only to him as its administrator.

Verse 11. Paul recalls another case: one in which he had been compelled to reprove and withstand Peter, who had come to Antioch, where the church had been founded among the Gentiles, though there were Jews among them also. Poor Peter! he shewed himself at the beginning, quite ready to eat with the Gentiles, he was free from the prejudices of his countrymen: but alas! when certain came down from Jerusalem, from James, who was the leader of the work and of the assembly in the civil and religious capital of the Jews, where the law was still observed by the Christians—then Peter, full of ardour but sensitive to the opinion of others, and timid in the presence of reproach, withdraws, and no longer eats with the Gentiles.

This was to destroy the divine work, which had already been wrought at Jerusalem—an evident act of unfaithfulness. The more a man is honoured—and in this case, there was true ground for respect—the greater the stumbling-block to others, if he fail, and thus it happened here. All the, Jews and even Barnabas also, dissembled with Peter, and no longer dared to walk with the Gentiles. The unity of the Spirit was lost, as also the truth of the gospel. Paul could not let this pass; and when he saw that Peter walked not uprightly, he reproved him before all. Authority cannot make evil good nor good evil. We see moreover, that Peter had not the very smallest authority over Paul; and this is why the latter recalls the fact. Peter deserved to be rebuked, and Paul rebuked him in the presence of all, saying: “If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of the Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?”

This leads us away from the history and from the question of owning Peter's authority, to that of the truth of the gospel, which he was imperilling. Not only did Peter shew a false and deceitful spirit—boasting of his liberty one moment, and the next, concealing what his previous walk had been—but he was establishing error; and there was danger; for inasmuch as in him lay, and as far as it depended upon his authority he was destroying the truth of the gospel: "we" continues Paul, "who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ therefore the minister of sin? God forbid. For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor."

Paul begins here to treat of doctrine, not merely of Peter's authority, leaving aside the question of the work committed to him among the circumcision. He reasons thus. Peter, being a Jew like the rest, was building again the system of the law, when he refused to eat with the Gentiles; he was seeking to be justified by works and by the exact observance of legal ordinances. But he had abandoned this means of justification, in order to believe on Christ, that he might be justified by the faith of Christ; and in building again the system of the law, he made himself a transgressor in having left it. But it was Christ who had led him to do it. Christ then was the minister of sin! this could not be. If he built again the things he had destroyed, he became a sinner in having

destroyed them—and Christ had led him to do it! The apostle then gives an admirable compendium of individual truth, in respect of his Christian position.

The law requires righteousness in man: it could not do otherwise, for it was the perfect rule of such righteousness. But neither Paul nor any other had fulfilled it; therefore it pronounced the sentence of death and condemnation, not death only, but also condemnation. He now sets forth how this sentence had been carried into effect, how he had escaped the condemnation and had died to sin: yet he was not dead; Christ had taken the condemnation upon Himself: thus his death was but the death of the old man, and this was an immense gain. The law had slain him, but Christ had died in his stead: once dead, the law could do no more, it had dominion over a man as long as he lived. If a criminal dies in the hands of the officers of justice, or in his prison, the law cannot punish or take action against a dead man: all behind him is closed, he lives no longer in the life he had previously possessed.

In Christ, all this is accomplished for us, but there is yet more. He took the condemnation and passed through death: we are associated with Him, and thus dead to sin without there being any condemnation for us; moreover, He is become our life.

Thus we are dead to the law that we might live to God. I, said Paul, have been crucified with Christ, who has taken the curse of the law; nevertheless, I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. This is death, both to the flesh and to the law. Thus, there is no condemnation for me, since Christ has taken it, inasmuch as He charged Himself with my sins, and bore them upon the cross,

abolishing them by His death. Sin in my flesh is condemned, and in the cross of Christ I was crucified with Him. (Compare Rom. 8:1-3.) Thus, are we set free, not only from the guilt of our sins, but from the power of sin in the flesh, the old man is for the believer, crucified with Christ (Rom. 6:6), that the body of sin might be destroyed. Having been redeemed, we are not subjected afresh to the law, to which we have died as if our salvation were still uncertain; for the flesh is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be; but through faith, we hold ourselves to be dead, crucified with Christ, who risen from among the dead, has really become our life. Christ lives in us, and we can thus reckon ourselves to be dead to sin (Rom. 6:10, n), and alive unto God in Jesus Christ our Lord.

We are no longer debtors to the flesh, which for faith is dead: but since Christ who has died is our life, we, living by this life, reckon ourselves dead; for Christ who is our life has died, and the power of the Spirit which acts in this new life, sets us free from the law of sin and death (Rom. 8:2). Thus, Christ being in us, the body is dead; for if it lives of its own proper life, it only brings forth sin; and the Spirit is life, the source of practical righteousness in us. Thus the wisdom of God, instead of placing the flesh under the law, to which it was not and could not be subject, gives in sovereign grace a new life in the risen Christ, who died for us. There is therefore no more condemnation to them that believe, and we reckon ourselves to be dead, since Christ who is our life has died. We are by the law dead to the law, crucified with Christ, nevertheless we live, yet not we, but Christ liveth in us. The bond of the law is broken; not that its authority is despised, but that I am dead; it can no

longer touch me, for I am dead. Nevertheless I live, yet not I, but it is Christ who lives in me, a life which is holy, just, and good.

But another truth is found in this passage. It is not merely a holy life (being that of Christ Himself), but this life has its object, its manner of living. All life in the creature has an object, we cannot walk without one. If the Lord Jesus is our life, He is also personally the object of the life, and we live by faith in Him. The heart sees Him, looks to Him, feeds upon Him, is assured of His love, for He gave Himself for us. The life that we live in the flesh, we live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us and gave Himself for us. Happy certainty, blessed assurance! This is not a subject of hope: the glory, though it belongs to us, is a hope; but in this we know the love in which He has given His life for us. It is a new life, the old man is crucified, and Christ whose perfect love we know, is the object of faith and of the heart. One cannot give more than oneself.

The conclusion drawn by Paul is of the utmost importance. “We do not frustrate the grace of God, for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.” Let us suppose that a righteous man could knock at the door of heaven, and claim to enter by right on the ground of his own works. Such an one would never know God; love would not have introduced him there, and God is Love. It would have been the wages of his own work, he would have deserved to enter. But it is not love when a workman is paid the wages he has earned; it may be done with courtesy, but it is always a debt—there can be no love in it. It is love that has saved me. It is the operation of love in God’s gift of His Son, and in the blessed Saviour’s own sufferings for us, when He drank

the cup which the Father gave to Him, the cup of death and of the curse which our sins had filled. By this we understand through grace the love of God.

But if righteousness can be obtained by observing the law, the death which Christ in His infinite grace suffered for us, is not needed: I am righteous by my own deeds: I frustrate the grace of God. “If righteousness is by the law, Christ is dead in vain “; a principle of the utmost importance. Legal righteousness (that is righteousness by works) and Christianity cannot go together, the one annuls the other. It is not that the law is bad or imperfect: it is the perfect rule of human righteousness, the righteousness which becomes the children of Adam; but no righteousness is found in them, they are sinners. There is none righteous, no, not one. The law being perfect condemns us, but we have died in Christ who bare our sins in His own body on the tree, and the law can no longer slay or condemn us. The Saviour has borne all for us who through grace believe on Him. Moreover He has given us, or rather He is in us, a new life, which is holy and obedient.

Thus, we are dead to the law, that we might live to God; righteousness is obtained, for we have become the righteousness of God in Christ, sins are put away by His death. But if I had obtained righteousness by keeping the law, there would have been no need that the Son of God should die for me. If Christ has put away my sins and become my righteousness before God, I am not justified by works of law but by faith in Him. If my righteousness is by works of law He is dead in vain.

## Chapter 3.

The apostle now looks at the position of the Christian, from another point of view. True Christians are possessors of the Holy Ghost; their bodies are the temples of the Spirit which they have received of God (1 Cor. 6:19). “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his,” Rom. 8:9. By the Spirit we cry, Abba Father (Rom. 8; Gal. 4:6). It is by the Comforter that we are in Christ and Christ in us (John 14:20). The apostle therefore asks, How did you receive the Holy Ghost? Was it by the works of the law or by faith in Christ? It was not questioned that they had received Him nor how they had received Him. The Galatians had never been under law, they were heathen. It was not by the works of law they had received the Holy Ghost. Moreover, some among them possessed His gifts, a fact which rendered the presence of the Spirit not more important, since He is the seal and proof of our salvation, and of our life in Christ (by whom ye are sealed until the day of redemption), but more evident. “Who then,” says Paul, “has bewitched you, O foolish Galatians, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ has been evidently set forth crucified among you? This only would I learn of you; Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? “They well knew it was not by law, but by faith, and all now who have received the Holy Ghost know well that it is by Jesus Christ they have received Him. Christians in this day believe so little in the presence of the Holy Ghost, that there is less force for them in this argument of the apostle; but to the Galatians it was conclusive. They had received Him by faith.

It was not in that day only that Judaisers sought to introduce the law, and to subject to it Christians who from the outset had received the Holy Spirit. Therefore the apostle says, “Are ye so foolish, having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect in the flesh? “For the law applies to man in the flesh, and puts him to the proof, so as to manifest whether, as a man alive in the flesh, he can obtain righteousness by keeping the law. What folly! having received the Spirit, the seal of divine righteousness, to desire to seek righteousness by carnal means, by human faithfulness to the requirements of the law, which addresses itself to man in the flesh, but to which the flesh is not subject, neither indeed can be! Amongst the Galatians were persons who wrought miracles by the Spirit, so that His presence as a seal, on God’s part, was very evident. In the present day many believers are inquiring whether God’s Spirit dwells in them. We will say a few words on this point.

If a man, convinced of sin, and believing in the Lord Jesus as the alone and perfect Saviour, who has finished the work committed to Him by the Father, can, from the bottom of his heart, say, “Abba, Father,” such an one possesses the Holy Ghost (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6). Not only does he see the truth in the word, and accept it, but in the presence of God he enjoys liberty, and possesses the consciousness of His relationship with God. He will have much to learn, much, perhaps, to correct, much to forget, much to alter in his spiritual condition, but he possesses the consciousness of his relationship with God. This is not simply conversion; a sinner, as a sinner, cannot be sealed. God cannot put His seal upon sin; but when a man has been cleansed by the blood of Christ, then the Holy Spirit comes and dwells in him.

We see the difference in the case of the prodigal son. He had come to himself, had owned his sin, and that he was ready to perish. He arose, and set off to return to his father. He was acting aright; he was truly converted; but as yet he had not on the best robe, nor the ring on his hand, nor shoes on his feet; as yet he had not met his father; he knew well that kindness and happiness were to be found in his father's house, but he knew not if he might enter there, he knew not if he would be received. He had not the sense of being a son, though he was such: he says, "I am no more worthy to be called thy son." This is not the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, "Abba, Father."

How many sincere and truly converted souls are in this state! They are not sealed. I do not say one must be able to explain how one cries, Abba; nor to explain the doctrine of the presence of the Holy Ghost—acquaintance with the word is needed for this. But we must have the Spirit to be able in truth to cry, Abba. There are many souls who, from bad teaching, fear to say they are children of God; but when in the presence of God, they unhesitatingly, and from the bottom of their hearts, cry, Abba. In such a case, the lack of liberty and of power to say, "I am a child of God," is the result of bad teaching; but if the soul has been sealed, when it finds itself in God's presence speaking to Him, it well knows that He is its Father, it has the sense of relationship with Him. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is," says the apostle, "there is liberty"—liberty in the presence of God, and also from the law and the power of sin.

We can now look for a moment at that which the Holy Spirit gives when He dwells in us. First, He is not a

spirit of bondage, but of adoption: we know that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. Marvellous and ineffable privileges! though to be thus in relationship with God and with Christ is still more than the inheritance, which is but the consequence of that relationship.

Moreover, the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given to us. A simple expression, but how precious! We dwell in love, the love of God, for God, who is love, dwells in us. The proof of the love is that God gave His only-begotten Son for us, and that He died, gave up His life for us. But we enjoy this love through the presence of the Holy Ghost; by that presence the love is shed abroad in our hearts.

The apostle John speaks thus: “No man hath seen God at any time: if we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in God, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.” And to shew that this belongs, without question, to all Christians, he says, “Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God,” 1 John 4:12-15.

It is difficult for one who does not walk with God to believe that we can dwell in God, and God in us. But it is clearly said, “If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” He dwells in us, and the soul that walks in communion with God enjoys this, rejoicing in it with humility and gratitude.

The presence of God never makes us proud. He is too great for us to be anything before Him. It was not when Paul was in the third heaven that he was in danger of being exalted above measure, but when he came down

again. Moreover, the Holy Spirit gives us to know that we are in Christ, and Christ in us (John 14:20). There is no condemnation for them that are in Christ Jesus. Not only are our sins forgiven, but we are made acceptable to God in Him who is the Beloved, accepted in Christ, according to the preciousness of Christ Himself, who is our righteousness, and loved as He is loved.

Here, again, we see the believer's perfect acceptance, as also his responsibility. Before God I am perfectly accepted in Christ. But if I am in Christ, Christ is in me as life and power, and I am responsible to manifest this life before the world. Christ is for us before God, and we are for Christ before the world.

We know, then, by the Holy Spirit that we are in Christ, and Christ in us. What a magnificent fact, that the Spirit of God dwells in us! the effect of the perfect redemption accomplished by Christ. But what a responsibility likewise for the Christian! God did not dwell with Adam innocent, even in the garden of Eden. He did not dwell with Abraham; but as soon as even the external redemption of Israel was accomplished, He came to dwell in the midst of His people, and sat between the cherubim, as on His throne. And now that true and eternal redemption is accomplished, He comes to dwell in believers individually, and in His people, gathered by the Holy Ghost. His presence is more than conversion. The converts washed in the blood of Jesus become the habitation of God, sealed thus for glory by means of the gift of the Holy Ghost.

The apostle insists upon the folly of these poor Galatians; they had suffered much on account of the

gospel, and if the gospel were insufficient and vain without circumcision, they had suffered in vain.

He then takes up the case of Abraham, whom the Jews so highly esteemed. He had believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness. Thus at the present time it is those who are of faith who are the true sons of Abraham, not those who are sons according to the flesh. “And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.”

Mark here the authority and importance of the word of God. It foresaw what God would do; it is that which comes forth out of the mouth of God, so that it is looked at as God speaking anticipatively. The apostle speaks of Scripture as of that which possessed the thoughts of God, since, in fact, inspired by the Holy Ghost, it communicates these thoughts to us. Know, then, says the apostle, how that the patriarch, Abraham, the father of the faithful and the depositary of the promises, received all by faith: thus those who are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. Those, on the other hand, who are of the works of the law, are under the curse. The law is good and holy, but it does not give a new nature, it does not give life, nor the strength needed to do what it requires. He who seeks blessing by the law is like the man who lay in the porch of the pool of Bethesda; his sickness had deprived him of the strength needed for his cure.

The law exacts; it requires man to keep it, it must have obedience: but it neither gives a nature that desires to keep it, nor strength to do it. It exacts, and that is all. Man ought to love God with all his heart: he has not

done it—he does it not. He ought to love his neighbour as himself: he does not do it—he is more grieved if he loses his own fortune than if his neighbour loses his. He ought not to lust, but lust is there. Therefore the law pronounces a curse upon the man who is under its power, because he has not kept it. It knows not how to forgive.

The apostle alludes to a remarkable fact, which is found in Deuteronomy 27:26. The tribes of Israel were commanded to stand, six upon mount Gerizim, and six upon mount Ebal, these to curse and those to bless. But when it comes to speak of those that were to bless, we find no blessings. In chapter 27:12, we get the six to bless, but no blessing: then in verse 13 the six to curse, and then follows: “The Levites shall speak and say unto all the men of Israel with a loud voice: Cursed be he,” etc.: and then at the end, the words quoted by the apostle. In the following chapters, we get God’s ways with Israel in the land of Canaan, but under the solemn declarations of the consequences of being put under the law; and no blessing is found there. Thus, those who are of the law are under the curse.

The prophets likewise taught that life is through faith, that the law does not justify saying: “The just shall live by faith.” Now the law is not of faith, but of works; moreover, the man himself must do them, for the law requires that he should work out his own righteousness: it says, “the man that doeth these things shall live in them.” Does it then follow that the authority of the law must be despised, since those who have been under it, have not kept it, or that all must be condemned? Not so. Christ has redeemed us (we who believe on Him) from the curse of the law, being made in His infinite grace,

His immense love, a curse for us, as it is written: “Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree; that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”

We find then here, the ways of God for blessing the nations. The Jews were under the law, as in fact all are, who have not been delivered by Jesus Christ, known by the Holy Ghost. If we were not wholly corrupt and without conscience, we yet were as to the state of our souls before God, under the curse. Now if the Christian adopts this principle, he puts himself under the curse; that is why the apostle is so earnest about the question. Christ gave Himself upon the cross, to take this curse upon Himself, and thus it does not fall upon us. He has also borne the sins of those who believe on Him. Thus the blessing comes to the nations, to whoever believes on Him, whether they be Jews or Gentiles.

But this is not all. We find in the Old Testament the promise of the Holy Spirit, a promise renewed still more clearly in the words of the Lord Himself. It was written that the Spirit should be poured out upon all flesh, that is, the Gentiles should have their part in it. This was Peter’s authority for receiving Cornelius among the Christians. The believing Gentiles were sealed as much as were the Jews. God had put His seal upon them as His children, and they were united in one body with the Jews and with Christ Himself. The blessing of the Gentiles was the same as the blessing of the Jews. The Jews had not received the Spirit under the law, when the Gentiles were excluded; and now that all were manifested together as sinners, grace which had cleansed both the one and the other, admitted one and the other to the

same privileges. Thus the promise already made to Abraham and to the nations in him was fulfilled in the gift of the Spirit, given through Christ, to those who believe from among the Gentiles.

He now insists upon this promise, upon the circumstances under which it was made, and the way in which the Gentiles enjoyed it. The starting-point of his argument is, that the nations were to be blessed in Abraham, according to the promise of God. It was by faith, that Abraham had received the promises, and the Gentiles were upon the same ground— that of receiving all through faith. Afterwards, the law was given to the seed of Abraham according to the flesh, but it was only a curse to the soul, for the flesh is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. Moreover, the just shall live by faith, and the law is not of faith, it requires works. But those who were under the law were redeemed from its curse by the death of Christ. The believing Jews were therefore freed from it; and the blessing they received through faith in Christ, extended to the Gentiles who had faith in Christ, but certainly did not place them under the curse from which Israel was delivered through this same faith. The Holy Spirit already promised, became the heritage of the one and the other: a magnificent testimony to the. acceptance of the Gentiles! The history of the promise to Abraham shewed the same truth. But a sure and simple principle is first stated.

Verse 15. If a covenant is not only made but confirmed, it cannot be disannulled, nor can anything be added to it. The promises were made to Abraham and were afterwards confirmed, as we shall see, to his seed. Now the law which was four hundred and thirty years after,

cannot disannul the covenant that God had before confirmed, that it should make the promise of none effect. The promise remained always sure, and nothing could be added to or taken from it.

The character and details of the promise are also important. It was made to Abraham and confirmed to his seed. But in the “seed” one only is spoken of, not a numerous progeny: and this is most exact. We find many promises made to Abraham, when it was said that his seed should be as the stars of heaven, and as the sand by the sea shore. But there was one promise made to Abraham alone, without mention of his seed. In Genesis 12 it is said that all nations should be blessed in him: and in chapter 22 this promise is confirmed to his seed, and that when he had offered Isaac upon the altar, and had received him again as risen from the dead (see Heb. 11:19)—a remarkable type of Christ in whom it was fully and literally accomplished. In chapters 15-17, we find the promise of a numerous posterity, which promise was fulfilled in the nation of Israel. But in chapter 22 we get the two promises distinctly stated.

We have then here the promise, the true seed, one single person, the confirmation of the promise to that one seed, and the blessing promised to the Gentiles with it. It is no question here of a numerous posterity, but of one single Person, and that Person is Christ. Isaac was but a type. The law, says the apostle, which came in four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul or add anything to the promise which had been so solemnly confirmed after the sacrifice of Isaac upon the altar (Gen. 22). If the inheritance is of the law, it is no more of promise, but God gave it to Abraham by promise.

Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added on account of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; that is, till Messiah, Christ should come. God never intended to save through the law, but through Christ His Son, by His death for us upon the cross, where He bare the sins of all who are saved: those sins can be imputed to them no more. Christ is the Judge of the living and the dead, but when believers appear before His tribunal, they will find there the One who has already put away their sins by His death. The law came in between the promise and the fulfilment of the promise: it was neither of faith nor of promise, nor was it the fulfilment of the promise by the coming of the Son of God.

The law required obedience from man, producing human righteousness if obedience were accomplished. But flesh was not subject to the law, neither could it be; so then those who are in the flesh cannot please God. Why then did God give the law? In order that man might, through transgressions, learn his real condition. God could do nothing to produce sins; man was committing them already; but sins became transgressions through the law, in order, as Paul says in the Epistle to the Romans, that by the commandment sin might become exceeding sinful.

The law worked in two ways. In the first place the sins which man committed became exceedingly sinful, because they not only practised what was evil, but they did so after God had plainly forbidden it. In the second place, sin in the flesh, lust, the condition of man after the flesh was detected. The flesh loved sin; and even a converted man who sought to conquer it, was overcome and made captive by the power of sin which ruled in the

flesh. By the law is the knowledge of sin, that is, sin in the flesh, and through the law, sins became exceeding sinful. If my child is accustomed to be idle and run about the streets, it is a bad habit, but if I forbid him to go out, and he does it again, it is a positive transgression and much worse than a bad habit. It was for this, to instruct us, to teach us what we are, that the law was given. The law is holy, just, and good; it presents to man his duty as a child of Adam before God, but it was given to man when he was already a sinner not surely to produce sin, but to change sin into offences. The apostle speaks still more positively to the Romans: “The law entered that the offence might abound,” v. 20. Moreover, it disclosed to man his evil nature: but I will not here say more. It is enough if the nature and working of the law are understood.

Verse 20. The law, says the apostle, was ordained by angels in the hand of a Mediator. We here find a new and important principle. It is plain that a mediator is not a mediator of one; but God is one. There was then another party between whom and God the Mediator fulfilled His mediatorship; in fact, there was Israel, that is, man. The enjoyment of the results of the covenant, depended on the faithfulness of both parties; for since God had upon Mount Sinai promised blessing on His part, if Israel were faithful to His will, so Israel was bound to be obedient, in order to enjoy the privileges granted under the law. That which had been promised unconditionally to Abraham, was accepted at Sinai under condition of the people’s obedience. “Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people,” Exod. 19:5.

Moses (the mediator) therefore came and proposed to them all these words, and all the people answered together: “all that the Lord hath spoken we will do,” and Moses brought back to the Lord the words of the people. Thus the covenant was made. Then they made a molten calf before Moses had come down from the mount. The covenant was broken in its primary obligation, “thou shalt have none other gods before me,” and Moses broke the tables at the foot of the mount, and they never came into the camp. Mercy spared them, but the covenant had been broken, and a new one had to be afterwards established. It had no more stability than the faithfulness of man in the flesh. The fulfilment of God’s unconditional promise to Abraham, depended only on the faithfulness of the God who had made it; it could not therefore fail.

And remark here, that it is not a question of Christ the Mediator to bear our sins and save us, but of the promised seed. With that a mediator had nothing to do. It was simply a promise that the seed should come, and it came. The law intervened between the promise and its fulfilment to put man to the proof, in order that the weakness and iniquity of the flesh might be manifested. It was not against the promises of God, but it shewed that man could not secure the accomplishment of those promises by his own faithfulness and his own works. For if the law could have given life, the new life given by the law would naturally keep its commandments; this would have been human and legal righteousness, and although human yet pleasing to God. But sinful flesh was detected, not righteousness accomplished. If they had kept the law, under which they had placed themselves at Sinai in order that they might enjoy the promises, they

would have enjoyed that which was promised: but they did not keep it. All—Jews as well as Gentiles, those who had the privileges as well as those who had them not—were concluded under sin, so that the promise made to Abraham might be fulfilled to all believers through faith in Jesus Christ.

Now before faith came, that is, before the system founded upon faith in Christ had come, the Jews were kept under the law, shut up to the faith that should afterwards be revealed. Therefore the law was their schoolmaster unto Christ, that they might be justified by faith. It was in fact, the goodness of God, which when all the earth had fallen into idolatry, kept one nation, which unfaithful as it may have been, yet preserved the knowledge of the only true God. The law was not, it is true, the means of justifying them, for they did not keep it; but they were shut up under obligation to keep it, and prided themselves in the promises.

The unity of God, and the fact of the promises made by Him of the seed to come, remained in their integrity among men. But once faith—that is, Christ and the system of faith— had come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. What was only for the time of expectation lost the whole ground of its existence when the object of expectation had come. It had been useful for preserving them until the appointed time; but once that which was waited for had come, to preserve the schoolmaster had no longer any motive—it belonged to the time of waiting. This would, in reality, have denied His coming and His work. Those who had not kept the law, when they were bound to do it, desired, from pride, to keep it, when every motive for having it was entirely passed. Such is man!

Verse 26. The apostle no longer speaks of us, that is, of the Jews. They had been kept under die schoolmaster, but he now addresses his words to the Christian Jews and Gentiles together. “Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.” He no longer speaks of Jews or Greeks, or slaves or free men: being baptised unto Christ, they had put on Christ, they had assumed the name, the profession, of Christ; every other name was lost in this. They were Christians, united together under this name. The resurrection had for all put an end before God to man in the flesh: they were all one in Christ Jesus.

The place of external profession is here spoken of, what a Christian was as such, not whether he was a true Christian or not. We shall see that Paul was a little doubtful as to this; nevertheless, in looking to Christ through grace, he was able to reassure himself.

In the Christian system, faith, as it is here called, does not refer to a name, nor to a party of any kind, but to Christ alone. They were Christians, and nothing else. Now, if they were of Christ, the only true Seed of Abraham according to the promise, through whom the nations were to be blessed, they were of the seed of Abraham, and heirs according to the promise.

All this contains important principles. Partakers of the promise in Christ, they could not be under the law. To put oneself under it, denied Christianity; Christ was dead in vain. We cannot be of any class, nor bear any other name, than that of Christ Himself.

## Chapter 4

The apostle now goes on to speak of the consequences of the truth, that we are children of God by faith in Christ Jesus— a truth which had been stated as a principle in chapter 3:26, and which is here developed in its effects. He draws the contrast between the heirs under the law and the heirs through faith in Christ, who had come, and was risen from the dead. Under the law they were as a child who does not understand the father's thoughts, nor does he even know them: he is as a slave, to whom it is said, Go or come; do this or that. Although by-and-by he will be lord of all, yet he is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. Thus believing Jews had indeed a part in the promises, yet, being under the law, they were as children under a schoolmaster. But this introduces a very important principle.

The institutions of the law were adapted to man in the flesh. A magnificent temple, beautiful vestments, a God present to the senses upon earth, though man was not permitted to draw near to Him; trumpets, visible sacrifices—all these things were ordained that man in the flesh might be in relationship with God, according to the elements of the world, which are suited to man in the flesh. Christians are a heavenly people; they see not the objects they adore, except by faith. God is worshipped in spirit and in truth, not with bulls and goats. The Spirit reveals to them that which they see not; they know that Christ is ascended into heaven, having finished the work which the Father gave Him to do; and the heart rises up into the heavenly temple, by the grace of the Holy Ghost come down from heaven, there to adore God. Thus the heirs themselves were as

children, bound to accomplish an external worship, to offer beasts. The cleansing was an external purifying of the body by water; the sacrifices—types for the time then present—could not purify the conscience from sin; they were not offerings of praise, and thanksgiving, and adoration, founded upon the accomplished sacrifice of Christ. It was all “the elements of the world,” which were adapted to man in this world.

Every religion accomplished in external ceremonies, and composed of such things, is but “the elements of the world,” and resembles heathen worship. The favour of God is sought by means which an unconverted man can use, quite as well as, or even better than, one that is converted; for his conscience does not make him feel that these things cannot cleanse the soul. Those who seek to obtain righteousness by works are greatly irritated against those who have peace with God through faith, for this declares all their labour to be in vain. There was but one city where the Gentiles persecuted Paul in which the Jews did not stir them up to do it. They boasted in what man could do, and maintained their own glory; they were not willing to see it trampled under foot. But faith gives the glory of salvation to God, and seeks in a new life, the spring of which is love, to glorify Him by obedience and the fulfilment of His will.

The law was then a schoolmaster until Christ, the promised Seed. In its forms and in its ceremonies, it resembled the religion of the Gentiles. God, while ever maintaining the perfect rule for the conduct of man and the unity of the Godhead, yet condescended to adapt Himself, in the worship He ordained, to the ways of the spirit of man, coming near to him, in order to make

manifest whether it were possible for man in the flesh to walk with God. Man has not kept God's rule, but he has clung to the ceremonies, in order to make out by them a righteousness of his own—a way that is morally easy, since he can pursue it without governing his passions, but which becomes, if conscience is aroused, an insupportable yoke. Alas 1 it is always thus, even in our own day.

But when the fulness of time was come—praise be to God!— after man had shewn himself to be wholly corrupt and without restraint when he had no law, and when he possessed it, with all its accompanying privileges, had broken it, not being able to keep it, even while desiring to do it—then, in the sovereign love of God, the promised Seed came: God sent His only-begotten Son, the second Man, the last Adam, the Word who was made flesh, and dwelt among us.

Marvellous grace! God Himself was manifest in flesh, that He might give Himself, and might, after having been raised from the dead, become Head and Source of a new spiritual race, instead of the evil and perverse race. He becomes the life of all believers; they are redeemed to enjoy the glory with Him. Old Testament believers will, without doubt, enjoy the glory, partaking in the result of the redemption wrought by Christ, although they formed no part of His body upon earth, for the thing itself was not come. The promise had been given, as we have seen; now it was accomplished, not fully, but nevertheless accomplished as to the resurrection of Christ, when life and incorruptibility were brought to light, and were preached through the gospel. For the gospel announced, not the promise, but

the fulfilment of the promise, in the coming of Christ, come down to accomplish the work of redemption.

God sent His Son: He came and took the form of a man down here. Born of a woman, under the law, He took His place in the world in two relationships: with man, through the woman; with the Jews, as born under the law j and every one, when converted, puts himself under it, unless, indeed, he be already there in spirit. This is very useful for the soul, as it thus learns its weakness. Redemption places all, that is, all who believe in Christ and in His work, under the benefit of that work, whether they be Jews or Gentiles; they are redeemed before God, who has accepted the work of His Son according to His own righteousness, even as He gave Him in His love, in order that those who were under the law might be delivered from it, and might receive the adoption.

Christ has ordained for the one and the other His own place before God. When He rose from the dead, He said to Mary Magdalene, “Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend to my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.” Precious and marvellous words, which had never been uttered before His resurrection. But now all was accomplished; their sins had been borne and put away; God, in all that He is, had been glorified; their persons were redeemed, and, according to the sure purpose of God, Christ had acquired glory for His own through His sufferings. He could announce it to them, though the time was not yet come for glorifying those whom He had already introduced into the position in which He Himself stood, as Man and as Son of God, before His Father. What words! Brethren of the Son of God! If God was His Father, He was their Father; if He was His God, He was their God: not only pardoned and

justified—already an immense blessing—but introduced into the relationship with God in which He Himself stood.

Was He any longer under the law? No surely. Under the law He had died, had borne its curse, had fully glorified God upon the dreadful cross; but that was all passed, and now He was risen, to bring His own redeemed ones, who were made partakers of the life in which He stood in the presence of God, into the glory in which He soon would be, but for which they must wait till He should return to take them there, where they would be for ever with Him, made perfectly like Himself. All that gave them the right to enjoy these privileges was now finished, and though the time had not yet come for entering there, the Spirit could be given so that they could enjoy the privileges in their hearts, and understand the position to which they belonged; the privileges could be announced, and this is what the apostle does. He could not, it is true, unfold them all, for their subjection to the law had dimmed their eyes to the understanding of divine things; but He could at least make their position clear, that they might be able to understand them.

Faith, then, places the believer in the position of a son with God, according to the value and efficacy of the redemption wrought by Christ Jesus; and because they were sons, God had sent forth the Spirit of His Son into their hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Thus the believer is no more a servant, but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. Under the law believers, although born of God, were but as servants in position; now Jews and Gentiles together are sons, according to the position of Him who has redeemed them. The

elements of the world were adapted to man in the flesh: the Spirit puts us in communion with the Father in heaven as His sons, united to Him who is risen from the dead. As Jews they were dead to the law by the death of Christ: the Gentiles, redeemed by His death, took up that yoke only when it had been broken for the Jews, and that by the death of Christ.

But the apostle takes up a still stronger ground. The Galatians were Gentiles, and had been as heathen under these same elements of the world. Not knowing God, they did service to them who by nature were no gods. Their worship was necessarily according to the elements of the world—what man in the flesh could offer: they could not conceive of anything else but a worship of ceremonies, the observance of days and the offering of beasts. The true God' condescended to place Himself upon this ground in His relations with man, as has been said. He drew near to man where man was. Nevertheless, upon this footing He did not reveal Himself. He hid Himself behind the veil, though He made a covenant with man: He gave a law which was to be observed, while He remained behind the veil, and He ordained sacrifices, most beautiful and instructive types of the true sacrifice of Christ, which is of eternal value.

Everything was made according to the pattern shewn to Moses in the mount, and was thus a type of the heavenly things; but the things themselves were only earthly things, worldly elements, suited to mortal man, and which mortal man, converted or unconverted, could accomplish—principles of the world, according to the need of the human heart, and that which man could offer, in the hope of propitiating his God. God suited Himself to man, while hiding Himself, and proposing to

man that he should accomplish human righteousness. God put an end to the whole of this system when He sent His Son, and more especially by His death.

The law came in to prove whether man in the flesh was able to please God: but the law was broken, never observed. Moreover, the promise was despised, and the promised One rejected. The cross ended the system which put God in relation with man in the flesh, or rather which shewed such a relationship to be impossible; and the work of redemption being accomplished, God began, with the second Adam risen from among the dead, spiritual relationships by the Holy Ghost come down from heaven, in His sovereign grace placing those who believed in the same position as His own Son. Marvellous, and for us how blessed a testimony to the value of the redemption He has accomplished!

Yet these poor Christians now desired to return to the weak and beggarly elements from which, when heathens, they had been delivered, through the knowledge of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus! Mark well that all their ceremonies are but the same thing as paganism, the elements of the world. Even if those who subject themselves to them be Christians, yet the principles according to which they walk are the elements of the world, and their practices are heathen practices. We learn this here as doctrine, but the history of the church shews it to us as a fact. Holy days and holy places were taken from the heathen, who had holy places and days on which they held festivals in honour of deified men, such as Theseus, Hercules, and others. The names of saints were afterwards attached to these

places and days, and the saints celebrated instead of the demi-gods.

St. Augustine has told us what was done, and how it began. He sought to put an end to these evil habits, not to the days, but to what was practised upon them, for they got drunk in the churches. This occurred in Africa, and the same thing was done elsewhere. The feast of the Nativity was the worst of all the pagan festivals, and it is still celebrated among the heathen in the East. Not being able to prevent those who, emerging from paganism, called themselves Christians, from continuing the disorders practised at this festival, the leaders of the church decided to put in its place the Nativity of Christ. Augustine also says, respecting the memory of the saints who took the place of Theseus, etc., that the church thought it better for people to get drunk in honour of a saint, than in honour of a demon. It is certain that Christ was not born in December. The time at which Mary went to visit Elizabeth proves this, if compared with the order of the twenty-four courses of the priests. Zacharias was the eighth course.

In taking up again from the Jews these elements of the world, the Galatians were returning to their former heathen practices. Until the coming of Christ these things had an important meaning; they were figures of that of which Christ has been, or is now, the reality: moreover they tested man, and shewed that he cannot walk with God as man in the flesh. But when once Christ was come, the substance was there, and the figures had no more ground of existence, the test had been already applied. What is done in fulfilment of the law is but the denial of the fulfilment of all in Christ—heathen

elements of the world, in which the Galatians walked when they lived as heathen in the world.

Verse 11. The apostle feared that his labour might have been in vain, that they had not the real knowledge of God and of Christian truth. They were ready, as we have seen, to despise the apostle; and with cutting irony, which came, nevertheless, from the depths of a wounded heart, he says to them (v. 12), “Be as I am.” The Galatians, who desired to Judaise, accused the apostle of being no better than the Gentiles with whom he ate, of refusing to circumcise their children, of having freed himself from the Jewish yoke, and of walking as a Gentile. Be then as I am, he says, free from this yoke, for I, like you Gentiles, am free from the law. You have not wronged me at all—I am free; be ye free also.

In former days they had not despised him, in spite of the infirmity in his flesh: when he had brought them the pure gospel, unmixed with Judaism, they had received him as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus Himself. They had accepted it with such joy, had felt and declared themselves to be so greatly blessed, that they would have given their own eyes— what they most valued—to Paul, so rejoiced had they been to receive the pure gospel, free from all mixture of law. Where was now their blessedness, if they found it needful to add the law in order to enjoy the blessing? Had the apostle become their enemy in speaking the truth to them? They had at first received it with joy, but now that he sought to lead them to cleave firmly to this blessed truth, was he become their enemy? The Judaising teachers were zealous, but not rightly so. It is possible to be zealous in binding souls to oneself, or to the sect to which one is attached. The Pharisees compassed sea and land to

make one proselyte, and they made him twofold more the child of hell than themselves.

These likewise (for they were such) wrought with the object of drawing the converted Gentiles into Judaism, hiding the truth of the gospel under circumcision and a mass of observances, which led men to seek their own righteousness by their own works, and denied the perfection of the work of Christ. They shunned the reproach of the cross, for man is never ashamed of a religion he himself can accomplish. Neither Pagans, nor Mahommedans, nor Jews, nor those who follow a corrupt Christianity, are ashamed of their religion. Alas! we find many thus ashamed among those who confess the truth, and Christ according to the truth; a remarkable fact, and one that shews where poor human nature is!

And again, the preachers of the law sought to shut the Gentiles out, hindering them from hearing the truth, for fear they should receive it, and become too clear in spiritual intelligence to listen to error, too enlightened not to perceive that the system of the law and of Judaism, denied Christianity. This is always the way. The leaders of a false system seek to prevent souls from hearing the truth; they desire to attach them to themselves alone. If the doctrine of the apostle had been good, they ought to continue to hold it primarily as he had taught it, and be zealous at all times, not only when he was present with them.

But this made the apostle long to be with them. He was perplexed as to them, for the gospel had in reality been abandoned by them; yet when looking to the Lord, he always hoped that Christ was truly in their hearts, and

that only in their heads they had accepted a doctrine, which totally perverted the gospel of Christ. He needed, so to speak, to travail in birth afresh with them till Christ should be formed in them. Nevertheless, he calls them his children: his love inspired him with confidence, and yet filled his heart with uneasiness. He would have desired to be with them that he might change his voice, suiting it to their state; not only teaching them the truth, but doing whatever their need required. Mark here, the deep love of the apostle. Moses, faithful as he was, grew weary of the burden of the people and said: “Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which thou swarest unto their fathers?” (Num. 11:12): but the apostle is willing to travail in birth with them as his children a second time, in order that their souls might be saved.

Verse 21. He already changes his voice. “Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?” He desires that the law should speak, since they were abandoning the grace of the gospel. In the law it was written that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a free woman; the one born after the flesh, the other of the free woman born according to the promise of God. But these things were an allegory, shewing forth the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Hagar, the bondwoman. Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai, which answers to Jerusalem (that is, the system of the law of which Jerusalem was the centre), with her children, as also to those who are under the law. But Jerusalem

which is above, the true church of God viewed in her heavenly state, is free; and she is our mother.

Such was the application of the history of Abraham and Sarah, and her servant Hagar. But the apostle also quotes from the prophet Isaiah another passage, to shew that it is when Jerusalem is forsaken of God, that she brings forth more children than when she had a husband. These children are ourselves, Christians, during the time of the church (Isaiah 54:1). The passage is addressed to Jerusalem, restored in the kingdom to come, but it owns that the forsaken one has more children than she which had a husband. The children born according to promise, are more numerous in the present time, than those born when Jerusalem was owned.

Then he turns to Sarah. “Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.” The cases were too much alike, for the principle not to be evident: and in fact it was always the Jews who raised up persecution against Paul. There is but one case when it was not so. The word of God plainly declared His judgment: “Cast out the bondwoman and her son; for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman.” The two things cannot be united: if man is heir through the law, he is not heir through promise and grace. Obtaining righteousness and blessing by our own works, and receiving it by grace through the free gift of God cannot go together, the one is opposed to the other.

Thus we are not the children of the bondwoman, but of the free woman. We cannot possibly be the children of

both, otherwise, as says the apostle, grace is no more grace. We are freed from the law, from its ceremonies, from its service, from the elements of the world, to belong to a risen Christ, who has cancelled our sins, and also all the ordinances of the law; who has borne its curse for us, and who has communicated to us a life which is in liberty and holiness before God. Christ Himself is this life in us: in it we rejoice in holiness, as well as in forgiveness, and in God Himself instead of living in fear. We are children of the free woman and of her only. The apostle now begins to exhort them to be faithful to this principle.

## Chapter 5

“Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.” Paul even avails himself of his personal apostolic authority, and that towards the nations, which was strengthened by the work he had wrought among the Galatians. They had, in fact, received the gospel from his mouth, and had received it with joy. “I, Paul,” he says, “I say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.” They would have put themselves upon another ground, that of human righteousness by works, not of divine righteousness through faith in Christ. They could not be justified in two ways at once. If they were circumcised, they were bound to keep the law. The thing is very simple: if a man puts himself under the law, he is bound to keep it. If righteousness and acceptance with God are through the law, it must be kept in every point. They were fallen from grace.

The Christian state is this. We do not hope for righteousness, but, through the Spirit, we hope for that which belongs to righteousness, on the principle of faith. They possessed righteousness, divine righteousness in Christ, and that on the principle of faith. But glory belonged to this righteousness, and that they did not possess: they hoped for it. Thus, by the faith through which they possessed righteousness, they by the Holy Spirit hoped for that, which belongs to the righteousness possessed by those who are in Christ. Blessed state! Righteousness is our possession, and the glory which belongs to it is our hope; the Holy Spirit the source and strength of this hope. Faith, the spring and realisation of our relationship with God, is that which discerns the glory which as yet we possess not, and rests upon the righteousness which makes us know that we have a right to it. How blessed not to be seeking righteousness! it is ours; we are it in Christ; our hope is to be with Him in glory, according to this righteousness. It is by faith, since everything in Christ is by faith.

In Him, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avail anything, but faith which works by love: that is the reality of divine life, which enjoys peace with God, which rises by faith to divine glory and to heavenly things, where it finds its portion. While waiting for it, it works by love, which flows in the heart from its source, even God Himself, who gave everything, even His own Son.

We see how disturbed and troubled was the spirit of the apostle. He felt that the truth was lost, and that his beloved children had left the right path. “Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you.” The Galatians might know that what they were

now receiving, was not that which they had received from the beginning. They well knew that when God, by the mouth of Paul, had called them to enjoy the only true salvation of God (which had been a source of happiness to their hearts), it had not been by the law nor by circumcision, human righteousness or human works, nor by the forms through which man seeks to repair the defects of those works, so as to obtain righteousness by them.

This was not the gospel Paul had preached, when they had been brought to the knowledge of God; it was grace and a perfect salvation in Christ. The new teaching did not spring from the same source; it was not therefore of God. But a little leaven leavens the whole lump. Through the gospel souls are converted: it is the power of God which works individually in the soul: it gives life: it is contrary to the natural heart. False doctrine, human righteousness, works, forms, are not contrary to the heart of man: they are a leaven which spreads and penetrates the mass of the people and their ways.

Verse 10. Yet it is beautiful to see how the apostle, amid the grief of his heart, finds peace and confidence as to the Galatians in looking to the Lord. He had said that he stood in doubt of them, not knowing what to think. Now he says: “I have confidence in you through the Lord.” How sweet is the introduction of this name, in the consciousness that He loves His own, that He thinks of them, and that we can cast all our cares ‘upon Him, in the certainty that His heart is occupied with them. “Be careful for nothing,” says Paul to the Philippians (chap. 4:6). We see how earnestly the heart of the apostle longed for the blessing of his children, and for the maintenance of the truth: but he knew how to carry his

anxiety to the Lord. He then had confidence where before he had been perplexed—confidence that the Galatians would be none otherwise minded; but he that troubled them should bear his judgment, whoever he might be.

We find here other characters and effects of faith, besides restoration of confidence with regard to God's children. Though Christ might be hidden, yet He ruled in the church of God, and all power in heaven and earth was His. He who troubled them would not escape the judgment of God, whoever he was. Paul was convinced of the faithfulness of God, he knew that Christ loved the church, and would do what was needful to protect it from the malice of the enemy. Faith rendered him confident and happy in the conflicts of his service by it, he could rest in the faithfulness of the Lord. This faith inspired confidence as to the state of the Galatians, and convinced Paul that he who deceived them should be taken away by the hand of God.

Paul then returns (v. n) to speak of himself. If I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? For it was the Jew who everywhere raised up persecution against him. If he preached circumcision, the offence of the cross would have ceased. We see, moreover, the trouble of his spirit; this characterises the epistle: "I would that they were even cut off that trouble you. For, brethren, ye have been called to liberty"; a principle, which in connection with what follows, is of the utmost importance. The Christian was called to liberty, the holy liberty of the new nature, but yet liberty. It is no longer a law which constrains, or rather vainly seeks to constrain a nature whose will is contrary to it, to satisfy the obligations which accompany the

relationships, in which by the will of God we find ourselves—a law imposed, forbidding evil to a nature that loves evil, and commanding the love of God and of one's neighbour, to a nature whose spring is selfishness.

Had it been possible to take away Christ's moral liberty — which was not possible—it would have been by preventing Him from obeying the will of the Father. This was the food He ate (John 4). As a perfect Man, He lived by every word which came forth out of the mouth of God. He chose to die, to drink the bitter cup which the Father had given Him, rather than not obey Him, and glorify Him in drinking it. Christianity is the liberty of a new nature that loves to obey, and to do the will of God. It is true that the flesh, if not kept in subjection, can use this liberty to satisfy its own desires, just as it used the law, which had been given to convict of sin, to work out righteousness. But the true liberty of the new man—Christ our life—is the liberty of a holy will, acquired through the deliverance of the heart from the power of sin, liberty to serve others in love. All the law is fulfilled in one word— "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." The Christian can do still more, he can give himself for others; or, at the least, following the direction of the Spirit, he fulfils the law in love. But if they devoured one another in selfishness, contending about circumcision and the law, "take heed," says the apostle, "that ye be not consumed one of another."

The apostle here establishes the principles of holiness, of the Christian walk, and brings in the Holy Ghost in place of the law. In the preceding part of the Epistle he had set forth Christian justification by faith, in contrast with works of law. He here shews that God produces holiness. Instead of exacting it, as did the law with

regard to human righteousness, from the nature which loves sin, He produces it in the human heart, as wrought by the Spirit. When Christ had ascended up on high, and was set down on the right hand of God, having accomplished a perfect redemption for those who should believe on Him, He sent down the Holy Spirit to dwell in all such. They were already children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, and, because they were such, God gave them the Spirit of His Son. Born of God, cleansed by the blood of Christ, accepted in the Beloved, God seals them as His own, by the gift of the Spirit, until the day of redemption, that is, of glory. Having the new life, Christ as their life, they are bound to walk as Christ walked, and to manifest the life of Christ down here in their mortal flesh.

This life, produced in us by the operation of the Holy Ghost through the word, is led by the Spirit which is given to believers; its rule is also in the word. Its fruits are the fruits of the Spirit. The Christian walk is the manifestation of this new life, of Christ our life, in the midst of the world. If we follow this path—Christ Himself—if we walk in His steps, we shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. It is thus sin is avoided, not by taking the law to compel man to do what he does not like; the law has no power to compel the flesh to obey, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. The new life loves to obey, loves holiness, and Christ is its strength and wisdom by the Holy Ghost. The flesh is indeed there; it lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit lusts against the flesh, to prevent man from walking as he would. But if we walk in the Spirit, we are not under the law; we are not as the man in Romans 7, where, impelled by the new nature, the will desires to do good,

but, a captive to sin, he finds no way of doing what he desires; for the law gives neither strength nor life. Under law, even if life is there, there is no strength: man is the captive of sin.

But sealed by the Holy Spirit, the believer is free, he can perform the good he loves. If Christ is thus in him, the body is dead, the old man is crucified with Christ. The Spirit is life, and that Spirit, as a divine and mighty Person, works in him to bring forth good fruits. The flesh and the Spirit are in their nature opposed the one to the other; but if we are faithful in seeking grace, the power of the Spirit—Christ, by His Spirit in us—enables us to hold the flesh for dead, and to walk in the footsteps of Christ, bringing forth the fruits that suit Him.

There is not really any difficulty in distinguishing the fruits of the Spirit and the fruits of the flesh: the apostle names them, those, at least, which are characteristic of their respective actions. Of the sad fruits of the flesh, he positively declares that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God: but the fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, etc.; against such there is no law; God cannot condemn the fruit of His own Spirit. Remark, that the first of these fruits are love, joy, peace. The Spirit will surely produce those practical fruits which manifest the life of Christ in the sight of men, but the inward fruits, the fruits Godward, come first, the condition of soul needful for producing the others. Many converted persons seek for the practical fruits in order to assure themselves that they are born of the Spirit and accepted of God. But peace, love, joy are the firstfruits of the presence of the Spirit; the others follow. In order to know what is in the

heart of God, we need to see the fruit of His heart, the gift of Jesus.

If I believe in Him, and through Him in the love of God, sealed of God by the Spirit, I have the sense of His love: love shewn in the death of Jesus is shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Spirit, which is given to those who are washed from their sins through faith in His blood. By that Spirit we have the consciousness of our position before God, and love, joy, peace are in the soul. The fruits which follow are, moreover, the proof to others that my certainty and assurance are not false, that I am not deceived. But for myself, it is what God has done which is the proof of what is in the heart oi God, and through faith I set to my seal that God is true. Then, sealed by the gift of the Spirit, I rejoice in His goodness, and the fruits of the new life manifest to others that this life is there.

Moreover, “they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts.” They have not got to die: Christ died for us, and He who died being our life, we hold ourselves for dead, crucified with Him, as though we ourselves had died upon the cross, since it was for us He suffered. Possessing another life, I do not own the flesh as “I,” but as sin which dwelleth in me, which I hold to be crucified. The faithful Christian realises this continually. God declares us to be dead with Christ: He looks upon us thus (Col. 3:3). Faith, accepting God’s declaration with thankfulness, holds the flesh, the old man, to be dead (Rom. 6), and through the Spirit, if he is faithful, he applies the cross in a practical way to the flesh, so that it may not act (2 Cor. 4); besides this, God in His government sends that which is needful to test the Christian, and to effect this.

The apostle adds the exhortation, “If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.” The law nourishes rather than destroys vain glory, for the law makes us think of self. When rightly employed, it is most useful for convincing of sin, not for producing righteousness.

Thus the operation of the law with regard to justification and holiness has been fully examined, and set in a clear light. It does not produce righteousness, it exacts it. It cannot be linked with Christ as a means of justification: “if righteousness is by the law, Christ is dead in vain.” Man ought surely to have kept the commandments of God, but that is not the real question. He has not kept them, therefore, upon that ground he is lost. Christ, on the other hand, brings salvation because we are guilty.

Then, as to holiness: it is not God’s way to seek to produce holiness in the flesh through the law, for the flesh is not subject to the law, neither indeed can be. God gives a new life in Christ, and the Holy Spirit, to produce fruits which are acceptable to Him, and against these fruits there is certainly no divine law. God cannot condemn the fruits of His own Spirit. It is the new creature, the new life, with its fruits by the Spirit, which are acceptable to God; it is this new creature which seeks to please Him.

Strengthened by the Spirit, and instructed by Him, according to the wisdom of God set forth in the word, let us seek to walk in the footsteps of Christ, that perfect example of the life of God in a Man, which has been given to us.

## Chapter 6

The apostle now adds some special exhortations. First, as to the grace which we ought to shew one towards another, coupled with the sense of responsibility in oneself. The spirit of the law naturally leads to righteousness, and then to hardness towards another, if he is overtaken in a fault: it makes us forget our own weakness. This was seen plainly in the Pharisees, and is found among Christians also; therefore the apostle exhorts them, saying, “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.” The sense of one’s own weakness makes us meek towards others.

Then (v. 2) we get a law; he calls it this because they wanted a law: the true law, if they must have one, is to act as Christ did—that is, to bear the burdens of others, and thus fulfil the most excellent law, the law of love. He would not have them to be indifferent to sin, or to fail in needful discipline when sin had been manifested. But when a brother had been overtaken in a fault, he would have them seek his restoration with love, with the faithfulness of holy love. The danger, and even the effect, of a legal spirit is to make us think ourselves something when we are nothing; we deceive ourselves. Simple words, but full of power! We need to prove ourselves and our work, that we may have to boast as to ourselves alone, and not as to others; a principle which is always true, and such was then the case with the Galatians. Whose had the work among them been? Paul’s. Others desired to appropriate that work; but when they had been heathen Paul had worked among them, and had been the means of their conversion.

Through his instrumentality they had received Christ into their hearts. But each should bear his own burden. Grace may bear the burdens of others, but, as to responsibility, when the Lord shall judge, each shall bear his own burden.

Here ends the exhortation which treats of the relations of brethren in their responsibility one towards another, as also of that which regards each one. He adds the desire, that those who learn through the labours of others should think in love of the needs of those who teach.

The apostle then returns to the fundamental principle of the Christian walk. It is not a law given to a nature which always, by its very nature, resists the law: it is a power which works in a new life, the Spirit given to those who believe on the Lord Jesus. The government of God ensures the consequences which flow from the walk. God does not allow Himself to be mocked; “whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” “He that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.” The path of sin and the path of the Spirit, in which the true Christian walks, both infallibly lead to the ends which suit each—the path of the flesh to corruption, even in this life; the way of the Spirit to life eternal.

Verse 9. But we must not weary in the right path, for God is faithful, and if we persevere, we shall reap in His own time. We often want to see the fruit of our labours at once, like one who turns up the earth to see if the seed is springing. But the work, if real, is the work of God, and we must wait till His work is accomplished;

then we shall see the fruit matured according to the perfection of His workmanship. Let us, then, not weary in well doing, but whilst we have opportunity let us do good unto all men, especially to those who are of the household of faith.

Verse 11. The apostle returns to his chief subject, shewing the preoccupation of his spirit, which is also expressed in the fact he mentions. He was greatly troubled because the Galatians were abandoning the principles of grace in which they had been instructed, and through which they had been converted. He had written this letter with his own hand, though habitually he employed another to write (Rom. 16:22; 2 Thess. 3:17). Those who constrain you to be circumcised, says the apostle, desire to make a fair show in the flesh. They themselves did not keep the law, but in order to bring honour to themselves, they sought to put others under the law—the religion in which they had boasted in the days of their ancestors, and thus to glory in the flesh, in the proselytes from among the nations. The apostle desired to glory only in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world was crucified to him and he to the world. To seek a good or even a religious appearance before the world, is to seek the honour of a world which has dishonoured, rejected, and crucified Him who has loved us and given Himself for us.

The cross, for us, is salvation, the proof of the infinite love of God; but it was the shame of the Lord of glory to which He submitted for us. There, the world finally condemned itself, and God was glorified in love. Paul did not want the honour of a world, which at the cross dishonoured Him who had so loved him; he would glory only in the cross—the proof of the Lord’s love and of his

own salvation. He identified himself with Christ, he was crucified to the world which had crucified Him, and the world was likewise crucified to him. A world that has crucified the Lord is not the place where a Christian can seek honour; it has, by the cross, manifested what it is. Shall we go with the world to crucify Christ, or shall we own Him who gave Himself for us upon that cross, and love Him there, where He shewed His love to us? In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision—that is all past with the cross, with death to the world and its elements—but a new creation. This is the Christian's rule, not the law which is adapted to man born of Adam, after the flesh and living in the world, though the flesh is not and cannot be subject to it. As many, says the apostle, as walk according to this rule, peace be on them and mercy, and upon the Israel of God—not upon man according to the flesh.

Paul, conscious of what he had been in his service, with a patient heart and elevated spirit exclaims, "Henceforth let no man trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." It is sad to see that the apostle, himself in affliction, was obliged to appeal to such a proof of his divine calling. There is no salutation, no word of love or confidence. "Let no man trouble me" is all he can say to those who formerly would have plucked out their own eyes in love to him.

All this shews plainly to what an extent the error of the Galatians weighed upon the apostle's spirit. How serious is this perversity of the human heart, which really unconscious of its state of sin and weakness, instead of finding in the law the proof of that state, uses it to produce its own righteousness, human righteousness, after the gospel has revealed the righteousness of God

for us in Christ, just because we had none for God. But from that day, this error everywhere abounds, and it even characterises actual Christianity. It is the doctrine of all the branches of Christianity.

This is a most interesting epistle, but a sad one; it brings us back to the basis of Christianity, the foundations of our relationships, rather than to the development of the privileges which belong to the Christian and to his standing in Christ. But it is all the more needful for the soul that desires to grow in grace. For if we are not well grounded in grace, and in the efficacy of the work of Christ, it is impossible really to grow in the development of life, and in fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. It is ever needful to lay afresh the basis of our relations with God.

11 Translated from the Italian.

12 The common thought, that the flames of purgatory purify the soul, is opposed to true catholic doctrine: those who are not justified are not consigned to it; such go to hell.

13 We have indeed two Christian ordinances—baptism and the Lord’s supper; but both of them refer to the death of Christ, so that instead of linking us with the world they are witnesses that by the death of Christ we are totally separated from it, that it is a dead Christ who is the object of faith, and that it is as dead that we enjoy Christian privileges.

## The True Path Of A Christian

Allow me to present to you a brief oudine of what has struck me as to the true path of a Christian, or rather the principle and measure of his walk, as taught in Ephesians 4 and 5. I purpose merely to draw attention to the great principles.

I should gladly see some application or exhortation added by yourself.

We get the principle and the measure of this walk; its double principle in chapter 4. If we have learned the truth as it is in Jesus, it is that we “have put off” (not to “put off”) “as concerning the former conversation the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and that we have put on the new man.” And here we at once get the true character of this new man. It is “created after God in righteousness and true holiness” —not yet love, though this will never be separated, but its intrinsic moral nature in respect of good and evil.

God has been perfectly revealed through the work of Christ, and revealed in respect of evil and sin. He has been revealed in His dealing with others, with evil and with good where it is, with what glorifies Him, that is Christ. He is righteous. He has been revealed in His own nature too, as regards good and evil: abhorrent of evil and having His delight in what is pure and good, He is holy. Adam was innocent; he did not know good and evil till after he had eaten the forbidden fruit. Now we know good and evil, and if we are to be “after God” it must be more, far more, in nature than Adam’s estate. It must be in righteousness and holiness of truth. The power of the divine word revealing God, as Christ as now sitting at

the right hand of the majesty in the heavens has brought Him to light, and quickening us, gives the true character of holiness in which we are created after God. (Compare John 17:17, 19.) God is known now not merely as a Creator who saw all as very good which had come out of His hands, but as one whose whole nature is revealed in the dealings and work of redemption, when evil and good are fully manifested, when evil is there and rife. But redemption, the new creation in which we are quickened out of our state of death in sin and raised as Christ out of His grave, has taken us completely out of that condition, and has made us, as so quickened, the living expression of the divine nature thus fully revealed. We are created again after God, in righteousness and true holiness. (Compare Col. 3:9-11.) What God is, in respect of good and evil, we are in nature as having put on the new man created again in Christ Jesus; and this, as we see in Colossians, connected with a true full knowledge of God as so revealed. We are partakers by a new creation of the divine nature as fully revealed in Christ.

This is the first great principle of our walk as Christians. It is our life, what we are.

The second is the presence of the Holy Ghost as dwelling in us.

God Himself dwells in us by His Spirit, and sheds His love abroad in our hearts. We have been thus sealed for the day of final, full redemption. We are not to grieve so holy and blessed a guest. Nothing inconsistent with His presence, where all is peaceful and holy love, is to be allowed in our hearts. It is not now merely a new nature, holy and righteous in itself, and capable of enjoying God

blessedly revealed in Christ, but God dwells in us, shedding His love abroad in our hearts, sealing us for the time when we shall fully enjoy Him. He guides, orders, reveals the things of Christ to our minds, communicates what is blessed to us, filling us with what is divine; but especially, here, is present in us, so that nothing inconsistent with God's own presence in love is to be allowed in us. Nay more, we are to walk according to the love of the divine nature.

Such are the two great principles of the Christian's walk. He has put off the old man, the first Adam, with all its lusts and will, and put on the new man which, with the knowledge of God's estimate of righteousness and holiness, is created after God according to this righteousness and holiness; and the Holy Ghost is present with him and in him, and he is not to grieve Him. No word or temper unsuited to that holy guest who sheds abroad God's love in our hearts, and seals us for the day when all will be holy and blessed, is to find a place in our mouth or in our heart. In a word, the divine nature with its moral effect, and the presence of God in love, and the power of holy hope, form the Christian. We now get the measure of this. In the latter we already get the walking of love. Chapter 5 gives us the measure, if measure indeed we can call it.

God takes two essential names: Love and Light—none else. These are taken as characterising the walk of the Christian. The measure of it Christ Himself, being the practical model, Christ in whom we see the life of God, God Himself, in a man. And this it is leads us to the full extent and character of what is looked for from the Christian. We have seen that we have been made partakers of the divine nature, created after God, and

that the Holy Ghost is given to us—we are sealed by it. The measure of the Christian is not what man ought to be, but what God is, and has been to him; of course this does not refer to His Omniscience and Omnipotence and the like, but morally, in holiness and love. The latter we are never said to be. It is the prerogative of God to be it, and love without a motive. We, that it may be also holiness, and withal as creatures, must have an object, and a motive. We cannot be it and love sovereignly; for we are not sovereign but subject. Yet we shall see how blessedly the divine character of this love in us is maintained, though God Himself becomes its full and final object. Light we are said to be, for purity of nature we can have, and have, as regards the new man.

We are called then to be imitators of God as dear children. Being born of Him we are to imitate and follow Him in our actions and spirit, as partaking of the divine nature, and in relationship with Him as children. We are to be followers of God and walk in love. We find a double character of this, by which, as I just now intimated, its divine perfectness is maintained. We are to be tender-hearted and forgive, shew grace to one another as God has forgiven and shewn grace to us. Compare Matthew 5:48, and the preceding verses; see also Colossians 3:13.

But there is another element in divine love in man, which has a very deep stamp of perfectness on it. I have said Christ is given as the model of the display of God’s character in man, as naturally it must have been. It is said here, “And walk in love as Christ has loved us and given himself for us, a sacrifice and an offering to God for a sweet-smelling savour.” Perfect love was here shewn in giving up Himself. So we are called to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, our

intelligent service. Two principles characterise this perfectness. First, offering up himself. It is not loving my neighbour as myself—a true and perfect principle where evil is not, a state which the law as such would produce if efficacious to do so—but where evil, moral or external, or sorrow requires it, wholly giving up offering up oneself. This Christ did. He offered up Himself, perfect in love. Our path is to follow Him in this. As in 1 John 3, "Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." The second seal of perfectness is that it was an offering to God. The object and motive were perfect. If He had only given Himself for us, there might have been touching generosity, nobleness of character; but the object which formed the motive was inadequate to give perfection to the act, take men as good, or simply evil; for it was love in a man and had a motive, though divine love; and it is in that He is a model to us. But He offers Himself to God, though for us. Here our worthlessness only adds to the proof of the perfectness. But the offering being to God the motive was adequate—the act of love perfect. Hence, too, we are called to add to brotherly kindness charity or love, which, we are told, is the bond of perfectness. Absolute, sovereign love is where there is no motive in the object. This we have seen in the last verse of chapter 4 and in Colossians. And this we are called to imitate as concerns our matters, that is, when any wrong is done to us. But when it is love with an object or motive in a man, when the motive gives its true character, then to be morally perfect, self must be given up to God. In us it may have been an evil self. But whatever it may be, it is given up, and, in our own case, the body presented a living sacrifice.

We are not, then, said to be love, for sovereign love we cannot be; but we are called to be followers of God in it, as forgiving in grace, which rises above all injury, and to walk in a love which gives self wholly up to God, as Christ did. Blessed privilege!

The other essential name of God is Light—essential purity of nature. And this in the Lord we are said to be. For in as far as Christ is our life, as having put on the new and put off the old man, we are so. Christ is our life. This is not prerogative with an object in grace, it is a nature which we have. We were darkness, but now are we light in the Lord. It cannot be separated from the love, because that gives us purity of motive, setting aside self. (Compare 1 Thess. 3:12, 13.) Yet it is a different thing. It is the purity of nature, thought, and object which were manifested in Christ. I do not add conduct, because that is a matter of exhortation. “Walk as children of light.” God is light, purity itself, and making all things manifest. Whilst Christ was in the world, He was the light of the world. “In him was life, and the life was the light of men.” And in Him we have life, and thus become light in the Lord, in a crooked and perverse generation, among whom we shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life, as Christ (1 John 1) was the manifestation of the word of life. God has shined in our hearts to give out the light of the knowledge of the glory of the Lord in the face of Jesus Christ. Then indeed it was for the full purpose of apostolic testimony. Still as having Christ as our life, the fruits of light are manifested, divine intelligence of good as in Christ Himself contrasted with the darkness of the world (a darkness which belonged to our nature) and the separation of good from the evil by the word, but by the

living knowledge of Christ as He is, which was practically expressed in all His life. As it is written, “Sanctify them through the truth; thy word is truth. For their sakes I sanctify myself that they may be sanctified through the truth.” So even in our intercourse with God, “Such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undented, separate from sinners and made higher than the heavens.” It is the revelation of Christ as He is now that acts by the Holy Ghost on our souls, “We beholding with unveiled face the glory of the Lord are changed into the same image from glory to glory.” The effect produced, in walk, is what His walk was on earth; and for the same reason He could then say the Son of man who is in heaven. That, no doubt, was the glory of His Person, but so far as we are introduced by faith, livingly, through the power of the Holy Ghost into what is heavenly, we, as to object and motive are purified according to that in our walk here, while His lowly path here engages our affections in imitating and following Him. That of which the power is seen in what He is was manifested to the understanding heart in His life down here. He was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from among the dead. In us it is a nature, a new man, but, as the creature must, having an object, Christ. “I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in. me, and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God.” So in Ephesians 5, “Ye are light in the Lord.” Then not only are reproveable things manifested by the light, but Christ is Himself the perfect standard and light of the soul. “Awake, thou that sleepest,” sunk into ease and apathy as a Christian, like the dead, though not dead, “and Christ shall give thee light.” God is light, we are

light in the Lord, and the perfect divine expression of this light in man, in which we are to walk, is Christ. The eye is upon Christ. “Christ shall give thee light.”

Such, then, is the true measure of Christian walk—what God is in His nature as love and light, brought down to its true, perfect, and blessed expression on the earth, in man, in Christ. Thus we are to be followers of God as dear children, the fruit of the light, the purity of the divine nature to be seen in us.

## Acts 20:28

As regards the translation of the Greek in Acts 20:28 (“with his own blood,” A.V.), I have not much to say. As to the fear of its touching the divinity of Christ, a person must be very ill-grounded in that fundamental truth to have any such feeling; the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in Christ, His being truly God, Jehovah, I am, is too inseparably a part of the whole texture of Scripture, too plainly stated in Scripture, and still more strongly proved, if possible, by the way it is supposed or assumed and implied in passages where it is no direct subject of revelation. Nothing could be more mischievous than the resting the divinity of the Lord Christ on this passage—a passage tortured by critics, no two of whom hardly can agree upon it. With the exception of Scholz, hardly any noted critic has simply ‘God’ in the passage at all. Indeed, as far as I know Mill is the only one; the principal ones have not ‘God’ at all, reading ‘Lord’ instead. Griesbach, Lachmann, Tischendorf, all read ‘the Church of the Lord’—Matthaei, ‘Lord and God,’ which Middleton approves, and Alford and others of more weight than he reject as perfectly untenable. Alford read ‘Lord ‘in his first edition; and saying, that as B in the Vatican has it by the first hand, the evidence of manuscripts is balanced; but on internal evidence he reads ‘God’ in the second. To me it remains uncertain if it be by the first hand, for the transcript of the MS is not to be trusted. Wetstein prefers ‘Lord.’ The new Codex Sinaiticus reads ‘God.’ But A C D E and many others read ‘Lord.’ Many more, but modern read ‘Lord and God.’ It would be monstrous to rest a vital doctrine on a text evidendy tampered with. Even in Athanasius to

Seraph-ion (1:522), the printed text has ‘God,’ but other MSS ‘Lord’ or ‘Christ.’ I suppose we may account Athanasius as a sufficient champion of the true divinity of the blessed Lord. Of all ancient writers he is known to be the undaunted and suffering defender of this truth against the whole body of Arians, the Emperor and all, and died an exile for this truth. Now, not only in the passage quoted by critics he declares that the blood of God is never used by itself, and that it is Arianism; but the argument of his two books against the Apollinarians, particularly the second book, is based on this. It forms, I may say, the whole point and subject of the second. He denounces as Arian such language as saying, ‘God suffered,’ or speaking of His blood flowing. He treats it as the madness of the Arians. He says that ‘if it be said that God suffered, “in flesh” even, then the Father and the Comforter have suffered, for they are all one’; and concludes, ‘The Word is God, if you look at His immortality (athanasia) and incorruptibility and immutability; but man, in His nailing to the cross, and the flowing of His blood, and the burial of His body, and descent into Hades and resurrection from the dead. Thus the Christ is raised from the dead, and being God raises the dead.’ He says we are to be content to say, ‘Christ has suffered for us in the flesh.’ I cannot quote more here: it is, as I have said, the argument of the whole second book. The reader may find a multitude of the Fathers also object to the expression too. They may be found in notes to critical editions. Wetstein gives many of them. At any rate, speaking of the sufferings of God or His blood-shedding is denounced as being Arianism by him, who best knew what Arianism was, and the greatest champion for the blessed truth of Christ’s divinity who ever lived. The Arians and Apollinarians did

so speak; because the Arians did not hold that Christ was of one nature with the Father, and the Apollinarians held that Christ had no human, intellectual soul, but that the divinity took its place in the Christ. Hence, the former had no difficulty that what was a creature, however elevated, suffered; and the latter must have made God suffer as the mind in Christ, or else He must have ceased to be. Hence, Athanasius opposed them so energetically, and said it was running into Arianiam; and hence we can easily see how he rejected an expression such as the one we are considering. Now I admit it was reasoning, not criticism. If I found it in Scripture, I should certainly not mind Athanasius, but take it as what is called koinonia idiomaton, dangerous and slippery as that ground is, if it ever be justified as to the natures of the Lord. I read, “the Son of man who is in heaven”; but that by His Person passes into His divine nature. But I do not believe the natures are so spoken of. They are not to be confounded any more than the Person divided. I do not want to speculate on such subjects. I only say this to express my subjection to scripture language, if such there be. But it is ridiculous to make a matter of orthodoxy, as a fundamental proof of Christ’s divinity, what Athanasius denounces as denying that divinity, and being Arianism.

Now for my own part I believe—have always thought—the reading ‘the church of God’ to be right. If dia tou idiou haimatos was the reading in this place, then “the church of God which He hath purchased with His own blood” would be the only right translation; and so the English translators read it. But I confess I agree with Athanasius that such language is not according to Scripture analogy and its expression of the truth. It is

not a question of the divinity of the Lord, one way or the other, but of the fitness of speaking of the blood of God. I do not think such an expression scriptural. I do not accept the title even of the Mother of God. I believe it revolts just and divinely-given thoughts in the mind, and turns away from the true, eternal divinity of the blessed Lord. He who was God had a mother, and He who was God shed His blood; but I do not think Scripture speaks of God's shedding His blood. I think it revolts the mind as wrong, unseemly—I will say, profane. I know what a person means and I bear with it, because I delight in his holding the true, essential deity of the Lord. But I agreed with Athanasius, when I had never read him, when I examined the passage in this view, in thinking such expressions contrary to the analogy of the faith. As regards the translation of 'dia tou haimatos tou idiou' "by the blood of His own," that it is Greek is I judge beyond controversy, in spite of the confident pretensions of some, and the slighting remarks of others. In John 15:19, we have this usage, which anyone may find in a dictionary. "If ye were of the world, the world would love its own"—'to idion ephilei.' It is an unquestionable Greek usage. Of course, it can be translated, "by His own blood." The question is, which is right. 'To idion' is that which is specially near and identified with any one, as our word, "own." Hence it is said, "He spared not his own Son." God has purchased the church with that which was His own, nearest and dearest to Himself: a thought as apt and beautiful as possible here. Of that there can be no question. The singular seems to me more intimate than the plural, but I could not here give any proof that I am right. At all events, no expression would be more appropriate, hardly any, it seems to me, so strong. God purchased the Church with that which

was most near to Himself and most dear to Himself. This seems to me a most forcible expression, peculiarly expressive in the circumstances—more so, it seems to me, than that which would have expressed the relationship of the blessed Lord to His Father, whatever the essential importance of that may be in its place. The force of the sentence is in the word ‘idion’ (English own), which is to me a deeply touching expression.

Since I translated the passage, I have found the first biblical scholars, dead and living, discussing this translation without the smallest idea of its not being sound Greek. Doederlein proposed it. Michaelis suggests this rendering. Meyer says the text was changed from ‘tou haimatos tou idiou’ to ‘tou idiou haimatos’ because the latter, which is admitted not to be the true reading, obliged men to translate it, ‘the blood of God’: allowing this, that with the true reading it is not necessary to do so. The only other translation is the one I have given. I am thoroughly satisfied that all the tampering with the text, which for so short a passage is almost unexampled, arose from not simply taking it as I have done. For my own part I think that ‘tou haimatos tou idiou’ applied to God, is unnatural and objectionable. This use of ‘idios’ after a substantive is rare in the New Testament, just because it has a contrasting and emphatic force. When it is used with ‘haima’ elsewhere, it is put before. Hebrews 9:12; ch. 13:12. When ‘idios’ is put after, it is contrast or special emphasis. Of Christ it is said (Mark 15:20), they took the purple off Him, and put on Him His own clothes (‘ta himatia ta idia’). Judas went ‘eis ton topon ton idion’— “to his own place,” not meaning that which was naturally his, but as could be said really of no other man, one appropriate to himself. Any man may go to his

place (eis ton idion topon) but ‘eis ton topon ton idion’ raises the question, why is it so peculiarly his own? It is to that place which was peculiarly his own. So He spared not His own Son ‘tou idiou huiou,’ not ‘tou huiou tou idiou, 2 Timothy 4:3: their own lusts ‘tas epithumias tas idias,’ their own proper lusts in contrast with God’s will, which they ought to have done. When it is simply the fact, it is (James 1:14) “his own lust” (tes idias epithumias). I have given all the cases, I believe, in the New Testament of this emphatic use. It is the general force of an adjective so placed after with an article. Now I confess this seems to me to make it singularly inapposite to be applied to the blood of God, that blood which was peculiarly God’s own in contrast with all other. I would not fail in reverence in speaking on such things, but it does seem to me that such a contrasted use of God’s blood as distinguished from all other is irreverent and somewhat shocking. The question is not on the divinity of the Lord, I repeat. Athanasius even charges such kind of language with being Arian. It is whether we are authorised (again I dread irreverence, but it is not mine but theirs who would insist on it) to speak of God’s own blood as God, for that would be the proper force of it.

Of the genitive ‘idiou’ after a noun, there is no example in Scripture. For my own part I am perfectly satisfied that “by the blood of His own”—that is, what was more than our words of ‘near’ and ‘dear’ can possibly convey, it was God’s own dear and beloved Son—is the true translation.

## What Is The World, And What Is Its End?

A Serious Question For Those Who Are Of It

This is the question I would now discuss, according to the light Scripture affords us. Nor am I going to forget that the world we live in has taken a Christian form.

And first, What is the world? Men are apt to think that this world is as God made it, and that all things continue as they were at the creation, only that man has made great progress in prosperity and civilisation. Now, in material comforts, none will deny it, though the men of a past age would hardly think our refinements comforts; and, while passions subsist, the difference is not so great as is supposed. Men have telegraphs, railroads, Armstrong guns, and iron-clads; but I hardly know in what respect they are the happier for it. It is a question if they have not excited the passions more than they have satisfied them. Children are not more obedient, families not more united, servants not more honest and respectful, masters not kinder, wives not more faithful. Morally speaking, I do not see what the world has gained. It thinks better of itself, and vaunts its powers: I do not know that this is any advance. Christianity, as light come into the world, has made a difference. Men do not do in the light what they do in the dark. But if we look beneath the surface, even that is not much. But the world is in no sense as God made it. He overrules all, has patience with it; but He never made it as it is. He made Paradise, and the world has grown up as it is through man’s departure from God. It has been destroyed once since, because of its wickedness. It is

conscious at this moment that things cannot go on long as they are; that we are in a crisis of the world's history which must result in some great disruption. Some will tell us that democracy is the evil, and it must be put down; others, that it alone can save the world. But all feel things cannot go on as they are.

I do not participate in men's judgments in this respect; but these fears, even if they magnify the apprehensions of men on one side or the other, are the fruit of the restless working of some principle which man cannot control, and hence his fears; they are the confession of the instability of the order on which he relies; and they presage, and in the world's history have ever presaged, some violent disruption, because they were the expression of the consciousness of the force of what was breaking all up—that passions are stronger than what controlled them. The bonds of society are too tight or too weak. Power is not in them, but in the force which is working underneath them. Some would slacken them to give vent to the power at work; some would tighten them, hoping to break or repress it; some hope, and many more fear; none know what is to come. 'After us, the Deluge,' has become the proverbial expression of this in men's mouths—the exaggerated expression of self-importance, but the accepted utterance of general fears. The Christian knows that God overrules all things, and he does not fear in this way, but for that reason he is more calm and clear-sighted, less interested in the maintenance of particular forms, and hence more interested in judging the effect of principles on them. And, if indeed taught of God in this, guided by His word in the knowledge of what the result will be, yet a large number of Christians, however, add to the delusion,

because, even among them, man's capacity for doing good is worshipped. Yet even these are getting uneasy at the influence Popery has acquired and is acquiring. What is, then, the world? It is a vast system, grown up after man had departed from God, of which Satan is actually, though not by right of course, the god and the prince. Man was driven out of the place in which God had set him in innocence and peace. He gave up God for his lusts, under the influence of Satan, who thus got power over him. His way back to the tree of life was barred by divine power. He has indeed built a city, where God had made him a vagabond, and adorned it by the hands of artificers in brass and iron, and sought to make it agreeable by those who handle the harp and organ. But he is without God in it. Left without law, the world became so bad that God had to destroy mankind, save eight persons, by the Deluge. Under law, man plunged into idolatry, from which no prophetic warnings could ultimately deliver him. God sent His Son; "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them"; but man would have none of Him: He was cast out of the vineyard and slain. The world in its origin, is a system sprung up from man's disobedience and departure from God, and which has turned God out of it as far as it could when He came into it in mercy. Hence the Lord says of it as a system, "Now is the judgment of this world." This is its state of sin. But it is also a system in which men have been proved in every way, to see whether they could be recalled or recovered from this state, by promises, by law, by prophets, yea by God's own Son. Especially among the Jews was this process carried on, as represented under the figure of a vineyard, where the owner sought fruit, but no fruit was to be had. The servants, and even the

only-begotten Son, were killed. And when we look now at the principles and motives of the world, are they other than “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life”? Do not pleasure, gain, vanity, ambition, govern men? I do not speak of exceptions, but of what characterises the world. When we speak of men rising in the world, getting on in the world, is it not ambition and gain which are in question? Is there much difference in what Cain did in his city, and what men are now doing in theirs? If a Chinese, who had heard a missionary speak of Christ and Christianity, came to London to see what it was, would he find the mass of men, the world, governed by other motives than what governed the masses at Nankin, or Pekin, or Canton? Would they not be seeking gain, as he would have done there, or pleasure, as they do there, or power and honour, as they do there? What is the world in its motives? A system in which men seek honour one of another, and not the honour which cometh from God only. In a word, the world having rejected the Son of God when He was here in it, the Father set Him at His right hand—fruit of that solemn appeal of the Blessed One, “O, righteous Father, the world hath not known thee, but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me.” Then comes the sentence: “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.”

But it will be said, Yes, but now Christianity has come in, that applies to the heathen world. I answer, “The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.” The lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life are not found only among heathens; if comparison is to

be made—how much more among Christians. But it is important to take up Christianity as a system, because, not only does faith recognise it as the truth and true revelation of God in Christ, but it has in sum formed the world in its present condition. If I go to inquire what the world is, I cannot turn to heathens or Mohammedans: I must look to Christendom. This is what characterises the state of the world. Now I have already spoken of the motives none can deny which govern men in it—as pleasure, gain, ambition, vanity. They may pursue these things, preserving a good reputation before men; it is only another snare to make Pharisees of them, or without conscience. But they pursue this, and a man is morally what he pursues. He is covetous if it be gain, ambitious if it be power, a man of pleasure if it be pleasure, and so on. But we must look at Christendom itself. At the beginning, the exhibition of the grace and power of Christ's operation by the Holy Ghost in raising men above human motives, and uniting them in the enjoyment of heavenly things with one heart, and so displaying a care for each other which the world does not know, and a deadness to the world which is the opposite of the very principle of its existence—pure in walk and unselfish in its ways, the church forced itself on the attention of a hostile yet admiring world. Now, and for centuries, the seat of anxious and tortuous ambition, of crimes and deceit of every kind, haughty power over others, and worldly luxury and evil, characterise what pre-eminently calls itself the church. The name of its most active supports has passed, in common parlance, into the name of cunning, falsehood, and want of conscience. The world has been driven into infidelity by what calls itself the church.

Take the Greek church. Where does ignorance reign preeminently? There where its clergy sways. Where all seems fair as regards profession, infidelity reigns universally in the active-minded population of the Romanist system. As to Protestantism, every one knows, because their all is open, how it is sunk into infidelity. Christianity only adds this additional feature to the world's history, that the worst corruption has come in—the corruption of what is best. The Reformation was caused mainly because the iniquity of the church was intolerable. This was predicted by the apostles: so that it confirms, instead of shaking, the faith of him who believes and reads the Word; but it teaches that reference to Christendom does not do away the proof of Satan being the prince and god of this world. He has proved it more than ever, by making that which was brought in as a witness of God to be the seat of the power of his own corruption. Taking in Christendom as a whole, what do we see? Mohammedanism has overrun the eastern part and Popery the western. The north of Europe has been delivered from the latter: and what is its state? Overrun with infidelity and Popish tendencies. I do not mean to deny that the Spirit of God is active, and that good is done in the midst of all this. I believe it, and thank God for it. But that is not the world, but a distinct power which works in the midst of it. In influencing the world and its government, Popery has made more progress the last thirty years than the power of truth. We may deplore it, but it cannot be denied. The world is far more guilty by having Christianity in its midst. But it has not ceased to be the world.

Remember, reader, that it was at the death of Christ that the devil received the title of prince of this world, and as

to his religious influence, is called the god of this world, who blinds the minds of them who believe not. God did not call the devil the prince of this world till He had fully proved and tested it. But when it followed Satan wholly in rejecting His Son (the few who owned Him, adding confirmation to it by their fear), then the name is given to him. When God's throne was at Jerusalem it was impossible; but, when the true ruler of it was rejected, then it was plain Satan was its prince. The intrigues for power when the empire became Christian proved, not the exclusion of Satan from the throne of the world, but his acquired dominion over what was called the church. No doubt the cross gave his power its death-blow in the sight of God, and of faith, but not in the world. There it was his victory; and the Christ was called up to sit at the right hand of God, till His enemies were made His footstool. Then men stumbled on the stone. When it falls in judgment, it will grind them to powder.

Now, though Satan's worst reign is his religious one, far the worst, even when the blasphemous beast is raging (Rev. 13), as any one may see in reading the character of the second beast, yet he reigns anywhere only by the corrupt motives of man's heart. We may add, indeed, the fears of a bad conscience to his means of power. He leads men astray by their lusts, and then gives them his religion to quiet their consciences, which he cannot cleanse. He makes religiousness (characterised by certain forms which strike the imagination, and a diligent activity in what flesh can perform) minister to the power of those who rule for him, and excites the passions of men to contend for their religion, as for something in which their own interests and honour are concerned; thus making religion the activity of the flesh

to sustain, superstitiously or through interest, a system, and capable of any wickedness to sustain it, so that wickedness becomes religious wickedness, and the conscience even thinks it is doing God service, while Satan's craft directs all this to his own ends. Still, outside all this direct system of Satan's religious power he governs the world—the Christian world, as all the rest and more than the rest—by men's ordinary lusts. But the eager pursuit of gain is more ardent than ever, leading to less scruple in acquiring it; and pleasure holds its sway over men, in defiance of Christ, as it did when there was no such motive to restrain them; war rages as it ever did; conquest and oppression range over a wider sphere than of old, while the nominal power of Christianity, with all men's boastings, has receded to smaller limits than in the seventh century, when it ruled over known Africa, filled Asia, and was almost the established religion of China.

Such is the world which is attached to its own objects, grandeur, power, pleasure, gain, not to Christ; and thus is enslaved to him who governs the world by these motives. The external system of Christianity, instead of delivering souls from them, is the seat of the highest exercise of these worldly principles; and where it is not the sphere of the concentrated influence of them, it is sunk into philosophy and unbelief.

What, then, is its end? Judgment, speedy judgment. Of the day and the hour, no man knows: it comes as a thief in the night. The world will not get really better. The thoughts men have of its doing so are one of the worst expressions of its evil confidence in man, man's development, man's energies. Man is to be made better. Nay, Christianity, say some now, is only a phase of man's

history; and now we are to have a better. What is it to come from? What are its motives?

Commerce, we are told, civilises. Education enlarges and improves the mind. Commerce does take away grossness and violence; but gain is its motive. Its earnest pursuit tends to destroy higher motives, and to make a moral estimate of value sink into money and selfishness. It has nowhere elevated the tone of society, but the contrary. It has not stopped wars; it has caused many. Commercial nations have, in general, been the least scrupulous, and the most grasping. Excuses may be formed; but none but a commercial people would make a war to sell opium. What has education done? It enlarges the mind. Be it so; of course it does. Does it change the motives which govern the heart? In no way. Men are more educated than they were; but what is the change? Is the influence of superstition really diminished? In no wise. On the contrary, the infidelity produced by dependence on man's mind has forced men, who are not personally established in divine truth, back into superstition, to find repose and a resting-place. One of the worst signs of the present day, and which is observable everywhere, is that deliverance from superstition and error is not now by means of positive truth; but that liberty of mind, sometimes called liberalism, which is bound by no truth, and knows no truth, but doubts all truth, is simply destructive. Go anywhere and everywhere, to India or England, Italy or Russia, or America: deliverance from superstition is not by truth, but by disbelief of all known truth. The blessed truth of the gospel is a drop of water in the ocean of mind and error. And even Christians reckon, not on the Spirit and word of God, but on progress, to dispel

darkness. It is building up Popery and mere church authority, without the soul knowing truth for itself, for those who dread with reason the wanton pretensions of the impudence of the human mind; which, satisfied as to its own claim to judge, has no real taste for, or interest whatever in, truth itself. On the other hand, the utter absence of truth in church pretensions, and its claim independent of godly fruits, drive even honest minds, not divinely taught and guided, into the wanton pretensions of that mind which has no truth at all.

The manifest conflict of the day is between superstition and the mere pretensions of man's mind (i.e. infidelity as to all positive truth, or standard of truth, or acquired truth). Neither superstition nor infidelity knows any truth; nor have they any respect for it. One recognises authority; the other is the rejection of it. One is the church, so called; the other, free thought. Faith in the truth is known to neither. I appeal to every intelligent person if this is not a true description of what is going on: rest in authority; or the mind of man is to find out truth. Where it is no one knows; the business of man's mind being to disprove any existing claim to it. One of them is no better than the other: church authority, the most hostile to God and His people, as the judgment of Babylon shews all the blood of saints is found in her; but the other, a rising up of man against God, which will end in his destruction.

It is as needful, in referring to the state of the world, to refer to its religious aspect, as to the lower and more material motives which govern it. I do not doubt for » moment (God forbid I should) that the Spirit of God acts for the blessing of some in the midst of all this scene, but it does not affect the state of the world. It is one of

the striking phenomena of the liberal, or infidel party, that where it is free (that is, where it is not itself oppressed by Popery), it prefers Popery to truth. Truth is divine, and it cannot be borne. Popery is human, and liberality will be liberal to it, not to truth. So governments, when too rudely pressed by it, pander to Popery, because it is a strong and unscrupulous political power. Truth does not concern them. If it presses on their party, it annoys them. All this has an evident tendency—the giving power to superstition as long as governments hold their own, but when human will grows too strong, a breaking up of all that; and the destruction of the whole system. A well-known specimen of this has been seen in the French Revolution.

If we turn to America, to what (to many) would be the most attractive part of the new world, what do we see? Large profession and religious activity, but the churches the great promoters of the dreadful conflict now going on14; Christians more worldly than the world; money supreme in influence; and the world, save as partially prohibited by law, overrun with drunkenness, pre-eminent in profane swearing, and demoralised by the corruptions which follow the absence of family habits. Intelligence, activity, energy, education, reign there. None of the supposed hindrances of the old world exist there. None can have been there and not have seen in this immense country the amazing development of human energy; but, morally, what is the spectacle it affords?

The world, then, has been evil from its origin, for the horrors of idolatry cannot be denied. Christianity, then, has been corrupted by man, and has not reformed the world—is actually the seat of its greatest corruption.

Commerce, a partial civiliser of men, absorbs them with the lowest of motives—money, and is wholly indifferent to truth and moral elevation; for it, a good man is a man with capital. Education, which also frees from what is gross, has not, with all its pretensions, changed the motives, ameliorated the morals of men, nor even freed from the bonds of superstition, save as it has set aside all positive truth, and every standard of it; and thus, while wounding infidelity on one side, riveted the chains of superstition on the other.

I appeal to facts. Is not Popery or Puseyism on the one hand, and infidelity on the other, what stamps the activity of England at this moment? It is not otherwise elsewhere. Will God be the idle spectator—whatever His patience with men, and how blessed soever the testimony of His grace—will He be the idle spectator without end, of the enslaving power of superstition, and the rebellious rejection of truth by the pretended lovers of truth, who cast down all foundations? He may, He does testify, as long as souls can be won and delivered. But is He to allow the power of evil for ever? He will not. He will allow it to fill up the cup of falsehood and wickedness. He declares that evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse; but they are filling up the cup of wrath for themselves. He is patient till no more can be done. “The iniquity of the Amorites,” He says, “is not yet full”; but then He will remove the evil and bless the earth.

My object is not here to enter into any detail of prophecy; it has been amply done elsewhere. But as the course of the world’s history points to judgment, the removal of the power of evil by power as the only remedy,.so that the end of this scene is judgment, is as

clearly stated in scripture as possible. I do not mean the judgment of the dead and the secrets of their hearts before the great white throne, but the judgment of this visible world. God has appointed a day in the which He will judge this habitable world (such is the force of the word in Acts 17:31) in righteousness, whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Jesus from the dead. Man has multiplied transgression, and will continue to do so till judgment comes. But the central sin of the world, that by which its true character has been stamped, is the rejection and death of Christ. But whom the world rejected, Him God has raised from the dead, and to Him all judgment is committed. Every knee shall bow to Him; and the more boldly they have rejected and opposed Him, the more terrible will be their judgment. But all man's pride, and vanity, and pretensions must come down. See Isa. 2:10-22; ch. 24:19-23; ch. 26:21; Zeph. 3:8.

So the corrupt and idolatrous system. "And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath," Rev. 16:19. "And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters: with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in

purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: and upon her forehead was a name written, Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration," Rev. 17:1-6. "And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all. And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee; and the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived. And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth," Rev. 18:21-24.

So the haughty power and rebellion of man. "And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty," Rev. 16:13, 14. "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called

Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called the Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written King of kings, and Lord of lords. And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great. And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone, and the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh," Rev. 19:11-21.

Figures these are, no doubt, but figures whose meaning is plain enough. Thus, “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 to 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: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth,” Dan. 2:34, 35. “I beheld till the thrones were set, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened. I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame,” Dan. 7:9-11.

Such, then, is the end of the world as it now is. The Christianity which it professes will have increased the severity of its judgment. They that have known their Master’s will, and not done it, will be beaten with many stripes. Can we say that Christendom, as it now subsists, is the least like the heavenly state in which we see the disciples in the New Testament; Acts 2-4? True, we find there that they soon declined, and that evil came in. But the record that tells us this, tells us it would wax worse and worse, and ripen for the judgment which surely awaits it. Flee from the wrath to come.

14 [Written during the War in America, in 1862.]

## “For Me And Thee”

Matthew 17:25-27

This chapter, when the connection is clearly seen, is of profound and touching interest. The transfiguration spoken of in the earlier part of the chapter was a turning-point in the life and ministry of the blessed Lord.

After the character of those who were suited to the kingdom had been unfolded, the divinity of His Person and character of His ministry are brought before us. His disciples are then sent out with the ministry of the kingdom to the Jews, at least the poor of His flock, in His lifetime, and then till He came as Son of man. Then we have the record of the rejection of John the Baptist’s ministry, and that of His own, as come in grace: and standing on the edge, so to speak, of the world, He is witness that no dealings of God could reach where His grace found, like Noah’s dove, no place there for the sole of her foot; and declares that the world has been tried, and He could find no entrance for divine goodness, and they must come to Him if they would know the Father, and have rest (for the Son revealed Him in grace), and learn of Him as the man meek and lowly of heart, and find rest to their souls in a world where evil ruled, and no rest could be found, as He knew.

In chapter 12 the Jews, as a nation, are finally rejected, under Satan’s power as a people in the last days, and the Lord disowns association with them according to the flesh; relationship with Him was by the word He preached. He leaves the house, goes to the seaside, not any longer seeking fruit in His vineyard, which bore none but bad—sowing that from which fruit was to

come. The kingdom of heaven in its mystery, with an absent king, takes the place of Messiah upon earth.

In chapter 14 we have the whole scene ripening historically. John the Baptist is actually put to death, and the sovereign grace of Christ continues while the coming scene is opened. He satisfies, according to Psalm 132, the “poor with bread,” but there, I believe, according to the Messiah order. Then He dismisses the mass of Israel, and sends His disciples off, and goes up on high (a priest on high), and the disciples are tossed on the sea. Peter goes on the sea to meet Him: as soon as He is entered into the ship the wind ceases, and He is gladly received where once He had been rejected.

In chapter 15 the hollow and false religion of the Pharisees is rejected, while fully owning Israel’s privileges, and sovereign grace goes out to awaken and meet faith in the rejected race of the Gentiles— according to Jewish standing, the accursed race. He was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, but God would not be Himself if only the God of the Jews, and the Gentiles were to glorify God for His mercy. We have then the five thousand fed, the same general principle; only now, I believe, the sovereign patience of God.

In chapter 16 the church, as built by Himself, takes the place of Jewish Messiahship, and chapter 17 the kingdom in glory. Thus we have the kingdom, as it is at present, the church, as built by Christ, and the heavenly glory of the kingdom, taking the place of the earthly Messiah. This is the point I desired to reach, which, indeed, characterises all that follows— the revelation of the heavenly glory on earth, what will be in the world to

come, and was now revealed to establish the faith of the disciples; though the Father's house is yet a better portion. It is found in the description of this scene in Luke 9, where they15 enter into the cloud from which the Father's voice came. For the scene itself see 2 Peter 1:16-19, reading "the word of prophecy confirmed." I have gone through the previous chapters because they lead up to the rejection of the Jews, and the new character in which Christ's Person and work were to be displayed. Here (chap. 16:20), they are forbidden to say to any one that He was the Christ. We find the same injunction in Luke 9:21: that ministry was over. Here He tells them the Son of man must suffer and rise again. The Son of man was about to come in the glory of His Father with His angels. So Luke 9:22-27.

In a word, the suffering Son of man and the glory that should follow, take the. place of Messiah on earth, now disowned there, and even forbidden to be any more preached. Thus the beginning of Psalm 2 was now before Him, bringing about in another way the purposes there spoken of, and Psalm 8 in part accomplished as spoken of in Hebrews 2. But the old things of Messiah on earth were over, redemption was about to be accomplished, and the new things of a glorified man introduced. In Matthew 17:22, 23 this rejection is pressed on the disciples, and then comes the blessed and touching way in which He shews them their association with Himself, as Son of God, in the new place into which He is introducing His people.

The tribute here spoken of is not tribute to the civil power, but the didrachma which every grown-up Jew paid for the temple service, and which they had voluntarily imposed upon themselves in Ezra's time—a

tribute to Jehovah. The question which the collectors put to Peter was really whether his master was a good Jew according to the earthly system now passing away. Peter, with the zeal so often there, yet in ignorance, at once answers “Yes.” The Lord then shews divine knowledge of what had been passing by anticipating Peter, to introduce in touching grace the new place He was giving to Peter and those with him “Of whom,” says the Lord, “do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute, of their own children, or of strangers? “Peter replies “of strangers.” “Then,” says the Lord, “are the children free.” We are the children, you and I, of the great king of the temple, and as such, free from the tribute. “Nevertheless that we offend not”—bringing in Peter, as one of the children of the great king with Himself free, but not willing to offend, and then shews, not divine knowledge but, divine power over creation. “Go thou to the sea, and take up the fish that first cometh up, and when thou hast opened his mouth thou shalt find a stater [two didrachmas] that take, and give unto them for me and thee “; shewing now His divine power over creation, making the fish bring just what was wanted. And then again He puts Peter with Himself in the place of sonship by the overwhelming, but unspeakably gracious words, “Give unto them for me and thee.”

Do our hearts echo these words, moved to their foundations? If Christ said “me and thee” to us, how should we feel it? Yet He does say it. It is when a rejected Messiah, His Person and the effect of His work too (but the expression of His boundless grace in it) come forth to give us our place in the purposes of God, but as His heart delights to see it and make us see it too. Oh! for the Son of God to say to such an one as me, “Me

and thee.” I know it is the effect of redemption, but of a redemption He has accomplished, and a redemption which gives us a place where He shall see the travail of His soul and be satisfied—in seeing us in a blessing which only His heart, which answers to the Father’s counsels, could have thought of for us. But what a comment of Christ’s heart on the ways of God unfolded in the foregoing chapter! Thinking first of us to apply it.

1882.

15 I suppose Moses and Elias, but the truth expressed remains the same. The cloud was the dwelling-place of God in Israel. [See Volume 33, page 289.—Ed.]

## The “Ifs” Of Scripture

The word of God always maintains the responsibility of man; indeed it must, for no morally intelligent creature can be other than responsible. Grace and redemption may introduce principles and facts which modify the operation of the principle, but the principle remains true. But I think that the word casts a more definite light on the place responsibility holds in connection with the grace that is revealed in Christ, than many are aware of.

I would lay down a principle evident to every one, and incontestable in human relationships, but forgotten in divine ones (and with one only exception not based on relationship, which I will state in its place), that as a general principle, responsibility is based on, and measured by, the relationships in which we are. Parent and child, husband and wife, master and servant—evidently in all these the responsibility is based on, and measured by, the relationship. The one exception is where God, or one having competent authority in the case, claims the recognition of another in any given position or authority. Thus, if Christ, Moses, or a prophet be sent, adequate testimony being given, we are bound to receive them. The mission is, in fact, an instituted relationship.

Now our original responsibility is no longer a question for those who know the truth. It is no longer, “if thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?”—always abtractedly true; we have sinned, and on that ground are guilty and lost. But the great truth of Christ and redemption has come in. If I call myself a Christian, I place myself on this ground—the ground of redemption.

The question is, to put responsibility in its place, where this is owned. Now redemption is a work of God, and not responsibility on our part. Yet they are constantly mixed up together, and uncertainty introduced where all is perfect, and confusion where all is clear. But there are two things generally in the position of the Christian—redemption wrought by grace for him, and his actual attainment of glory. Now “if”—that is a condition, is never connected with redemption. It is always connected with our course towards the glory, and here it is of continual occurrence.

In the purpose of God there is no variation or uncertainty. In His government He may set conditions, and in fact does so: it is connected with our conduct, but in purpose—not so; and in redemption even, taken in its application to us there is no uncertainty. In Ephesians you have no “if”: “We have redemption through his blood.” In Titus, it is “Not according to works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy, he saved us.” “By grace ye are saved.” The value of Christ’s work admits of no “if,” nor its application even to every believer. “He hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, according to his own purpose and grace, given to us in Christ Jesus before the world began.”

So in type Israel stands still, and sees the salvation of Jehovah, who led forth the people He had redeemed, and guided them by His strength to His holy habitation. And again, “Ye have seen… how I bare you on eagles’ wings, and brought you unto myself.” The whole was absolute and complete redemption. So we have no more conscience of sins, but are accepted in the Beloved. He hath by one offering perfected for ever those that are

sanctified. Here it is the application to conscience. But not only is a full title made in righteousness, not only are the sins blotted out, and we are justified from all things, accepted in the Beloved, and our consciences purged, but we are made meet [fit] to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Nothing lacks in completeness. Hence the thief could go straight to paradise, fit, through the travail of His soul, to be Christ's companion there. Yet ordinarily we are left to tread longer or shorter time our pilgrimage here.

Now this, as in Deuteronomy 8, is to humble us, and prove us, and know what is in our hearts. We enter on it on the ground of redemption. All Christendom stands on this ground, may little realise its value, but it is Christendom because redemption is accomplished. The first thing tested is—is it realised? Are we really so? If not, we perish in the wilderness in unbelief. On this point I do not enter. But the question remains then—Shall I arrive safe in Canaan? for we are not yet there. And here come in all the "ifs": if I hold fast the beginning of my confidence firm to the end: if ye continue in the faith, and the like.

I believe there is a full answer given to what is in question, practically realised, in Philippians 2 and 3; in others it is doctrinally set forth. But the answer is not redemption—a finished work. This is the basis of all, and if one imbued with the mind of God had seen one drop of blood sprinkled on a door-post, he might have been certain on to Solomon's, and yet far better, Christ's millennial glory, but it was not accomplished, and God teaches us by what is revealed, whether historically as to His ways, or prophetically in His word, as to things to

come, and all His counsels given us in the New Testament.

But the wilderness was not redemption, and God would have us to look at redemption as complete. He suffered, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God. We are complete in Him (Christ). But, as I said, whatever exercise of conscience we may have had before knowing the value of the blood of Christ, or what the lingerings of unbelief cradled by self to make out our own righteousness, it is usual in God's ways to have a practical wilderness course after redemption, when the knowledge of ourselves, and of God and His ways in grace and government, are developed, to humble us, and to prove us, and to do us good in our latter end.

When we come to see what we have to lean on at the end, we are brought back to the beginning, though one who has walked faithfully with Christ will surely have a sweeter and deeper knowledge of Him who began and finished all. All Balaam can say is, when the question was, Could Israel enter into Canaan, I can do nothing. There is no enchantment against Jacob, no divination against Israel, as at this time it shall be said of Israel and Jacob, What hath God wrought? But meanwhile, between the two we are in weakness, and in temptation, and real perils. The flesh is in us, and what pleases it is there. Shall I arrive safe in Canaan? is the question. If I mix up this with redemption, all is confusion, all is uncertainty; for while it was said to be finished, and all our sins remembered no more, here all is in question again, and, imputed or not imputed, I.lose heaven by sins which have been borne: if they have not been borne, then redemption is unfinished and incomplete.

Now the government of God, though in perfect love and grace— “whom the Lord loves he chastens”—yet has always a legal principle in it; that is, the ways of God depend on what we are, not in the perfectness of His love, but in His ways with us. Besides, the heart craves holiness, and knows God can bear with nothing else. We would not that He should. He makes us partakers—blessed truth!—of His holiness. Now the mass of Christendom are really unbelievers, and, like Israel, perish in the wilderness, never do get into Canaan. Those fear who are true of heart, and, if there is no distrust of grace, it is a salutary fear, lest any of them should seem to come short.

There will be found in Numbers two great principles (found again in Hebrews) which characterise the position; the red heifer, practically answering to John 13, 1 John 2:1, 2, but here known to believers for restoring communion after they have practically failed; and the priesthood: the former meeting a failure in the wilderness, the latter the sustaining power for weakness — “grace to help in time of need.” In Numbers 19 we have the red heifer out of its place, say the wise rationalists, whereas the essence of its meaning depends on where it is. Then (chap. 20) Aaron dies, and after Sihon (Balaam, as we have seen), comes God’s judicial estimate of His people. In Deuteronomy 9 we find His moral estimate— this, What has Israel done? that, “What hath God wrought?” and the comparison is full of instruction.

The statement, “What hath God wrought?” is an accomplished thing—it is wrought. Now in the wilderness, though redemption was the basis of all, an accomplished work was not what was wanting for the

wilderness itself, but living care, guidance, ministry and constant need to be met; and this was what was found, and what we find in that of which this was only the type. They had to reach Canaan, as we have glory, and that where there are spiritual wickednesses on the way, in a wilderness where there is no way, nor bread, nor wine, and we ourselves without strength. And the dangers are real and present. It is not a full and finished salvation—which, thank God, there is—but daily dependence, and a living One who can sustain, guide, and protect us. God, that we may know ourselves and Him, puts us in this place of danger, real danger and difficulty, where by ourselves we could not get through, and gives us to find it out, but with the testing and trial, with the question, "If we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end": all these are most real, and forgiveness itself leaves all vague, but there is the infallible promise for faith to lean on, and divine support: "We are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto the salvation ready to be revealed."

The well-known passage (John 10) assures everything: "They shall never perish, neither shall any one pluck them out of my hand." No perishing either; Christ is our life (no greater power to pluck us out), and that according to the divine power of the Father and the Son. So in 1 Corinthians 1:8: "who shall confirm you to the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus"; so "God is faithful by whom ye were called." There is no uncertainty or doubt, then, in the wilderness; but the kind of certainty is different, and the difference practically important. Redemption is accomplished, and Christ our righteousness, according to all the value of what He has wrought for the glory of

God. It is finished, perfect, and accepted of God. But in general the race is to be run, that we may win Christ, be found in Him; we have to hold fast to the end, that He may present us blameless, as in Jude.

This is a never-ceasing work, but as certain as if all was done. “He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous.” It is constant dependence, in order to get safe to the end, but dependence on what is sure, as God is sure. We work out our salvation with fear arid trembling, but God works in us to will and to do. The wolf seizes and scatters the sheep, but he cannot seize them (the same word) out of Christ’s hand; the faithfulness and the strength are alike, and both divine. The “if” is there, and dependence constant, and diligence in it called for, but God, with whom is no “if,” is there to meet it.

There are uncertainties and questioning experiences of this kind, when all our Christian life and happiness are lumped together, and which are confounded where redemption is not known, but the soul has really to say to God. It will say, “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord”; but this is an abuse of terms; the soul is looking for a certain state as ground of acceptance. Now this is really a question of righteousness. What is said is surely true, but holiness is what is holy—yea, God Himself loved for His own sake. It is not holiness when it is desired with a view to acceptance. That soul does not know redemption, Christ as its righteousness, and is looking at its own state as its ground of acceptance. It has to learn that it is guilty and lost, not something to be desired—right and essential as the desire is—but to learn that it is not what, nor has done what, God desires, and has to be saved, must cross the Red Sea, and that its business is not to wait for what is desirable, but to

acknowledge its own sinful state, and that what it needs is redemption, to stand still and see the salvation of God.

1882.

## The Place Of Sacrifice In The Ways Of God

If we take the history of the garden of Eden as a whole, we shall see it is such a whole, and, in brief, a complete picture of the ways of God. Man placed under responsibility (and even under law failed and broke it) was sinful, and an actual sinner, and was driven out from the place of sojourn, where God Visited him for fellowship. But God did not send him out to begin a new world away from Himself, without giving the fullest testimony to the sovereign grace that has met the evil. Man's nakedness was the expression of innocence being gone. Shame and guilt, and a guilty fear of God's presence, was now man's estate. God, in sovereign grace, met this. He clothed Adam with robes which came from death, and His eye had His own work before Him. That did not say man was not naked in himself, but that God Himself, having taken knowledge of it in grace, had covered his nakedness. The present state was perfectly provided for in full, and the power of evil judged in the future. Hereafter the power of the serpent's seed would be destroyed.

But man thus driven out from God, and innocence gone, began a new world, and the question necessarily arose, Can man have to say to God, and how? Now it is clear that if God wrought in man, He could not for a moment be indifferent to what had happened, and still clearer that God could not be indifferent to the state of evil which had brought man where he now was, and was expressed by what he was—in sin and away from God.

That which was the sad effect for man, God saw as the evil state in him.

The driving him out of paradise had placed man in a judicial way in this place, though not irrecoverably. He was in it morally, and the question arose: Could he approach God—go to God? Now he could not really, while insensible to the state he had got into; he would be still as far from God as ever; and, in the public government and testimony of God, God could not give a testimony to His so receiving him: and this is the new platform of Cain and Abel—approaching God when in a state which was the result of being driven out from His presence. Do we approach God as if nothing had happened, in connection with the everyday circumstances and duties of the place we have got into, or in the sense of the sinfulness of this state, the sense of our fall, and looking up to God in our consciences, as those who have got there by sin? Every Christian knows. And here note, it is not committed sin, but the consciousness of our true standing before God. Cain goes with the fruit of his toil (man had been sent forth to be a tiller of the ground)—the actual practical state of man driven out. In Abel faith had its perceptions. Sin had come in and death by sin: faith recognised it. “So Christ appeared once in the consummation of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” This was not the clearing the individual’s sins actually committed: they are spoken of immediately after as a distinct subject, adding judgment—but, a judgment past for those who look for Him seeing He has borne their sins Himself, who becomes Himself the Judge; Heb. 9:26-28.

We have four worlds, so to speak, in this aspect: the garden of Eden; a world no longer innocent, but

departed from God and driven out, where sin reigns and Satan; a world in which Christ reigns and in righteousness; and the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. We have an innocent world (now gone), tested without evil being it, by simple obedience. The final world as based in righteousness, which in its nature never changes, cannot change in its moral stability.

But the moment sin had come in, and characterised the world and the state of man, the terms on which man could be with God must be altered, must be changed, because God could not change. That a holy God and a sinful creature should be on the same terms as an innocent one, could not be. Free and happy communion would be impossible: cry for mercy there might be—challenge on what ground he was there; but no free intercourse. That God is love does not alter this. His love is a holy love and He is light, but “men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil,” John 3:19.

Now, I admit and believe, that the free, sovereign self-originated love of God is the source of all our joys and hopes and blessings, eternal and infinite as they are. But God exercises that love by bringing in a Mediator in death: not here by blood-shedding to meet guilt, but in perfect self-surrender to God in that which was death, as such, and the fruit of sin. Fat (Gen. 4:4) was forbidden as much as blood, but not offered as such for forgiveness, but for acceptance in another, who gave Himself wholly to God in death which had come in. And remark, this was that souls might approach to God: each came with his offering.

Cain came, as I have said, as if nothing had happened, so much so that he brought to God, as offering, what was the sign of the ruined state into which he had got, but which did not reckon it as ruin. There was no faith in it. In Abel's there was; he offered by faith, which recognised that death had come in, come in by sin, but that another had given Himself for him "an offering made by fire of a sweet savour ": for there are two things— "unto him that loveth us and washed us from our sins"; "Christ also hath loved us and hath given Himself for us to God" as an offering made by fire, "and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour"—one to clear foregone sins; the other, the value and preciousness of the One in whom we are accepted— "Accepted in the beloved." Now this was a question of acceptance in coming. God did not accept Cain. He did accept Abel, but the witness was borne to his gifts. He was accepted, but God's testimony was to that which he brought—the life of another in all its energies and perfectness given up to God in death.

Another thing we have to remark here, it was not God setting forth anything to the sinner. That was "a mercy-seat through faith in His blood." It was Abel presenting himself to God, but coming by the acceptance and perfectness of another, who had given his life for him. And this is propitiation. Now to say that God could receive a sinner as He received an innocent person is to say that God is indifferent to good and evil. And note here, it was not by the eye of God resting on an inward change that a difference was made: there was such a change, for faith was working in Abel's heart; but it was a judicial estimate on the part of God of the gifts he brought—Christ, Christ offered in sacrifice—and for this

we have the express authority of the Hebrews. It was a propitiatory sacrifice—a ground of acceptance, or the whole basis of the standing of a fallen world is gone—the whole moral basis of the preference of Abel to Cain is gone.

That love may have been there, nay, if you please, electing love, I admit, but the ground of acceptance, as stated in scripture (see Heb. 11), is gone if propitiatory sacrifice be not accepted: and to win secure righteousness before God, and for the believer's acceptance, according to the value that is in Christ, He offered Himself absolutely without spot for God's glory. "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." Faith believed in it then and found its fruit. Abel was accepted, and distinctively on the ground of what he brought—his gifts: Cain brought no such offerings, he had to be accepted in himself only, and he was not. Faith looks to this sacrifice, and comes by it now, and finds acceptance and blessing according to the value of Christ in the eyes of God.

I only add, now, that God gave Christ to us to this end. He "sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." The self-originating work of love is in it, but the effectual work of suffering is to make good in righteousness that love. God forbid that I should weaken the feeblest confidence in the Father's love. "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him," "And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us."

It is certain, then, that Abel, man being fallen, sought God's face -and acceptance, by a sacrifice, to the value

of which God bore testimony: “By which he obtained witness that he was righteous”; a sacrifice which recognised death as come in, but which, as so presented, bore the character of perfect self-offering to God’s glory. It was not actual sins which were in question, but the state of man and his acceptance upon the ground of mediatorial death, in which God’s own glory alone was sought on man’s part in obedience, and in which the highest gift of grace shone out on God’s part in love.

But I add, here, as it immediately connects itself with our subject, there is another point, less abstract, narrower possibly in effect, but dealing more immediately with conscience, and hence of present necessity. If a man believes in heart, that is as convinced of guilt, in the Lord Jesus Christ, he will not come into judgment, he knows he is justified, forgiven, has peace with God, and so rejoices in the hope of the glory, and trusts God for the road on to the end. “Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity”—not that he has not done any, but it has been dealt with, borne by another. Another has been substituted in his place by grace, who has taken charge of it in Himself— “Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree.” It is not here the basis on which the race is before God, as in Abel’s case, and which, as a general principle, recognises the whole truth, but actual sins committed, which are dealt with and put away out of God’s sight by One “who was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed,” Isa. 53:5.

Now this, call it by any word you please, was one person put in the place of another, and then in such sort taking

the sins and their consequences on Himself as that they should not come at all upon the person who was himself guilty, in judgment or penal consequences. Upon all who are not under this substitutionary benefit they do come, and God enters into judgment with them concerning them. For the believer it is said, “according to this time,” not, what have men wrought, but “what hath God wrought,” Num. 23:21-23.

Thus, substitution is as certain a truth as scripture can afford, that is, one person standing in another’s place, bearing his sins in His own body on the tree, bruised for them instead of the guilty, who is healed by the other taking the stripes, for “All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all,” Isa. 53:6.

February 25th, 1882.

# Fragmentary Thoughts On Revelation

Editor's Note16

Chapter 1:5, 6

The ways in which the gospel may be preached and reach the heart are so many, that one has to look to the Lord to direct one, that it may be brought so as to comfort the saint and awaken the sinner. The moment the word is revealed to the soul in grace, the point is gained. There may be a thousand thoughts on men’s minds, but there is enough in this blessed word to meet these thoughts, and to bring every one of them into captivity to the obedience of Christ. He is the Lord of all; and in His Person all truth centres. He is the substance of all truth—the ground and centre of truth to the soul. As we know Him, we get comfort, peace, and joy; as we walk with Him we have power to overcome. In verse 5 we have Christ presented in a threefold character. He is the one most drawn out by the Spirit of God. Alas! it is not always so drawn out in our heart. The answering character to that in the spirit of grace is, “To him that loveth us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.” In verse 7 is an application to the world—it will be a day of mourning to them. The Jews behold Him whom they have pierced, and the nations wail because of Him.

Let us especially consider the way in which Christ is presented to the soul. First, we have grace and peace in a peculiar form from God, that is, Jehovah; and the seven spirits, His spiritual perfectness, not the Father speaking to His children, but the Eternal, and the seven spirits, the Holy Ghost exercising the varied power of

the throne. Christ is brought near as connected with the earth; the faithful Witness when He was here below. This is what our souls need to remember—faithful testimony to what God is; for without this we have no certainty, whether as saints or sinners. A holy man cannot know God without the witness, nor whether the witness would suffice to meet a holy God. When I know God, I get sure ground to go upon, I shall know where I am—a terrible thing if I am walking in sin; but there is only uncertainty out of Christ, for He is the light.

There are sufficient traces of power in creation to serve as a witness of the eternal power and Godhead—enough of misery around us to see ruin—enough in conscience to learn that we have sinned; but we cannot learn God in providence, for we know not why He does this, or refrains from doing that. Providence is a depth out of our reach; we are not able to find out and judge the ways of God, nor indeed of the thoughts of a man's mind very often. There is another, the law, which appears to be a clear witness for God against sin. It is true that this is a witness of God's claim on man. We ought to love God with all our hearts, mind, and strength, and our neighbour as ourselves, but it reveals nothing of God's thoughts to us, and if this were the only witness, we should be ruined for ever. The object of the law is not love, but righteousness— God's everlasting claim of righteousness. But the law cannot meet what we want, for it says, "Thou shalt not covet," and there was never a man since the days of Adam that did not covet. If you do not satisfy God's claims, there is a curse upon you. Thus the law is man's letter of death. We turn to Christ, the faithful Witness, "the same yesterday, to-day and for ever"— the Witness down here amid the same

circumstances in which we are placed, and dealing with men in all the feelings of life.

Jesus Christ was not as a king shut up in His palace, but in the midst of all man's wants, passions, propensities, and desires. The first grand comfort is when I see Christ, the faithful Witness, in the same circumstances as I am in: our hearts can say what God is to us. When I look at Christ down here, I see the faithful Witness, and I am brought into certain ground as to what I should meet in God. Jesus did not come claiming from man what he ought to be, but shewing out Himself in all the circumstances of man—shewing us what God is.

Whatever character I meet, Christ is the faithful Witness — the life and the light of man. This faithful Witness owns no goodness but in God. When the young man came to Him, Jesus does not tell him that He Himself is God, for that was not the time to do this. The young man was very lovely, and he thought by adding something to what he had already done he should go to heaven. He came to seek teaching of Jesus, and he gets Him as the end of the law. The faithful Witness touched him. All was laid bare, and the young man's heart was found given to mammon. With the Pharisees the faithful Witness shewed that their righteousness was only adding the sin of hypocrisy, as all outward show is. He knocked down men's righteousness with a terrible hand. What was the company that Christ came to? He was the friend of publicans and sinners. This upset the whole standard of man's righteousness. How came this? Because all pretences to righteousness were found to be false. This is a terrible thing for those who are building their hopes of heaven on their character. The world is constantly

presenting their character at the expense of their conscience.

On the other hand, we see that Jesus did not want a character from man, but from God. John the Baptist came in the way of righteousness, and he went into the desert, and was company for no man. He came in the way of righteousness, not in grace. It is commonly said, a man is known by the company he keeps; and this is true, in a certain sense, of Jesus. How? He who in His own nature was holy, undefiled, and separate from sinners, was the companion of publicans and sinners, the faithful Witness to them of grace, that God is love. Jesus would make no allowance for man's claim to righteousness. He had compassion for sinners—He was always grace.

Whatever your state, come to Jesus, and you will find that He is always gracious, that He has always grace. The disciples would send some away when they brought young children to Jesus. They thought Him a great doctor, and that He must not be approached. Jesus took them up in His arms, and blessed them. The disciples had no sympathy with the thoughts and feelings of Jesus; yet He spoke to them as if they had sustained Him. "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptation." "They all forsook him, and fled" (Matt. 28:5, 6), Peter even denying that he knew Him.

If I find difficulty in the way of the sheep, Jesus goes before them. In everything He had gone before us. Do I fear death? Jesus set His face stedfastiy to go to Jerusalem, knowing that He should there be crucified. In this faithful Witness we find the activity of love. He came to seek and to save those that were lost, to bring them

to Himself. The moment I find Christ I find a true God and Saviour. I may have been walking in all sin, but when I find Christ, I find One who was such to such as I am—to sinners. If I take God's witness of Himself, and give up reasoning, I know what God actually is— He is seeking sinners—and have no uncertainty at all. I may think I may get better, and may put off coming to God; the God who has come down first in Christ, or I should never repent at all. God, who so rich in mercy to come down into all my loneliness, He has come down as the faithful Witness to take up such as me—He could be the Friend of publicans and sinners: He was despised for it — faithful in love going through all the scene of man, because He was the faithful Witness, that grace may come to me where I am ashamed to be seen of men: there Christ comes to seek me out, determined to be the faithful Witness of God, who is rich in mercy. It is not that God has given a good character of Himself up in heaven; but it is goodness come down to earth, to identify Himself with all the misery of man. The One above all, our Saviour, is God, and God is love, and Christ came to be a faithful Witness of this. You cannot be in any condition that Christ did not come into. He plunged into the very sea of men's misery to help you out. It is a comfort to get man's sympathy, but he often cannot help us. What is it to get God's sympathy, which has power in it? This was the accepted time, from the time of Jesus, coming into the world, to His coming again—the day of grace.

What a comfort to the saint to meet the faithful Witness, who never reproached the disciples' negligence, but said in the tenderest manner, "Could ye not watch with me one hour?" He waits upon all our circumstances—upon

all our anxieties. As our High Priest He bears us always on His breast—the accomplishment of God's love to saints, as well as to sinners.

The conscience makes even a saint afraid of God; he finds an evil will in himself, and the devil often gets an advantage over a sincere saint, and keeps him away from God; but the comfort is, Christ met the enemy in all his power, and He is presented to me as the First-begotten from the dead, the One who has put Himself under all the consequences of my sin, and now in His new character I find Him "the faithful Witness" —One who has borne all my sins—not now under them. The Father in righteousness was obliged to raise Him from the dead, and I can say, as a believer in Him, that I have no guilt—He sees all washed away. This is beholding Christ as the First-begotten from the dead. I see One who has blotted out my sins before Him who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and I get true and settled peace—not a cold, hardhearted way of spying I have peace; but I look to Jesus as my Saviour, and this re-kindles love, and impels me to keep His commandments.

We are by nature under Satan's power the end of which is death; but the Lord Jesus overcame through death him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and through this I have not only victory over Satan in Christ, but I may say all things are mine, whether life or death, etc. Satan could not deal with the heirs of salvation, unless he had foiled the Captain, and Jesus submitted Himself to the power of Satan, but in the resurrection that power was broken for ever. Liberty and joy are ours j not freedom from conflict, but deliverance from Satan. Now the way that Satan gets power over us is by his wiles, persuading us to receive him as a friend, instead

of treating him as a fiend— “Resist the devil, and he shall flee from you.” It is not said, Overcome him, for this Jesus did before.

Jesus was the expression of grace and truth, the blessed Son of God before; but now in resurrection, He presents us with a new character to God, such as man never had before—a Man who had put Himself under the power of death, risen to absolute dominion: a new thing—man once without God, now in the very presence of God, and the very pattern of God’s mind and delight! Sin is done with in Christ, and our standing in Him is quite a new thing— “Bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh.” There is no past history of this, no experience, not any old thing; all is done away, there is an entirely new Headship in the second Adam, the Lord from heaven. Is this my place? Yes; but we find difficulty in apprehending this, because of the weakness of the flesh; for the moment I look at myself, I have another man full of failure; but my standing before God is in Christ the new Man, not in myself that I have to struggle against, but the new Man, the Lord Jesus Himself I am one with, who bore my sins and put them away for ever. “Beloved, now are we the sons of God,” etc. (1 John 3:2), but it is not by being in glory that I shall be justified, that is by faith now. Justification is from two causes; first, that Christ bore my sins; secondly, that He is before God without sin.

“Prince of the kings of the earth.” I would say a few words on this point, together with the response from the heart of the saints. We see not here the dominion of Christ over the kings of the earth, but we shall shortly. As to the response of the church: when God enables me to believe the testimony of the Son, He gives me the Holy Ghost, He puts the Spirit into man’s heart as a seal,

and earnest of glory. What is the effect in this verse 5? It gives power to say us— “To him that loveth us” no uncertainty: the Holy Ghost always says to us, not them (1 Pet. 2:21), not that we shall be loved, but He does love us— no room for doubt, but the fruits of the Spirit, consequent on the Holy Ghost’s dwelling in me. Things were not so ministered to the Old Testament saints, though they may be as holy. Christ has come, was dead, has accomplished righteousness, has sat down, so now the answer to all His titles is, “To him that loveth us and washed us,” etc. All the promises of God are in Him, Yea and Amen, to the glory of God by us; 2 Cor. 1:20. God hath anointed us, hath sealed us. Do I doubt? What do I doubt? That the Father sent the Son for poor sinners? If you believe this, you cannot doubt that you are saved. Your salvation is based upon the unchangeable revelation of God; and what a tide of affection flows from knowing this! God, through Christ, has saved not me alone, but the whole body of saints. What a difference does it make to me, in thinking of the joy and blessedness, whether I am going alone, or in looking at many of you, and being able to say, “He has made us kings and priests!” Just exactly what He is Himself—the highest in authority, and the nearest to God. Can you all, dear friends, say this according to the Spirit, “To him that loveth us?” —so settled in the consciousness of it, that the heart can only go out in fulness of praise! If it is not so with you, dear friends, it is because you have not received the testimony of the faithful Witness, who was grace, and the Messenger of God’s grace to us. The Lord give us to give place to the Holy Ghost in His thankful testimony to His love, and grant us to walk nearer to Him, in the conscious power of it.

There are certain expressions in the word of God which unfold, in the most familiar manner, what the Christian is; and which, if there was but the most ordinary attention on the part of the reader, would lead him to say, “Well, if that is what a Christian is, I know nothing of the matter.”

These expressions are not the violent stretching forth after some hope, but they are characterised by the quiet certainty with which they appropriate the blessing. As John here says of all the Christians to whom he was writing, “unto him that loves us, and has washed us from our sins in his own blood,” etc. Now, if I were to ask you —you, perhaps, who would be affronted if I should say you were not a Christian—if I were to ask you, are you sure that Christ loves you? that He has washed you from your sins in His own blood? No, you would say, if honest, I know nothing of it. Yet these are the expressions of the common recognised state of Christians. Or can you say—Yes, blessed be God, though a poor thing in myself, I do know that God loves me? To be able to say this is the common portion of the believer. And so it is written, “we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in the wicked one.” All Christians are recognised as knowing salvation. And in 2 Peter we read of one who had forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. But he could not forget what he had never known. Forgetting “that he was purged,” was backsliding; the christian state was knowing that he was purged.

You will find every kind of exhortation addressed to the believer; but they are all based on the ground of his having been brought to God. I ask any one, would there not be a quieter, happier state of soul if you were certain that God loved you? There cannot be happy affections if

the soul is not in confidence with God. That is the kind of knowledge of God which is life eternal. God is love, and if you do not know that, you know nothing. And where are you if you know not God? If you believed fully that God is love, love toward you, what kind of thoughts would you have of Him? Would you think that you must obey, or else He will punish you with His vengeance? Would you think of Him as a Judge? No. Such thoughts are not the thoughts of one acquainted with His saving love. Of course there is a judgment, but there is no mercy then. When Christ comes to judge, can you stand if He marks iniquity? can you answer Him for your transgressions? No. But if you really believed in His righteous judgment now, you would say, “enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.” But Christ is not now a Judge; He is a Saviour. It is all mercy now. He is not imputing to any their trespasses. Every eye must see Him. We Christians see Him now as a Saviour. You who do not believe put it off till the judgment, hoping to be able to meet Him then; but then “all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.” He is a Judge when He is not a Saviour. It is judgment then, not trial as to whether you will pass. Now there is a trial going on, not indeed as to whether you are a sinner or not; but as to whether you will receive Christ or not. Now your heart is put to the test: alas! your wilful heart would still reject Him, if grace does not bow you in the sense of sin. God will justify Himself in that day, and no one else. In that day He will demonstrate the sin which is the ground of the judgment. Every secret thing will then be made manifest. It is not then that the question is raised, but that the judgment is manifested. Now the question is raised. All this is brought into the soul now. In spite of

all the fair appearances of the world we justify God now, we accept the judgment God gives of man now, we justify Him in condemning us. The eye of God brings the judgment into my conscience now, and I bow to it. I feel and say that God should not let such a wretch live before Him. That is what will be when every eye sees Him; but it is also what is now in the soul, when the Lord reveals to us our state by faith. I now justify God. I say I have been all darkness and sin, and I abhor myself in His presence. Conscience is dumb in the light of God. If you have been brought to this, you know yourself. If you seek to hide it you are not the better, but the worse.

Suppose that I am brought to this, I shall not now be trusting to a vague feeling that God is merciful. It was not so with Peter when he found himself a sinner in the presence of the Lord. He said, “Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man.” He felt that sin and Christ, as the holy Lord, should not be together. So is it ever when the soul is brought to be jealous about God. The idea of compromise is a horror to one whose conscience is active about sin. Well, when brought to this, what can the soul have confidence in? Oh! in this— that when we were in such a condition we have full assurance of the love of God toward us.

Now if I turn to nature, I see signs of goodness, but widespread misery and wretchedness too, so that I know not how to say God is love; and these very signs of goodness shew me that I have lost it all, for this God I have offended. If I turn to providence, I find it all confusion—how often have the wicked the upper hand! If I look to the law, it condemns me, and leaves me without hope. In all these I see things about God; but nothing that reveals Him. In Christ I get what reveals

God. I, for myself, just where I am, find that He is the "faithful witness" of God. For it is in this world, where all the sin was, that Christ was the faithful witness.

There will be no need of a witness in heaven. Now I can go to Jesus and see God in Him. Do you ever find a single act or word of this faithful Witness that was not love? Never. Of course He would unmask the hypocrite. But the moment a person is true—were he the greatest sinner in the world— the moment he is contented to be what he is in Christ's presence—you will never find that He was anything but love. Of course God must convince of sin. He will write on the sepulchres and tell what is within. God will unmask what we are; our self-deception He will discover to us; but then He is perfect love, and nothing else. What brought Christ here? To know that there was sin? Oh no! He knew it well; but He came here because there was sin. The very sin I am confounded at, is the very thing that brought Him here in love.

In the case of the woman who was a sinner, in Luke 7, Christ puts down Simon, and He does not care for the guests. Why? Because a poor woman was to be comforted in love. Christ came into the very place where sin was. If it is a question of truth, He knows my sins. When I speak of Christ loving me, it is that He loves me knowing all that I am; it is not loving, surely, the sinful condition I am in, but loving me when in it. He will write on the ground to let my conscience act; He will bring my sin into my conscience. He will not let me get satisfied with myself, but He will have me to rest in His thoughts of me. What the heart struggles to do is to be satisfied with itself; but God will break that down; and the moment you are brought to that, He will make you to be

satisfied with Him, just as you are. He will not leave you there, of course; but He will have you to rest in the knowledge of His perfect love: “Unto him that loves us”; then I find rest.

But that is not all: it is added, “And washed us from our sins in his own blood.” It is not said, will wash us, but has washed us. We want it now, for peace, and for holy affections. “In his own blood.” Who has done this? Christ. He has done it. He has made us “clean every whit.” And if He has washed us He has done it in righteousness, knowing all our sin, and maintaining all this perfect righteousness which made us tremble because of our sins; but in accordance with it all He has washed us from our sins in His own blood. He knew what our sins were in the sight of God, and so He gave Himself up—Himself entirely He gave for me. An angel could not, nor should not, do it—he is called to keep his first estate—but Christ only. In this act of Christ in washing my sins I find Him giving His blood, His life, Himself, for me. Not one single spring do I find that was not love to me. Such is the knowledge I get of Christ.

He has washed me from my sins in His own blood. Do I believe this? Oh yes! I do. I believe that every one of them is washed away, and that He has done it, as it is said in Hebrews, “By himself purged our sins.” Ah! you say, if I only felt this! But let me ask you, will your feelings add to the value of Christ’s blood? Oh no! Then why not rest on it, as that which has perfectly satisfied God on account of the sins? The question of sin Christ settled between God and Himself; “When he had by himself purged our sins”: He did it according to the holiness of God, and according to my need. And what cleanness do I get? The cleanness which God’s eye

requires; all that which shut us out from God being perfectly put away, so that we are brought into the light as God is in the light; and in doing it His perfect love has been revealed.

“And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father.” If I take a person and bring him into the enjoyment of everything that I have myself, I give the fullest proof of the perfect outgoing of my heart towards him. Kindness may give something for a person; but that is perfect love. I cannot do more. Well, that is what Christ has done. He is the King and Priest; and He makes us kings and priests too: and it is worth so much the more because it is the very thing He has Himself.

Another thing we get—the perfect love of the Father. Not the love of Jesus alone, but the love of the Father, the knowledge of which Jesus gives us. He makes us priests unto His Father. Was ever love like this? Never. Was Christ ever anything else? Never. He is nothing but this perfectness of love for us. And the sum of it all is, “he loves us.” Has He anything else to say to us? No. What love had to do, it has done. Oh, in the simplicity of thankful hearts, to say, “he has made peace by the blood of his cross!” “Unto him that loves us, and has washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion, for ever and ever. Amen.”

## Chapter 2:1-11

It is good to be occupied with spiritual affections, or rather with the subjects which vivify them, with those things which are not seen, which God has revealed to us, and which are of the world to come. The Holy Spirit

presents to us many of those things which we shall enjoy later, and with much more detail than we can expect.

That which the Spirit says to the churches is for the peace and the joy of the children of God in the glory which is coming. The Spirit says, “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.” This, therefore, concerns us individually. According to His faithfulness, the Lord Jesus takes cognizance of the present state of the church. That which is in question here is not accomplished salvation, but the particular state in which the church is found, or even the state of such and such an individual, as we may judge from verse 2. “I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience,” etc. Then also, “He that hath an ear, let him hear,” etc. At the same time, Jesus is there revealed to us as judging the state of those to whom this is addressed. There are also particular promises fit to sustain the remnant of faithful ones, in the midst of the special circumstances by which their faith is tried. The promises which are presented here, differ from those which are made to the church in an absolute and general manner. They apply also to the church, and the church enjoys them. However, they have particularly as their object to sustain faith in the circumstances in which we may be found, whether as a remnant in the midst of the unfaithfulness of the mass of the professors, or as faithful in the midst of the trials which we are called to pass through. Now, for the conflict, we need discernment, in order to understand where the conflict is found; what is its main point or speciality. Faithfulness is found in contrast with the evil which the Lord reveals, because we are on God’s side in this world.

We need to understand that the interests of Christ are our own—that His battles are our battles; and the more we lay hold of this idea, the stronger and happier we are (Exodus 17:16). Happily, in Jesus these things do not fail us. Although Jesus identifies Himself with the church, He nevertheless judges the state of the church, and here He presents Himself as judge, but in love.

The book is divided into three distinct parts: first, the things which John saw; secondly, the things which are; thirdly, those which are to come. The things which John saw are mentioned in chapter 1; those which are, in chapters 2 and 3, including that which concerns the seven churches; those which are to come begin at chapter 4, and fill the remainder of the Apocalypse. Christ manifests Himself here as judge, not as in the latter day for the wicked, but as a priest who discerns all in order to remedy the evil.

You will find in Leviticus that, after the consecration of the priests, all the things as to which it was a question of being clean and unclean are presented together. It was they who were to know how to discern between the clean and the unclean. The priesthood had to discern everything. And it is also what belongs to the Christian, not as to one who fears the imputation of sin (although he has a responsibility), but because he has been anointed by God to distinguish between good and evil, according to the holiness of the service of God.

That is why Jesus takes to Himself this character of authority; that is the general idea which He gives of Himself. “These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks,” v. 1.

We find in all the addresses to the churches these words, “I know thy works.” He takes cognizance of all that is done. It is very comforting that God has put us in such a position; and we are responsible according to the grace of the position. This responsibility increases according to the measure of grace in which we are placed. A servant and a slave do that which the master demands; but the child enters more intimately into the interests of the family, and he is responsible according to the position in which he is placed. It is good that we too should consider ourselves under this point of view. An Israelite might have done things which a priest would not have dared to do; many things were required of the priest for the service of God, to which no other man among the people was bound; then he was to discern good from evil, according to his nearness to God, as the anointed of God. We ourselves, also, are priests. We have the knowledge of good and evil— a privilege acquired through sin at the beginning; so that this has been our ruin, but, at the same time, a thing which proceeded from Him who willed it thus—a thing good in itself, and which we possess now according to the intelligence of the Holy Spirit, in virtue of the obedience of the second Adam. When Satan led away Adam to infringe the prohibition which God had made him, Satan added, “God doth know, that, in the day ye eat thereof”—of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil — “then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.” The word adds, “The Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil.”

Two things are always found, as in the garden of Eden, responsibility and life—the two trees. Adam acted in his

responsibility, and failed as to it, before having life. This is why God must needs drive him out of Eden, because God did not permit that he should have life together with sin. There are the two great principles, responsibility of good and evil, and life: Christ alone has reconciled them. When the law was introduced, it presented responsibility, and not life. The law places man in responsibility as to his salvation; but instead of life, it pronounces condemnation and death. Christ, on the contrary, takes the responsibility on Himself, and becomes at the same time the source of life. Christ took upon Himself our responsibility before the judgment of God, and has placed us under a much higher responsibility—responsibility according to that life which He has given us. Consequently, He judges Christians, not to condemn them, in their everyday conduct. But treating them according to the holiness of this life, He judges their walk, that grace may always be given them, according to their need, and to maintain them in communion with the Father and with Himself. He intercedes at the same time for His own before God, not to obtain their justification, which He has perfectly accomplished, but to take them out of their difficulties and maintain them in the path of faith.

Jesus, therefore, takes notice of the state of the church and says, “I know thy works.” It is not to condemn, but it is as being priest, and thus having to manifest the new man according to all the grace which is given him, and we shall see how far this responsibility goes.

Verses 2, 3. “I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: and

hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted." Here are many excellent things, and one might have thought that there was nothing but approbation; but it is not so. "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee." Christ cannot come down from the height of His love. He would have fruits according to the love which He has for us. A worldly person would say, Is it absolutely necessary that I should do that? Have I need of these things? Am I bound to do that, as a Christian? But the love of Christ cannot be content without seeing fruits. It is like a father who loves that his child should succeed, that he should bear fruits capable of rejoicing him, and in keeping with the love which he shews him. The child may be slothful or lazy, but the father devotes himself to him; if there is not a response to the care taken by that love, neither is there contentment on the part of the father. If there is not with the conscience of that love, the same ready response as at the beginning, there is not the sound which goes to the heart of Jesus. It is better not to play at all than to play false tones. One has abandoned one's first love, and there is not that love which responds to love. Jesus is not a hard Master; He only requires these things from us in love. He says, "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." It is something which does not suit the ear of Christ, something which is not in tune: it is the first thing of which Christ takes notice— "thou hast left thy first love." They had patience; they could not bear them which were evil; they had laboured for the name of Jesus, but— "they had left their first love." If love is wanting, something essential is wanting. The heart has begun to be occupied with itself. A wife may do for her husband all that she did before, work as much, be

wanting in nothing as to her duties; but if the husband does not find in her that which satisfies the heart, all is wanting: the wife has ceased to be occupied with him in the same manner.

We love something, and if it is the affections of faith, Christ is the object of them. As soon as He ceases to be the object of our thoughts, the thing is seen; He at least perceives it. After being delivered, we are full of love, and we only see the light. We think that sin is dead within. In the measure that the heart is rilled with other things, the springs of this love are weakened; and if we ask ourselves, Do you still think as much of your Saviour as when you received Him for the first time into your heart? We notice that we have left our first love. I can be occupied with good things; I may seek souls; but if I no longer think as much about Jesus—about what He is for me— all is marred. If I am before God, I am always little; I feel myself responsible to God, and I am nothing. I judge myself, there is love; but if I get far from Him, I think of myself, and weakness increases. There is no longer the same discernment. There is no longer the same love. One is no longer at a height to view things as Christ views them; one is not at a height to shew grace. This is the leaving of one’s first love, and of the patience of our hope.

The apostle Paul, writing to the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 1:3), reminds them continually of “their work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope, in our Lord Jesus Christ.” In the Ephesian church are found works, labour, and patience; but they are no longer the work of faith, the labour of love, the patience of hope. The Lord says to them, “Thou hast abandoned thy first love.” Each one of us can address the same question to himself, “Am

I as much occupied with Christ? Have I not left my first love?" And, if we are in this state, cannot the Lord apply these words to us? "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."

Verse 7. "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life." It is not with us as with Adam, who had only a responsibility of obedience: our responsibility refers to a conflict with Satan; and the proof that we are the strongest is that we can conquer the power of Satan. We may fail, it is true. If we were in nowise in the conflict against Satan, it would be because we had not life; but, besides this conflict in principle against him, one must also conquer in the details.

The tree of life, which is here referred to, is no longer in man's paradise, but in God's. In Eden, the paradise of man, there were two trees. Satan succeeded in entering there, and all was marred; but God's paradise was arranged by Him and for Him, after all was lost, and that by a work of love and glory, which causes the other to be forgotten. The paradise of God is a work of grace, which is the consequence of what it is God's good pleasure to do when man has failed. The paradise of man was a test of what man is; that of God is the consequence of the fact that Christ has resisted and overcome all evil. As the other was the place where the responsibility of the first Adam was—responsibility as to which he failed—we are placed with the life of Christ in us, and put to the test in the midst of evil with that life, not as men, but as Christians. The world thinks to be put to the test as men, but they are mistaken; the Christian alone is put to the test, in order to manifest in the world a life which is not

of this world. Now let us see how Christ introduces us into the midst of all that.

The question is not, if I conduct myself well, I shall be accepted. No, it is not a question of that. The world thinks that it is a question of a conflict, destined to satisfy certain demands of God; it is an error. For the Christian, the conflict is the exercise of the power of the Holy Spirit in him who has already eternal life, who obtains the victory over the world, of which Satan is the prince and the head. In order for us to enter into the conflict, it is necessary for Christ to take away all our sins; for if any remained, it would be with God that we should have to do. The difficulty was found on that side, and it is the practical state of souls not set free; but we must be without sin before God; and being His in this world, and He being for us, we can enter into this conflict—where evil does not enter at all, where flesh cannot subsist—and there have the victory over Satan.

Verses 8-10. The Lord addresses Himself here to the church of Smyrna, as being “the first and the last, which was dead and is alive; I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty (but thou art rich), and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer; behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” It is very evident that the promises, and the character of Christ, apply to the circumstances of that church. Here is something striking. It is not a question of knowing how far the heart responds to Christ; but of knowing if it is

worth while leaving everything, even one's own life, in order to enjoy the privileges which are in Christ.

That which comes in here is the result of leaving the first love, as a church: for it is not necessarily true as to individuals. Persecutions follow as the consequence of that which is not in the mind of God. The widows complain of being neglected in the daily ministration; Acts 6:1. It is no longer Christ who alone occupies the thoughts: they have left their first love. When that happens, the world holds somewhat the place of Christ.

The church must learn that everything is above. "Fear none of those things which thou shalt have to suffer." Christ might have said, Thou shalt not suffer; but He wishes us to understand that we must be little, poor, and despised, and that one cannot be rich. I do not speak of temporal riches, but of that poverty which has nothing but its faith to present; and that is what God wishes. If the church suffer, if it is tormented in different ways, there is also another suffering. The church had nothing to present but its faith, which could sustain it. Now the Jews who were there boasted of being the true people of God; they said they were rich, and blasphemed. The Christians, for them, were only miserable heretics, and sectarians: and the church felt its position contemptible in the eyes of those who, according to appearance, were the people of God. That is more painful than when the world speaks evil of us. The church was afflicted, persecuted, and poor; but Jesus says to it, "Fear none of those things." The Jews said insulting things; but the Lord said, "Thou art rich." In this we have a lesson. Christ does not prevent our suffering: we must make up our minds to suffer; but if Christ says to us, "Thou art rich," that is enough for us. And He will only have for

disciples those who are content with what He says, “Thou art rich.” If any one is not satisfied with that, well, let him go to the world.

There is, however, something remarkable here. Jesus says to them, “The devil shall put some of you into prison.” He attributes it to Satan, as if He were not able to prevent it. He says you shall be tried (v. 10). I leave thee to suffer; it is the time of the power of darkness, but it will end. Whatever, then, may be the power of Jesus, He changes nothing in the position of actual suffering. It is necessary that the moral ways of God should have their course, and that the work should be accomplished according to the good or the evil which is found in those in whom it takes place. It is necessary that He should leave to the enemy his own part, according to that which is due to him, so to speak—according to the state of those who are the objects of the government of God. He leaves power to Satan in order to manifest the glory of Christ by the church; and if we are not near Christ, Satan gets the victory as to things present, and Christ is not glorified.

All power belongs to Christ: we have nothing to fear. But Satan is there, and the church is responsible for the manifestation of the glory of Christ; and as soon as we leave Christ, we can no longer do it. It is a question of realising all this power of Christ, according to the position where we are individually; and we must be near enough to Christ to get the victory over Satan, and to do perfectly well all that we are called to do according to our position. It is not a question of leading or of being a general. If each soldier does his duty in his own place, the victory is won; and that may go so far as to lay down one’s life. It is not a question of getting life: we have it;

and we shall reign. It is a question of the church placed there to manifest the power of Christ by the Holy Spirit, to manifest His glory where evil exists, before spiritual wickednesses, and to enjoy the same results of the victory as Christ Himself: the crown of life in the paradise of God, as Jesus has Himself, and with Him.

It is not only not being lost; but it is to be with God, and to get the victory over Satan, who has the power of death. What we have to understand is that each one in his place, from the head down to the skirts of the garment, and however little he may be, has his place and his responsibility to manifest the power of Christ; and if he is not in the power of Christ, he is overcome. May God give us this strength, and render us capable of accomplishing in all things His will!

## Chapter 2:8-17

Last time we were speaking of the character of judgment running through this book of Revelation. We see the Lord in these epistles judging the churches, and then the world; we see Him taking notice of everything: “I will judge every one of you according to his works.”

It is well to see the difference between the church as seen in Christ, and as on earth representing Christ. She partakes of His glory, as united to Him; and as a vessel contains His glory, and represents it on earth—the “epistle of Christ, known and read of all men.” Responsibility down here does not touch salvation in any wise. He had promised, in His faithfulness, to carry them on towards the fulness of His glory, and He judges them for failure in the use of the responsibility He laid upon them. God’s own people are profited by it, but the

“simple pass on, and are punished,” and at length, as a body, they are “spued out of his mouth.”

All chastening is intended to turn to profit for the church. In the address to each church there is a particular revelation of Christ corresponding to the peculiar judgment, and there are special promises to each. It is not here the supply of grace from the Head for the body, as in Ephesians, but the responsibility of individuals in their walk. Another thing we have to remember is, that the object of these addresses is not to shew the power of the Holy Ghost actively at work. If it is judgment, it clearly is not this. Christ cannot be said to judge the work of the Holy Ghost. It is power in grace if the Holy Ghost works, but Christ’s judgment is His estimate of the practical use made of the privileges given. The Lord looks at the church as responsible for all the love of which it is the object. The candlestick is to be taken away when there is no profit. It is not individuals judged here, but churches—what “the Spirit saith to the churches,” and there is no return found; therefore it is to be taken out of its place.

Then the address is to “him that hath an ear, let him hear.” There is individual energy to overcome, and it is overcoming in the condition in which they were—it is overcoming things within, not overcoming the world. “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith”—there was that as well, of course; but here it is overcoming evil in the church. We must remember that the church has fallen from its first love, when Smyrna is addressed; and the church ceases to be a place of security to the saint, the moment the Spirit so addresses the church as failing; therefore individuals are singled out. I get myself as an individual singled out,

but the church addressed. I have to make good my certainty by the word. The church may be right in this or that; but I have to discern by the word what I can follow, and what I cannot. This is a principle of great importance. It is not that there were no blessings for these churches—they were highly commended in many things. But the churches were being judged by Christ's word.

Development is a common word in use now, but it has in it the principle of infidelity. There is nothing in God to be developed. The word is a revelation of God in Christ. In 1 John 1 we find it said, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which our hands have handled of the word of life: for the life was manifested," etc. It is clear there can be no development of that which has been manifested. Unless we can get something beyond "God is light," there can be no development. There is much to be learnt about Him; but it is a Person here presented, not a doctrine. If it were a doctrine, we might get something added; but it is not a question of doctrine, but a living Person that has been revealed, and in the address to this first church we find that they have left their first love—they have left something; there is no development in that. God cannot set up anything but what is perfect, nothing contrary to His mind, or inferior to His mind. Look at man. We see him brought out perfect, but he could not keep his first estate. Then there was a perfect priesthood established, but there was failure in Nadab and Abihu. He "planted wholly a right seed." What comes from God must be perfect, and cannot by any other operation. There may be decline, and there is decline. This is a very simple truth, but it

cuts up by the roots a whole system of thoughts and feelings and judgments.

Then we find another grand principle brought out here. He exercises the heart by bringing in the hostile power of the world to hinder decay, and to separate from the evil around— and this is tribulation. Take Christ Himself, see His perfect-ness as the Servant of God: “He learned obedience by the things that he suffered.” Much brought out through trial, opposition, slighting; His path led, darker and darker, down to the cross. He met Satan’s power, and even the wrath of God. He overcame all, and is set down with the Father on His throne, and in it all, it only brought out the growing manifestation of the perfection in Him.

There is another thing with regard to us. Persecution and trial are used to hinder our departure from God. There is the constant tendency in the heart to take rest in prosperous circumstances, the flesh turns to what is agreeable in the world; but it will not do. God says, “Arise, and depart hence, for this is not your rest.” Persecution is the natural portion of the children of God. When the church was taking rest at the beginning, persecution soon came in. In Matthew the principles and character of the kingdom were brought out in the sermon on the mount: “Blessed”— “Blessed”— “Blessed,” etc. Blessing is the character, and then the grace of Christ was just beginning to be manifested; the miracles had begun to be performed, etc., and God was now shewing them what was “blessed “in His sight. Towards the end of the Gospel, instead of blessing, it is, “Woe”—“Woe”— “Woe”; “your house is left unto you desolate”; because the opposition was fully brought out by the perfect manifestation of what was in Him.

God sends us tribulation, opposition from without, to bring out grace, and to hinder decay. With Christ it was always and only the former. But take the case of Job: God uses Satan as an instrument of blessing to him, as He does with the church. About Job God begins the conversation, “Hast thou considered my servant Job?” etc.; and God uses the trial to bring out to him what Job had never known before. Then, again, take the case of Paul. He had to be taken up into the third heaven, to get such a sight of the glory as to fit him for the peculiar service to the church to which he was called. Then what use would the flesh make of this? It would puff up. Then a messenger of Satan is sent to buffet him, and he prays that it may be removed. But he is not to be rid of the thorn in the flesh, but gets the assurance, “My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” This it was that strengthened him for after service, not the being in the third heaven and the sight of the glory, in one sense, for it was to be God’s strength, not Paul’s. Take another case in Peter. He needed to be sifted, because of the self-confidence in him: therefore the Lord allows Satan to sift him, but He prayed for him. When confidence in self was pulled down, then he could be used to help others.

It seems astonishing that God should use Satan as the instrument to try the saints here; but it is so, and He says, “the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried.” In this church we find the state is decaying (they have lost their first love), and God has to put her into the furnace. She gets into the place where Satan persecuted before; she gets where Satan’s seat is. “I know thy works, and tribulation, and thy poverty (but thou art rich).” God knew that they were rich, they were

multiplied in the world, and then there was a tendency to rest in the circumstances put into, instead of in the Lord Himself. The Lord would not suffer this. He must put them into trouble, because He would make them lean on Him. He would cast the church on her own proper position altogether. He will give them to find the hostility of the world, in order that they may be brought back to know their own privileges in their own real position. How strange that the church should need persecution, not only that Christ should suffer them to be cast into prison, but also that they were to be faithful even to death! And the promise to them is “the crown of life.” They may be martyrs, but there is positive blessing and honour for them. Christians are seeking what the world does. If the Lord turns the current, He puts them through the fire. If the church has the world, in any sense down here, it must give up a heavenly, a crucified, Christ.

You cannot associate the world and religion, but it was the object of Judaism to connect them. It set about to mingle the tastes and feelings of nature with God, and whenever the world is connected with religion, there must be priesthood let in, because the moment you get man as he is, he cannot stand before God. But now Christians are priests—no need of an order of priests between God and you; you are a heavenly, not an earthly people. “He suffered without the gate, let us also go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.” The moment the blood is carried into the heavenly places, we are associated with Him, and we are taken outside the world altogether, and connected with the heavenly places. Judaism connected the two. Our place is outside the camp, and inside the veil, with

Him. Carnal ordinances connected man with God under Judaism; but when Christ is rejected on earth, the place is in heaven, and there cannot longer be the mixture of the two. We are raised up together, and made to sit together in the heavenly places in Him. We have no middle thing if Christ is our portion. The moment we lose the sense of this, God must let loose the power of Satan to keep us in a straight path.

The character in which He addresses this church is as the First and the Last, One dead and alive. Looked at as man, He is dead to this world, cast out and rejected. We now must, like Mary Magdalene, get an empty tomb, or a living Christ. If your heart is upon Christ, all that you can find in this world is an empty tomb with nothing in it. Then you have nothing to do with the world, for all heavenly blessing is yours. The constant tendency is to slip away from this, because, if we do not cleave to the world, it cleaves to us. This was the case of the churches here. They needed to be put through the fire to separate them from the world. Judaism had crept in; then development (Gnostics, etc.), “intruding into those things which they have not seen, vainly puffed up by their fleshly minds.” Then persecution comes, and blows upon all this. The history of these times shews that the living power in the church was not in its doctrines, but in its martyrs.

Verse 13. “I know where thou dwellest, where Satan’s throne is.” Here is another and more subtle character of evil. The Lord gives them all the credit He can. It has passed through tribulation, sent on account of worldly corruption from without, but here there is doctrinal corruption within. It is in the world where Satan’s seat is, and it has been living there ever since. (It is not a

question here of individual conduct, but of the corporate position of the church.)

It was at the cross of Christ that the world emphatically became the seat of Satan—not that, as some say, his power was then defeated. The world had been first put under man, tried on the ground of responsibility; then it had been under trial in the exercise of power in Nebuchadnezzar. Satan risked everything upon getting rid of Christ, but then it was his own power was really broken—he just destroyed himself; but he has ever since led the world (as the universal instrument of Satan) to reject Christ; from that moment he is the prince of this world—until that rejection he could not be said to be so. It was when Christ was on the cross he led the mind of the world. The church has been taken out of the world, to be associated with the true Prince; but alas! it has taken an earthly character. But if it is taken up, and rejected with Christ, then what has it to do with the world? “Why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances?” etc. There is no possibility of escaping it in any other way but as being dead with Christ. Ordinances are not Christ. They have been nailed to the cross of Christ. If we are dead with Christ, we are dead to ordinances. Man in the flesh must have something between him and the Head. If united to the Head, there is nothing wanted to bring near.

“But I have a few things against thee. Thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam.” He had taught them the evil of this corrupting association through a persecuting world; but Christ could never say,” There is Balaam’s teaching for you.” He could never talk of the moral acquiescence in evil as the proper trial of the saints—not like the tribulation before. You have got

Balaam then, not Jezebel yet. Balaam would associate them with the world, but Christ says I have passed through death for you, and now you must for Me. He would riot step in to hinder the consequences of the position into which they had brought themselves, but He could own their faithfulness.

Balaam could not succeed in enchantment against Israel. The question was whether Israel might pass into Canaan, and Balaam (a frightful character) was employed to hinder them if he could. The effort was to get Jehovah to curse His people, but he could not, and he was forced only to bless. There is no possibility of using Satan's power against the people of God. God held the lips of Balaam, and obliged him to bless in spite of himself. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." He has no power as an adversary. It is as a tempter he has power. When the enemy could not succeed in bringing a curse upon the people, he sought to seduce them into wickedness, and then how could God bring them in? (Num. 25). In this church we find he has come in as a seducing Satan, instead of being without as a persecuting Satan. Then they were exhorted to fear none of those things which should come upon them. Weakness is in fear. When we look into the persecution we tremble. Out of it we look out to Christ, where there is faith. Thus the faithful one is separated from the world by that persecution, and made to feel what his own proper portion is. But when the church is on Satan's territory, he says, You shall have as much as you like—as much as ever I can give you—for I will seduce you into it. In enriching them with earthly things, he seduces them from God. Balaam was a prophet, but a false prophet, just as the evil servant who hid his lord's

money was a servant, though an evil one; and we find him coming in within the church (ver. 14), and if he can make it all ease in the world, comfortable in the world, his end is gained. Then they might go and eat in the idols' temples: doctrine of the Nicolaitanes follows—internal corruption. In Nicolaitanism we see the flesh acting in the church; through Balaam the world had come in. It is very sad to see how the church declined after the tribulation had brightened it up for God, and our hearts ought to bear the burden. By being thus associated with the world, by being content to dwell where Satan's seat is, they had got the door open for evil doctrines—Antinomianism, a fleshly religion of demons. Satan did not want to persecute when he could corrupt. Here it is only teaching false doctrine, in the next church we see there are children born. The promise to the faithful here is a very sweet and peculiar one.

The word is that by which Christ draws the church to Himself. He comes out with a "sharp sword with two edges," v. 12. The word of God is the resource of the faithful, and the promise is more individual. In the sorrow and pain of seeing those belonging to God not departing from iniquity, there is bound up in the heart this link of secret fidelity to God which associates them with a suffering Christ. They shall have to eat of the hidden manna. It was hidden faithfulness which was to be rewarded with this hidden manna; the fruits, indeed, would be manifest to all around, but it was a secret between God and the heart, an inward link with that which never changes in its character. What is this hidden manna? We find manna spoken of as the bread which cometh down from heaven: "My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven." The manna for the

Israelites was spread about the camp, not hidden. Christ is the provision for daily walk. But besides this they were to take a pot, and lay it up before Jehovah: when they had got into the land, they were to have the memorial of what they had enjoyed in the wilderness. So we in heaven shall have God's eternal delight in what Christ has been down here as the suffering Christ. The memory of what Christ has been in the wilderness is God's eternal delight. With us, he that has been faithful with Christ in rejection from this world will have the everlasting joy of fellowship with God in the delight in Christ as the suffering Man, which He had and has and will have for ever. It will be the same kind of delight, though of course always in different measure. If we are walking faithfully with a rejected Christ, instead of letting Balaam into our hearts, we shall enjoy Christ down here now; but we cannot enjoy Him while we are going on with the world. If we so pretend, it becomes Nicolaitanism or Antinomianism. Even in the Gospels what enjoyment can we have if walking in the spirit of the world? The imagination may be fed, but the soul is not satisfied. God has not given His Son to be played with, but to be fed upon.

There are public joys in heaven, thousands of voices echoing the song, but there are secret ones also. Joys with Christ we all share in common, but He must have our individual affections as well as our common affections— "a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." That name has no meaning for any one else but him to whom it is given. Christ reveals Himself to the soul, "and a stranger doth not intermeddle with its joy." Christ has joys for us as individuals, and my joy you

cannot have, and yours I cannot have. This joy of communion will never be interrupted, and individual communion will not hinder the universal joy. This promise specially relates to the future, but it is the source of joy and strength now. The Spirit of God makes it anticipative of that day. We may have now this “white stone” from Christ, this secret expression of His grace and love to my heart. Others cannot have it for me. How it makes this white stone more precious than anything else, though all the world may think I am wrong! Of course, I must judge of all by the word. The world may talk about things, but Christ has talked to me, and He will own in that day all He has said to me.

What a sorrowful thing that Balaam should be teaching the saints! But, never mind: there is no trouble whatever in the church that does not bring the soul into deeper communion with Christ than anything else could. Then is the opportunity afforded for overcoming the evil within.

## Chapters 3 And 4

The contrast between the addresses to the church at Sardis and Philadelphia is similar to what is found in 1 Thessalonians, where to the world the coming of Christ is spoken of as a thief in the night, but not so to the saints in the world. “Of the times and seasons, brethren, ye have no need, that I write unto you.” The professing church at Sardis will have the character of Christ’s coming in judgment.

Verse 2. “I have not found thy works perfect.” No decay of spiritual life ever lowers God’s standard of holiness in the church. The church at Ephesus is reproved for losing first love—here it is “works,” v. 1. All resources of spiritual government and power are perfect in Christ.

“These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars.” Christ has the perfectness of seven spirits and seven stars.

Whatever we have to do in this world—common occupation, business, anything—the great object is to represent Christ. If my soul is knit to Him (“my soul followeth hard after thee”), we shall measure all our path as to how far we can do justice to Christ. “If thine eye be single,” etc. There may be a hundred wrong ways, but I must take care to get into the right one. Whether I have made much or little progress as a Christian, I must have Christ my object, as the end; Christ will be reflected all down the path, then every step onward will be brighter and brighter. It is not going fast on the road, that is the great point, but going always in it (the faster the better too), “forgetting those things that are. behind, and reaching forth to those things that are before, I press towards the goal for the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus.” We must have our hearts set upon Christ, though, in one sense, not nearer Christ at the end than at the beginning; in another, we are a great deal nearer. The fact of our resurrection is not nearer, but we are nearer in the moral effect of the expectation. Of the church it is said, “that he might cleanse it by the washing of water.” In one sense it is perfectly clean, but in another it is getting cleaner through the application, by the Spirit, of the word to the individual members of Christ’s body, and so producing in the whole moral likeness to the image of Christ. So the outward fact of resurrection is, and may still be future, but it is the power of the truth of resurrection wrought in his heart that Paul desired.

There are some in Sardis of whom it is said, “they shall walk with me in white,” but the Philadelphian state is one of far more blessing. There is energy in the midst of Sardis encouraged, but there is approbation given to Philadelphia— “hast kept my word.” The great exercise of faith will be keeping the “word of Christ’s patience,” for the days are come in which it is said, “Where is the promise of his coming?” The heart set on Christ Himself gets such a sense of His blessedness, that it is kept fresh in the hope of seeing Him. “For we shall see him as he is,” it is said, not “shall be.” We shall see Him as He is now, the glorified Man, and we should so realise Him now, and so realising Him, I have so tasted what He is, that I want Him to come. In one sense He cannot come, but is waiting in patience till His word be fulfilled. “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me.” He waits, He has not got it yet; and I must wait. My heart has got such a connection with what Christ is, is so knit up with Him, that it can find no satisfaction in anything else. “My patience”; “He shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied.” The Father’s will is that He shall lose nothing.

The character of the promise to him that overcometh corresponds with that which they were exercised in. What is the promise? He shall be a pillar in the temple of my God; it is not said, the temple of God merely. Mark the number of times “my” comes in in this verse. You have been associated with My patience, and now you shall have the same association with God that I have. “Thou hast a little strength.” See what little strength comes to: a crown then! Great strength now, is mixed with carnal things, and will be weakness then. “I will keep thee from the hour of temptation.” Mark that word

“from.” Does the Lord delight in trying His people? No, He would rather keep them from it, but He must try us for our good. Still, we may well use that petition, “Lead us not into temptation,” for it is a sad thing if God is obliged, as in Job’s case, to try us by throwing us into Satan’s hands for the destruction of the flesh. There will be trial come upon all the world; as long as there is a grain of wheat in it, He will sift, sift, sift it, till every grain is separated; but He will not have us to be so separated. “I will keep thee from the hour,” etc. If the saint goes on in the consciousness of little strength, keeping the word of Christ’s patience, in fellowship with God’s long-suffering, he will be kept from it.

In passing through the wilderness God gives us two things as means of blessing down here—the word of God and the priesthood of Christ. There is the promise of entering into His rest, and to everything that comes in between our apprehension of that rest and us, the word of God comes as a two-edged sword. The word of God is “sharper than any two-edged sword,” etc. What tends to unbelief? Every thought and intent, every little root that strikes into this world, everything not from God, everything that separates from our desire to see Jesus and be with Him. We are in the wilderness, but every heart rests either in Egypt or Canaan: it is Canaan in hope, or Egypt in heart. Whatever does not bear the thought of God separates from Him, as the word shews us. Sorrow, affliction is not wrong, but if the will does not submit, it is rebellion, and that is wrong. All open sin is cut up by the word, the two-edged sword. All our weakness and infirmity are borne by Him who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. We must be going on

with Christ, and in the consciousness of going on. “Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.”

“I will write upon him my new name”: He will stamp it on those who overcome as associated with Him in the temple of His God. He will give us His own portion as risen and heavenly.

The inscription to the epistle to the church of the Laodiceans (or in Laodicea, as in the margin) differs from those to the other churches, inasmuch as here it is the character of Christ in Himself, apart from the body, instead of His relationship with the church. Christ remains the same, although the church is gone to ruin. God could put His Amen on Him if the church fail ever so, and He is available for every opened ear. The tides belonging to the Lord are applied to each, answering to the condition of the church; and here there is the positive declaration that He will spue them out. There is nothing owned—all good shut up in Christ—but there is rebuke and chastening. He is outside, standing at the door and knocking, “if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him.” There is the entire definite and final rejection of the professing church pictured, no hope held out but judgment, positive and definite, prophesied of—nauseous to Christ, as lukewarm water.

There is, however, love at work still, as with Israel in Jeremiah 2. Repentance is called for, but, of course, God knew the body would not repent. “Behold I stand at the door and knock.” These words of invitation to those who hear are of a different character from those in Canticles: “The voice of my beloved that knocketh; open to me,” etc.; where it is awakening the heart afresh of the

Jewish people, who had been asleep a long time, stirring up the stupid, sleepy thing, by appealing to the affections. Here it is at the close of the testimony Christ is seeking to gather up any lingering desire after Him; but the promise to those who overcome, though most blessed, is of a lower and more general character than that given to the other churches. To sit with Him on the throne—this is what all will have who reign with Him a thousand years. All who are raised reign with Him. To the other churches there is something more special promised—this is only trenching on the kingdom. But Christ Himself will come in to him, "and sup with him, and he with me." He says Christ will come, and give you to enjoy with Him at His table, not come down with you to your things.

Verse 17. "The wretched one" is more literal. If a person says, I have got Christ, and so is careless about his walk, thinking he has got all he wants, it might come up to this state of things. But the whole description seems to apply more to those who have not Christ at all. They had got all that could make a fair show in the flesh—numbers, learning, prosperity—like Babylon, which says, 'I sit as a queen, and have need of nothing.'

Verse 18. "Gold." Divine righteousness is what the soul wants in order to be with God. "White raiment "shews the purity of the righteousness of Christ. The wisdom spoken of in Proverbs is a spirit of value for these things.

It is a dreadful thing to be associated with a form of things, when the spirit and life are wanting. The fig-tree was, as regards Israel, an exhibition of this state. The thing to be overcome in such a state of things is

lukewarmness; and to be able to overcome lukewarmness you must be hot yourself. “Moab had not been emptied from vessel to vessel.” Affection to Christ in hidden ones, as individuals, may be found, but faith is not so much brought out in the assembly—a strong manifestation of the declension in the corporate state of these Christians and of the fact that man spoils everything God sets up amongst men.

Verse 19. “As many as I love I rebuke and chasten”—convicting the conscience. Nothing is healed until that is done; it is not only an expression of His displeasure, but bringing it home to the soul—it is to “as many as I love.” Whatever amount of exercise of conscience there may be, it is a proof of God’s love; this is comfort to many a troubled soul. Men often speak of judgments as if they were from man, not God, but man’s heart rebels more against God than against man. Job complained of God more than of the Sabeans. It is because God touches the conscience. It is a sorrowful thing when God’s voice is not heard in the chastening. There are more pains taken with this Christian than with any. It is a different thing from Paul in 2 Corinthians 12, where he says, “Though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved”; as if he said, I shall not cease to love you, though the way I take to shew it to you makes you love me less. Here the meaning is, although they did not love Him, but were sunk amongst the rest, He would not give them up.

“He that hath an ear,” etc. Christ is a Son over His own house. “To him that overcometh … even as I also overcame,” etc. Christ had to go through all this, and to overcome. Blessed grace! He has made us heirs and joint-heirs. Let us take a lesson from Saul as to overcoming. He overcame the Ammonites; but the

Philistines, whom he was specially raised up to conquer, he never overcame. If people do not do the thing they are sent to do, it does not matter how much they do.

Notice that this address to the Laodiceans is a threat—it is not said, Except ye repent—not the fact of its accomplishment: their moral condition. They will be totally done with morally, but the Philadelphian state of the true Christian may run into it—only we must remember, the “spueing out” will be after the remnant are gathered out of it, after the church is taken away. The outward state may go on to Antichrist, and then be given up.

## Chapter 4

There are two points I desire to notice in this chapter in connection with the perfect peace of the soul which belongs to the redeemed, and the consequent spirit and character of their worship. The subject matter of this book consists of judgment, for, with the exception of the church in bliss, the character of all is judgment. God is sitting on a throne, and His throne is not in the character of grace, but in that of Sinai. Not that the throne will be on the earth, but that the judgments, the lightnings and thunderings, which are coming on the earth, will issue from this throne. In this introductory chapter (which it is as to the earth) we have God in the character of Lord God Almighty, and not in the character of Father; but the names given in the Old Testament—Jehovah, Lord God Almighty— are in connection with His power which will be put forth in the coming judgments.

Now what shews out the perfect peace to which we as believers are brought, is seeing the twenty-four elders sitting on thrones round about the throne, whence those

judgments are issuing, in perfect peace. They are close to the throne, round about* the throne from whence all flow, and yet they are not at all alarmed—no disturbance, no trembling—because associated with the very throne from which all the judgments come.. Then mark another thing. They are sitting, not even here seen standing, but sitting in perfect peace, like David, who went in and sat before the Lord. They worship, it is true, and fall down, which is a much higher thing than sitting. But how thoroughly this scene shews into what a place of perfect peace we are brought, that, when the judgments break forth, there is nothing in them to alarm us. They were seen sitting in perfect peace, and this is our place; so that however we may be tried down here in the world, when we come before God we can and ought to sit in peace, and rest there.

Then there is another thing. When the character of God is opened out in the threefold ascriptions of “Holy, holy, holy,” does this disturb them? No. So with us, when the full character of God’s holiness is seen in His justice, making good His holiness. If in the presence of this holiness I thought there was a spot on me, I could not be at peace before Him. What a blessing to have our home and place of rest where the thrice holy God is!

When they hear, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty,” their affections move them, and they fall down immediately in worship. While the judgments move them not the least, their affections take them off their thrones in their falling down to worship. It is the effect of being in perfect undisturbed peace that their affections find utterance in praise. They lay their crowns at His feet, attributing all to Him. They fall on their faces; this is a deeper thing than even sitting in peace before Him.

“Thou art worthy … for thou hast created all things,” etc. This is intelligent worship; they know why He is worthy —they know it for themselves (as in chapter 5), for He bought them to God by His blood.

There was no terror awakened in them when the thunderings and lightnings were going on; no, nor when the character of a thrice holy God is opened out: but when the glory is spoken of they worship. If there is fear, there can be no worship. “Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness.” But grace has set us in the place of worship by the power of the Holy Ghost: being made kings and priests unto God and His Father, we can worship Him. We are not in the glory yet, but may we grow in the sense of what He is, and worship Him who is worthy to be glorified.

This is God’s claim as Creator; chapter 5 is the Lamb’s title in redemption, leading to worship. The kings and priests in chapter 5 include more than the church. They have a royal, a priestly character, being more than the bride. The bride restrictively, does not come in until chapter 19. The subject of the whole book of Revelation is the throne preparing the world for the kingdom; but the kingdom is not ready without the bride, and therefore she is mentioned before the close of the book.

In verse 4 it is “four-and-twenty thrones,” not “seats.” Our translators were afraid to go so far as to say “thrones,” but the word is the same as in the first clause of the verse. Here we see the happy place the church is brought into. They are sitting in dignity and peace, while all the circumstances of judgment are proceeding from the throne. They are unmoved by the light nings and thunderings, etc. But mark the difference when the

living creatures say, Holy, holy, holy, and give thanks. Instead of trembling at the holiness of God—which as sinners they would have done—they fall down to worship; and it is intelligent worship, for they say, “for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they were, and have been created.”

## Chapter 4

The fourth and fifth chapters of this book help us to understand the present heavenly character and position of the saints, being descriptive of their actual position during the time of the judgments being poured out. The church is not actually seen as such, until she appears as the bride at the close of the book.

The proper subject of this book is not grace, but judgment; though, no doubt, the patience of God in executing judgment is grace. But the book is one of judgment, even as regards the churches; for the Son of man is seen walking among them, taking notice of their conduct. Having gone through the professing body, judging its ways and its works (while those who overcome have their portion in blessing) He spues its last state out of His mouth; and then He enters on the judgments which befall the world. Before entering on the detail of these judgments, He gives a preliminary view of the position of the saints, as we have it in this and the next chapters.

There are three subjects distinctly marked in the first chapter as comprised in this book. First, the glory and the manifestation of Christ Himself, the things seen; second, the churches, “The things which are”; third, the things hereafter, or “after these,” that is, the things which do not belong to the position of the church in its

testimony down here as a corporate body, but after it is as such spued out of Christ's mouth.

First, then, what is seen is the glory of Christ; secondly, "The things which are." The only question that can arise is as to the force and bearing of the expression "things which are." They are looked at as the condition of the church as a whole (not merely local churches). Thyatira was told to "hold fast till I come"; and to Philadelphia He says, "I will keep thee from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world"; clearly shewing it was not any mere local body that was addressed. We get in these instances the clearest intimation of its being the general aspect of the whole church looked at in the character of judgment, from the time of its leaving its first love, until it is entirely given up. The thing Christ is dealing with is the church, until an entirely new dispensation commences.

Another characteristic there is, as connected with "the things which are," the church is a witness for God. In the first church we see this ceased to be the case; and at the close of all, when it has entirely lost its character as such, Christ Himself, in the fullest and completest sense, presents Himself to take the inheritance, and takes up the character which it should have maintained, namely, the "Amen, the faithful and true witness." Then, as having taken up this character, He assumes the government of this world again; and that is quite a different thing from His walking amongst the churches in His judicial character upon earth, passing judgment upon those things that should have been a faithful witness of Him. Then the prophet sees Him in heaven, having done with the church upon the earth. He is not seen there as the Head of the body, but as the "Lamb

that has been slain”: the One rejected upon earth is upon the throne in heaven, from whence the judgments are to proceed. This is a most solemn moment. We see how the world is all going on under God’s eye, and with what patience He has been bearing with it.

In regard to God’s dealings with man, as man, after his fall, there have been, to speak generally, three great epochs: first, the period before Christ came; secondly, the present interval; thirdly, after He comes again. In one sense there were many epochs during the time He was trying man with constant and unwearied patience, to see if good could be got from him, before Christ was rejected. He knew full well what would be the result, but He was putting man to the test. He planted a vineyard: it brought forth wild grapes, the hedge was broken down, and a wild boar out of the forest devoured it; and at last He said, “I have yet one Son, they will reverence Him; but they said, This is the heir, come let us kill him.” Then the world was in a certain sense judged—not the judgment executed, but probation was ended. Satan, the prince of this world, is cast out. This took place when the true and rightful Prince, the Son of Him who owned the vineyard, was rejected. The world was then judged as to its character and ways. It is under condemnation, and therefore we are exhorted not to be conformed to this world. The plainest testimony is thus given against it morally. “The fashion of this world passeth away.” “If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” “The friendship of this world is enmity with God.” Having rejected His Son, the sentence of rejection is passed on it by God. The Son leaves it, and it would see Him no more. Satan is proved to be the prince of it. The Holy Ghost comes to convict it of sin, because of

unbelief; of righteousness, because Christ had left it to go to the Father; of judgment, because the testimony of judgment on the prince of this world is passed. The world is convicted of righteousness by these two things —the Son of God being rejected and ascended to the right hand of the Father, and the world seeing Him no more. And the Holy Ghost is given to the church, the vessel to contain the witness of the glorified Man till His coming again. The saints are gathered by the Holy Ghost, out of the world, to go forth to meet the Bridegroom.

What peace there is to our souls in seeing Christ's power over all creation, in connection with Satan's power being all broken! In the new age this will be fully manifested; and the working of miracles by the disciples was a sign of that energy and power of the Son of man which will be known in the world yet to come. "Behold I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you, but rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

The earth then was set aside when the rejected Man took His place in heaven. The Jews were the immediate instruments of His rejection; but man, the first Adam, was utterly set aside through this act; and the Jew was to be brought to see that in the flesh dwelleth no good thing, and that heavenly grace was entirely in connection with the new Man. He is gone into heaven, that "He might fill all things." He came down in grace as the last Adam, that He might bring in glory; and thus when the church is being formed, we get this double character: the heavenly Man taking His proper place in heaven, the earthly man judged. It is henceforth all new.

“If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.” We know not Christ any more “after the flesh.” It is as Head of the new creation that we are united to Him. “The first man was of the earth, earthy; the second man, the Lord from heaven.” The second Man has ascended; “but in that he ascended, he descended first into the lower parts of the earth.” He has ascended as the second Man to take His glory with the Father. As the result of all this, the church is looked upon as dead and risen with Christ— “sitting together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” The new character for those who thus belong to Him is to manifest this heavenly Man by the power of the Holy Ghost down here; and thus the church becomes the living witness of Christ’s rejection on earth and acceptance in heaven.

The church being set in this place, the Lord goes on with it, so long as He could in any way regard it as His witness on the earth.

Having disposed of “things that are,” we now see that in order to be associated with God’s thoughts and God’s ways, the prophet has to be taken up to heaven. “A door was opened in heaven,” and he sees the Lamb upon the throne, and those who had been faithful upon earth are with Him there. See the character of the throne itself: it is a throne that is going to vindicate the rejected Lamb, and the judgment to be executed. “A voice said unto me, Come up hither… and immediately I was in the Spirit”; but being in the Spirit, it was not to look round on things on earth, but go up into heaven.

In connection with the throne we see a display of power and majesty. It was so at Sinai, where there was judgment attending the giving of the law. The mount was

to be guarded. “Whosoever toucheth the mountain shall be surely put to death.” Then in Jerusalem His throne was established again; and there was the manifestation of His glory, as sitting between the cherubim over the mercy-seat. Through the mediation of Moses (after the golden calf was set up), we see God forgiving sins, though not clearing the guilty. He said, “I will make all my goodness pass before thee.” It was always the terms of God’s government with an earthly people. There is another throne now—the throne of grace. This is not our highest place, which is to be sitting in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; but it is a great mercy to have boldness to come to this throne, “that we may obtain mercy,” etc., while walking down here in weakness, trial, infirmity, and perplexity; it is from this throne of grace that we find the power of God available for all we need to guide and help.

Here the throne in heaven is neither of these, but a new thing, a throne set in heaven and executing judgment. It has nothing to do with a throne of grace, and is not the object of supplication. In one sense they are all alike, because God’s throne; but that is all. So thoroughly is this different from the throne of grace, that the effect of prayer was judgment. See chapter 8, where, when the prayers of the saints were offered, and the incense ascended, fire and judgment came down upon the earth. “There were voices, and thunderings, and light nings, and earthquakes.” With us we get by prayer “grace to help in every time of need.” Here the censer being thrown on the earth brings down judgment.

But it is not the Lamb executing judgment; nor is it the word of God either. But we see the throne before He comes out. It is the interval between His having done

with the churches on earth (for there is nothing left in the church to judge), and His coming to the earth again as the Faithful and True Witness.

The throne is set up for the introduction of the “Only-begotten into the world” in judgment. We have in this chapter God’s relationship with creation set forth. God comes out in the character of Creator. If He is coming in judgment, everything must be set right before Him. It is not God enabling man to go against the stream which is wrong, but the stream itself must be set right. He must have creation itself brought into order. Every kind of glory belongs to Christ. As to Israel, He is King of Israel. When He is born into the world, it is as Jehovah-Jesus, “for he shall save his people from their sins “; Hoshea meaning Saviour, Jah Jehovah—Jesus meaning Jah-Hoshea, Jehovah the Saviour. He is Lord over all creation. “All things were created by him,” etc., and He is Lord over the Gentiles too.

As Son of David, then, He has Israel; as Son of man, He has the world—everything j as Son of God, He has His own title to all glory as Creator and Head over all to the body, which two things we get in Colossians. The sign God gave of His covenant with creation was the rainbow, the token of God’s faithfulness; and when these judgments are coming on the earth, there is the sign at once of His covenant faithfulness in relation to creation.

Verse 4. “Seated on thrones.” The symbols here represent the saints in their heavenly condition, but not as the church, Christ’s body. They are “kings and priests.” In this chapter we see them as kings; in the next as priests. The one is their kingly office, the other is their priestly character as worshippers. The moment

God is going to deal with creation, the saints are seen sitting on the throne with Him. What a wonderful place is given to us! We are a “royal priesthood,” etc. We do not belong to this creation, but are a kind of first-fruits of His creatures. The glory and profit is all His, though the blessing is ours. We have a special place of glory, “heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ”; but that is not all, we must be His bride. In Colossians we have both First-born of every creature as the heir of God’s estate, and beside that, He is first-begotten from the dead. He is Head of the new creation. He has come up from among the dead in the power of that life which could not be holden of death. In Ephesians there is another thing: “He gave him to be head over all things to the church.” All things are His, and He is Head over them to the body. Not Head over the body (though He does judge it), and therefore it is added that the church is the “fulness of him that filleth all in all.” The head without the body would be incomplete, and the church makes up His completeness. We are completely associated with Him. We are not of the old creation, but of the new. It is true we are still in the body, and have to carry it about with us in the bondage of corruption. We are part of the new creation as being one with Him who filleth all in all; while, looked at individually, we have the character of “kings and priests.” Here we see all the saints who will be raised, sitting round the throne of God; round the very place from whence proceed the thunderings, etc.

“The Spirits of God.” The imagery is taken from the temple. What a place for us to be in! “Know ye not that ye shall judge angels? “Do not think that these things are too high for you: they are not the highest. You must bring the heavenly character of them down to every-day

practice. When Jesus was on earth, the lowly Man here below as “sent into the world,” He brought down the principles of the heavenly spirit in all His ways and words— “the Son of man which is in heaven.” And He says to His disciples, “Ye are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” This sweeps away every principle of conduct which cannot connect us with Him whom the world has rejected. The world hates what is heavenly in it. It cannot bear the testimony of what it has done. We are called to be nothing in the world. We must be contented to be despised; and find Christ in such a way our heavenly portion, as to have no ambition to be anything where He was nothing. “How can ye believe who receive honour one of another?” Our calling is to manifest the spirit and temper of the heavenly Christ.

“Seven lamps of fire.” All this is judgment—sevenfold perfection, but sevenfold judgment. It is not here, as in Zechariah, the “eyes of the Lord, running to and fro in the earth,” but consuming everything that does not suit the presence of this heavenly throne. It is a solemn thing, this judgment from heaven. “The leaves of the tree shall be for the healing of the nations.” Our whole relationship with God is founded on grace. We dwell in Him and He in us. The revelations of the Spirit of God to us are about Him as our God, and heaven as our home. “The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.” Stephen, full of the Holy Ghost, looking up to heaven saw the throne, and Jesus on the right hand of God; but the character is very different here, not all that makes delight and blessing, but the Spirit itself is as “lamps of fire.” What will the earth do when heaven has this character of judgment, when there is neither throne of grace, nor patience, but

all is judgment? Verse 6, etc. Now we come to another part of the scene altogether: “Four living creatures full of eyes before and behind.” They are symbolical as heads of the judicial power of God. He may use angels, or He may use the saints as His instruments. We often find cherubim mentioned in scripture. The first time is when they were placed in the garden of Eden to keep the way of the tree of life. In Ezekiel they are connected with judgment. In chapter 9, when the glory of the Lord is gone up from the cherubim, there is the execution of judgment upon all those who had not the mark. Then again, within the veil, was to be seen the symbol of God’s judicial power, for the cherubim looked down upon the ark, the throne of God’s power. He was governing Israel. God was using this power in the midst of creation around. When the temple of Solomon was built, the cherubim were not looking down into the ark, but their wings reached from wall to wall, and they looked outward. This is a figure of the Solomon reign of Christ, when all His judicial power will look out to bless. In Psalm 72 we see His reign extending over all the earth, yet over Israel especially. “By me kings reign, and princes decree justice.” In the four living creatures we see the four classes of creation which we have in Genesis: the first creature like a Hon, the type of wild beasts; the second like a calf, the beasts of the field; the third, the face of a man, human beings; the fourth, the flying eagle, the fowls of the air. So that here we have the symbols of God’s power and judgment in connection with the creation on the earth, whatever the instrument may be— Nebuchadnezzar, the angels, or the saints.

“They were full of eyes before and behind.” The figure is very intelligent; it means secret intuitive intelligence—

seeing all before and behind. Nothing escapes the eye of God and the power of God. Where man cannot see, He sees. All things are naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. “They had each of them six wings,” as in Ezekiel, and this signifies rapidity of execution of God’s counsels and purposes; alacrity in the service on which they were sent. They cry, “Holy, holy, holy.” This is something distinct from worship. The four creatures are found worshipping in chapter 19; but it is not so here. God is celebrated here in power and glory. The elders, whose hearts’ affections are drawn out in the appreciation of the Lord, fall down and worship; but there is the celebration of power besides—the public celebration of it. All creation will be the perpetual celebration of the holiness, and wisdom, and power of the Lord God Almighty.

Everything the rainbow encompasses in heaven and in earth owns the creative power of God. The sun and stars will tell of His power and glory. “Every creature on the earth and under the earth,” etc. All the mute creation will have a voice in perpetually celebrating His eternal power and glory. “There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard.” When God brings in His reign of power in the Lord Jesus, creation being delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God, we shall see that His government, as well as His grace, proves that He is the holy God. Sin will not be known there. Defilement will not be known there. On the day of atonement, both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry had to be sprinkled with blood. In this chapter we have what is anticipative of that which will be, and which we get in redemption in the succeeding chapter. The one being a

picture of the power of God in creation, the other in redemption, both are shewn out before the revelation of the judgments which will bring in the glory.

We find nothing of the Father here. It is the Old Testament titles of God, as Almighty, and Lord as revealed to Israel: Jehovah, “which is, and was, and is to come,” the Almighty as revealed to Abraham. The character of Father with the children is not brought out at all, nor Jesus as Head with the members, but God as publicly celebrated. When we speak of the Father, it is mansions we have got, not thrones; we are at home with the Father, we delight in the Father. “I go to prepare a place for you, and … I will come again and receive you unto myself.” But here it is the majesty of God; the voice of creation and providence celebrating through eternity Him “which is, and was, and is to come.” We get two facts connected with the heavenly saints. When the throne is set, they are sitting in the very midst of judgment, in calm, quiet repose. The thunderings and lightnings neither shake the crowns upon their heads, nor their hearts within. It is all perfect peace with them. Blessed testimony this, of our place! The Lord grant us to enter into it, to get our hearts up to the height of God’s thoughts about us. We should be amazed at the wonderful grace of His ways towards us, when we think of the perfect peace which grace has given us to enjoy above, even in the presence of the tokens of divine judgment, and the redemptive power which has given us a capacity to be there.

The second point is, that when God Himself in His majesty is brought out, it does not excite fear. There they are in His holiness, set in the light, not in spirit merely, but in fact. They are made “partakers of his

holiness”; and when they hear the living creatures, which rest not day and night, saying, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty,” worship is excited, not fear. “Glory, and honour, and thanks unto him that sat upon the throne,” does not leave them seated on their thrones; and they “fall down and worship him that liveth for ever and ever.” Such a sense they had of the glory of Him who sits upon the throne, that it took them out of their own personal glory, and they used it only to celebrate that glory which they have to acknowledge.

The saint in glory is glad there should be something above himself there. He can strip himself of glory that the Lord should have it all. What a contrast to the spirit of infidelity in the heart which does not like this! The pride of the heart cannot bear that something should be above it; but the saint in light is glad that Christ should have all the glory. The saint can delight in the character and honour of God. The heart delights in His being glorious, and in His intrinsic glory. “Thou art worthy, O Lord.” What a sense is here of His worthiness to be exalted! This is the first instinct of their life, however weak and feeble it be. See the thief on the cross; he had got the secret of God about His character: “This man hath done nothing amiss.” And what was the consequence of this capacity to see His glory? He wanted to share it, and Jesus said, “To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” Here were the first workings of life in his soul; but immediately we find that instead of the desire to pull Him down whom God would exalt, there was joy to find something above himself. Shall we not be glad to see Christ’s glory? Glad of the excellence of heaven? Shall not I be glad to see Paul in a higher place than I? It is the character of the spirit and temper

of heaven. Man is entirely changed here, for he would pull down God Himself if He did not suit him, according to the natural impulse and bent of his mind. All this celebration of God's power brings out worship: "They cast their crowns before the thrones," etc.

Another thing to remark here is, that in connection with this spirit of worship there is an intelligent understanding about it. "Thou art worthy; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created." Look at the expression in Hebrews: "It became him," etc. What an astonishing thing to be able to say it became God to treat His Son in this way. The first two chapters are full of the glory of Christ. How at home the apostle is in the things that became God; and then again, "Such an High Priest became us," etc. We belong to a heavenly people in connection with Him who is made higher than the heavens, and we want a priest there. When a soul is emptied of itself, it begins to know and love the glory of God; it is not as a dull, senseless thing, but there is understanding and knowledge, and this is life. You will find this intelligence in the next chapter, likewise, "Thou art worthy; for thou hast redeemed," etc.

Mark two things: the entire prostration of heart before God, and the blessed intelligence of the titles of God. How it does take the poorest of this world out of the miserable tinsel of its corruption, when God reveals Himself thus to the heart and understanding! The selfishness of man would shut him up into narrowness of spirit, instead of being taken up with God. Are we not glad to have crowns to lay at His feet? "For thy pleasure they are, and were created." It is God's delight, and God's good pleasure that is the spring of everything. If I

am right with God, I say, Let Him have His way. If I am away, I shall not like Him to have His good pleasure; but to let Hun have it is the only spring of blessing. The Lord give us to know Him in this way; and we can say that in Jesus and by Jesus, we do now know His love; and, through the good pleasure of His will, we have been made His children, adopted unto Himself. When the Lord Jesus was born, He became the link between God and poor sinners, for He was the gift of God's love in "good will to men"; in Him, dead and risen, we are through the Spirit brought to God. The Lord give us rightly to estimate Jesus! With Him in our hearts, all will be simple, all will be peace, all will be love.

## Chapter 5

We saw, in the fourth chapter, the throne of God set in heaven, the great purpose of which was to bring into the world the Heir of all things—as is expressed in Hebrews 1, "when he bringeth in again the First-begotten into the world." This purpose, for which the throne was set, is not as yet accomplished; for the First-begotten is not actually brought in till chapter 19. At the end of the third chapter we have the Lord's own testimony as to the failure of the church on earth, in that it is spued out of His mouth. Then Christ takes the place the church was unable to maintain, that of the "Amen, the faithful and true witness." And thus, the Lord's judicial power having ceased among the candlesticks on earth, we find in the fourth chapter a throne, not of grace, but of judgment, set in heaven, round which the glorified saints are sitting on their thrones, perfectly undisturbed at the thunderings and lightnings that are issuing forth from the throne; but when the majesty of God is celebrated,

they cast their crowns before Him and fall down and worship Him as Creator. In this fifth chapter we get the things between the spueing out of the church from the mouth of Christ, and the judgments preliminary to His taking His rightful throne on the earth.

It is not the manifestation of the general glory of God, in this chapter, but the unfolding of a book, or rather the preparation for it, as it is not actually unfolded till chapter 6. Neither do we get a throne which gives promises of blessings to the earth, as in chapter 4, where the rainbow was round about it, as typical of God's covenant faithfulness with the earth. Nor do we get the Old Testament titles of God, as "Lord God Almighty"; nor do we see God, as "Creator," as it is said, "for thy pleasure they are and were created"; but it is as the "Redeemer" that He is celebrated here. In chapter 5 we get the purposes of God, the church being gone. God then begins to act in various ways, ever patient even in judgment, until the accomplishment of His one great purpose bringing in the "First-begotten "into the world. We get nothing of God's purposes in chapter 4, because creation alone cannot meet them; therefore, the moment God's purposes are mentioned, redemption must come in to accomplish them. Mark also, that God's purposes here are in connection with the earth, and not, in any way, as having anything to do with His purposes of grace to individual souls. Redemption must come in, that God may be glorified in salvation, as well as in creation.

"I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book," etc. Here we see the purposes of God in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne: they are in the right hand of power, that they may be accomplished, for He who sits on the throne is able to bring them in. There is

great comfort in this thought too, that how dreadful the judgments may be, and truly they are terrible, the book is in the hand of God: so that when we read of the seals, the trumpets, and the vials of wrath, we see them in God's hand, as the settled expression of the accomplishment of His purposes; so, too, when we see that the Lamb that has loved us, and given Himself for us, is the One to take the book in the same quietness with which God holds it in His hand.

The natural mind, and we are still in the body, would tremble at these things, as it is said in Luke's Gospel, "Men's hearts failing them for fear, for looking after those things that are coming on the earth." But faith gets its settled place in the purpose of God, and is not afraid; it sees all to be in the hand of God, and for His glory. God, in the stability of His own power, holds the book upon the throne, for God alone knows His own counsels, and faith recognises this. Thus He who has loved us and washed us from our sins, in His own blood, is Christ, who is the wisdom of God, and the power of God, and the unfolder of these purposes of God. These things do not apply to the church, but the Christian is to have an understanding concerning them, for he has "the mind of Christ." When anything comes out in the way of prophecy, the Lord unfolds it to us, that we may intercede with Him about others. It was so with Abraham, for after God had called him out of his own country, and set him in the road of faith, revealing Himself to him, and giving him the promises, then God shews him other things which did not concern himself. He tells him His purposes as to Sodom, besides giving him the second promise, "Unto thy seed will I give this land." The Christian is entirely out of the scene of

judgment here. No doubt the Christian gets the present judgment of evil, while walking down here, in the shape of chastening for his profit; but when judgment is spoken of prophetically, it always refers to others. Take Enoch who prophesied, saying, “The Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints to execute judgment.” He was walking with God, and had the secret of God’s counsels as to the judgments that would be executed, and yet not at all as applying to himself, for he was to be taken away out of it all; and this is true of the church of God. These terrible judgments from the throne do not touch her, though she is to be the vessel of testimony as to what is coming and in the place of intercession, as Abraham was. “God said, Shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I do?” Then when Abraham gets the knowledge of what God is going to do, he gets into the priest’s place of nearness to God and begins to plead for Sodom. This is, in a higher sense, the place of the church, as far as she has faith for it. “We have the mind of Christ.” In this sense it is that the Christian is a prophet, having the mind of Christ; and also, as having the spirit of intercession, he is a priest; and likewise, he is the vessel of ministry for carrying the gospel to poor sinners; and he will reign when Christ reigns. At present, the church, having received grace, through the cross of Christ, is the messenger of grace to those who are ready to perish.

But now we will turn to our proper subject, for in chapter 5 we pass into fresh ground again. When God begins to unfold His purposes, Christ must come in, for not only does all belong to Him by divine title, but He is also Heir of all things by divine appointment. Therefore, when we have the redemption of the purchased

possession, the taking the inheritance out of the hands of the usurper by judgments, we find the book of God's counsels, as the conveyance of the inheritance of the rightful heir who won His title to it by His work. Consequently when the book of God's purposes concerning the inheritance comes on the scene, we also get the Son whom "He hath appointed heir of all things." It was customary among the Jews (Jer. 32:11), on conveyance of property, to have two books, an open one in which were title deeds, etc., and a sealed one laid by, in order that no mistake might be made; and this book which God put into the hands of the Lamb, was a sealed one, "sealed with seven seals." "And I wept much because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look therein." Of course, there could not be any thought of looking therein as to how God would accomplish His purposes; for I would here remark that where the heart is brought near to God, it is not that there is a disposition to pry into these things, for that would be sin; but when we find God has purposes to reveal to us, it would be sorrow not to know them. But some might say, surely salvation is the all-important thing, but I ask, Is not that settled? That ought to be the question, most surely, if it be not yet settled; but if I am a child, I have the interest of the family at heart, and, therefore, when that which concerns the First-born is brought out, I am interested in it, because my affections are drawn out by it. For there are affections which flow from this relationship itself, as well as those resulting from the fact of being saved. Of course, it is nothing but idle curiosity to be looking into prophecy before the great question of salvation is settled between the soul and God. When the conscience is set at rest before God, there will then be liberty for the exercise of those

affections which flow out from such relationships. But still there are affections flowing from the relationship itself, and felt in measure, it may be, as soon as that relationship is effected in the soul, and before the soul itself is conscious of its portion. That is, we often meet with those whose hearts are towards God, without having settled peace in their souls. Take Job, for instance: he said, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.” God was breaking him down, and breaking him up, just to shew Job what he was all the while. Job had full confidence in God, although his soul did not know real peace. Affection was there, and when the soul got peace, then the pent-up affections flowed out. For I do not mean to say that there is no affection until the soul has got peace; but when the question of salvation is settled, then there is unhindered liberty for the affections to flow out. And when the soul has got peace, then it is ready to learn in quiet communion with God, all that He is about to do. “And one of the elders said unto me, Weep not.” It is most striking how much these twenty-four elders are found occupying the church’s place of nearness to God; and we constantly find intelligence in these elders—not merely worship, but intelligence. They are always the persons who are the vessels of understanding— “made kings and priests.” The church has a much higher kind of knowledge than that of the prophets, who prefaced their messages with a “Thus saith the Lord.” What the Lord had communicated to them, they delivered, and after they had delivered their message, they had to search into its meaning, for, as Peter says, “Not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you.” So, here, we find John in the character of a prophet had not the same kind of intelligence as the elders; he had just so much light

given him as was revealed at the time, just so much as was needed for the delivery of his message, and no more. But now the Holy Ghost is come down, and the full revelation is given of the mind of God in His written word; the church, as such, having the mind of Christ, not only knows the message, but knows the mind of Christ about that which is revealed.

John sees no one in heaven, or on earth, or under the earth that was able to open the book, neither to look thereon, and then, naturally enough, he “wept much.” But what is the result of the elders sitting round the throne? Do they weep? Are they disturbed by it? No, not any more than they were by the thunderings; for with the utmost calmness and composure they at once say, “weep not.” Could they doubt Christ as being the appointed Heir of all things? Certainly not. That was a settled thing, and more than this, they knew Christ as the Lion of the tribe of Judah: the lion, denoting power—the having full power to take the inheritance. But the elders knew what redemption was, and therefore to them it was a peaceful, settled thing that this “Lion” had all power to open the book and to loose the seven seals thereof, to unfold and fulfil the counsels of God, and to bear the glory. The two things that most peculiarly belong to Christ, are power and wisdom— “Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God”; and He makes the church to participate in His wisdom, for “He is made unto us wisdom,” etc., and He will give her to share His power. We see this order beautifully maintained in the history of Joseph: when in the prison, God gave him wisdom to interpret dreams; and afterwards we find him at the right hand of the throne of the king, exercising all power. So, likewise, the church will share the power

with Christ, for she will reign with Him, and will be the sharer with Him in everything, the essential glory of the Godhead excepted. Our proper portion now is not power (I am not here speaking of spiritual power to overcome evil), but now is the time for the church to manifest wisdom in the undsrstanding of the ways of God; having the Holy Ghost, who, as the Lord said, shall guide into all truth; but this must be through the written word, as the written word of God is the only depository of the truth of God. Therefore, it is the great instrument in the hand of God for communicating this knowledge through the teaching of the Holy Ghost, although at the same time He may be pleased to make use of various channels to accomplish it. Thus we see that where there is the desire in the heart according to God's mind, He cannot fail to satisfy that desire. If the desire is expressed, even to weeping, it is infallibly answered with a "weep not"; for this reason, that Christ has done that which will enable the mind of God to be communicated to every seeking soul. But this could not be before Christ came, as the Lord Himself says, "Blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear, for many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them." But the moment the work of redemption was accomplished, and Jesus sat down at the right hand of God, the Holy Ghost was sent down in testimony of the acceptance of the work and Person of the risen Man, now in glory. And, therefore, now, whenever there is a desire in the heart according to God, it is always met and answered in the power of the Holy Ghost; for if Christ is revealed, then it is God's mind that we "should grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ." But then there must be

a lowly mind to receive it: “The meek will he guide in judgment, the meek will he teach his way.”

“Behold the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, hath prevailed to open the book.” In the first place we get here the special definite counsels of God, as to the centre of His purposes on the earth. Judah was the one in whom the promises were centered. When Jacob blessed his sons, he said, “Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise,” Gen. 49:8. The general promise at the beginning was, “the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head.” Then all was vested in Abraham’s seed, “In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.” The line became narrower and narrower, Judah was chosen from amongst his brethren, and last of all, the family of David; as it is said of the Lord, “He shall sit upon the throne of his father David.” It is not a.throne in heaven, as governing creation, but a throne set up on the earth, to govern file earth. “When the Most High divided to the heathen their inheritance, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel.” He is called the Lion of the tribe of Judah, because it is by power that He will accomplish God’s counsels. He is the “Root of David.” David, looked at as a type, and as a responsible man, had failed, and his family failed also; and this has always been the way whenever God has put man in a place of trust. But God cannot fail, and He must raise up a seed to David according to His promise. At the end of the book we see the Lord spoken of as the Offspring of David, as well as the Root, but before He can be manifested as the Offspring, He must be proved the Root. For He is the root and source of all the promises of God. In Him they are “yea, and amen,” whether for the

church of God, or for Israel. If David bears fruit of blessing, he is not the root, though he may be the stem; if he bears fruit, it must be through Him who is the root.

The Lord meanwhile, takes another character, that of the Lamb. “In the midst of the throne stood a Lamb, as it had been slain”—the poor lowly one with the marks of humiliation. “As the sheep before his shearer is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.” In the “Lamb as it had been slain,” we find the Lord taking up a dispensational character, because of redemption; and thus we find Him as the lowly, uncomplaining, unresisting sufferer, in a world of sinners, and that is where real power is found. It is the same for us now; we dwell where evil prevails, and it is our place to suffer as Christ suffered, to have discernment between right and wrong, and to suffer, rather than yield for a moment to the evil. “In the midst of the throne stood a Lamb.” Although He was the suffering Lamb as regards the earth, still His real place was upon the throne itself. How blessed is the thought that Christ fills all things! If I go down into the lower parts of the earth, I find Him there. If I reach up to the throne of heaven I find Him there; and not only as God, but as the One dealing with good and evil. What a blessed thing it is to find all this in the One who is so near to us! He who said, “I am among you as he that serveth,” He who washed the disciples’ feet, is not going to cease to serve them; although He could not continue in companionship with them, He serves them still; yea, He will yet “come forth and serve them.” He who was one with the Father, to whom as the Son, God had given everything, humbled Himself to be the servant! How blessed to see our full and perfect association with all that love and righteousness could bring! Oh! it is a

solemn thought that there is no place in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, that is not filled with the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, except indeed in one sad exception, that of the heart of the poor, wretched, unbelieving sinner. There is no place from Calvary to the throne of God, that is not filled with the love and righteousness of God, as manifested in Christ; and if we could always give ourselves up to the knowledge of this, what quiet peace of heart should we enjoy! The very peace of God Himself would be keeping us, for we could get into no place or circumstances, sorrow or suffering, but we should find Christ there; and, as we were remarking, if Christ be between our hearts and the suffering, instead of the suffering getting between our hearts and Christ, we shall find the place of suffering to be the best place on the face of the earth for us, as all suffering will then bring us nearer to Christ. There is no middle place. The bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp; Heb. 12:11-13. You must take up the cross outside, if you get the heavenly place inside. There was a veil over God for Israel, but we have liberty to enter into the holiest of all by the blood of Jesus. The veil is done away in Christ, and to us it is the throne and temple up there, and the cross and the Lamb down here. Those who are in heavenly association with a risen Christ must have the cross down here, because we are alive and accepted within the veil. All that is precious is there. The church is brought to see sin as God sees it— brought into the light as God is in the light, and, being cleansed from sin, gets into the sanctuary through the rent veil. That is our proper and only place, the earth being entirely shut out from us, excepting we are just strangers and pilgrims through this wilderness

world. And just in proportion as we practically know the cross down here, will be our enjoyment of fellowship with Christ up there in heavenly places. Light fills up all the space between the cross and the glory. There is no possible place that we can get into but we shall find Christ there; for to simple, single-eyed faith there is no spot between the cross and the glory, be it earth, or be it heaven, that is not filled with Christ.

When John gets into this church-understanding (as we may call it), he sees a “Lamb as it had been slain”; and he sees power given to the Lamb, for in seven horns and seven eyes we have the perfection of power and all-seeing wisdom which is given to the Lamb, before a single seal is opened. And before we get the unfolding of God’s purposes, we have the presentation of the Person of His Son. It is just this in God’s dealings with a soul: the eye of the soul being fixed on the Person of Christ is the way in which it gets peace; as before you can get peace of soul through the work of Christ, your eye must have rested on the Person of Christ. It was so with the thief on the cross, with the poor woman of the city who was a sinner, who stood at His feet weeping. The soul must first be fixed upon the Person of Him who has made the peace, before there is the knowledge of the work which has wrought the peace. Before it all and after it all, it is Himself that is presented.

“No one was found worthy.” None could touch or even dare to look upon the book, until the Lamb, so to speak, had filled his eye. And this is that that gives peace and steadiness to the soul while searching into prophecy; for if you get into prophecy without Christ, you may be able to understand it, but it will be the mere result of the rambling of an unsanctified mind; but if you learn it with

Christ, you will find Him the key to the whole thing; for if He is the centre, He is also the key to the glory about to be revealed; and if you thus learn prophecy in connection with Christ, it will be to the glory of God.

“A Lamb, having seven horns and seven eyes which are the seven spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth.” It is not said here ten or twelve. The number “seven” denotes divine perfection; the number twelve denotes human perfection in its administrative power—there were twelve apostles, and twelve patriarchs. The seven eyes shew the wisdom which sees everything, and the seven horns denote power. A horn is used throughout scripture as a symbol of power, whether in speaking of an individual or a kingdom. We will now refer to a few passages as shewing the importance of the expression, “seven eyes.” The perfect harmony of this blessed book is a wonderful testimony (were it needed) to its divine origin, as no human skill or intellect could have preserved the connection between passages written 2,000 years apart. But we see the secret of it is, that the divine mind is running throughout the whole of scripture. (See 2 Chron. 16:9). “The eyes of the Lord run to and fro through the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of those whose heart is perfect towards him.” Simply rely on the Lord in everything, just to do His will quietly, and He will shew Himself strong on your behalf. Then in Zechariah 3:9, “Upon one stone shall be seven eyes.” It was the figure of the establishment of God’s authority in Jerusalem. Then in Zechariah 4:10, “The eyes of the Lord [not in Zion merely, but going further out] which run to and fro throughout the whole earth.” Besides seeing the general truth of the providential vision of God, we see that in a

future time, when the true branch is introduced, perfection is established in Jerusalem as the centre of peace and blessing. Then these seven eyes will be established in Jerusalem as the centre of peace and blessing. Meanwhile God is dealing with the earth, taking notice of everything, and manifesting His power in governing all things. And our place and portion is not that of power, but that of suffering with Christ. “If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him.” But in Revelation 5 we find these eyes of God in the midst of the throne in heaven. We hear nothing about the Father with the children, nor Christ as the Head of the body, with the members; but it is the rejected Lamb upon the throne of judgment in heaven, as He is not yet come forth to take His earthly throne, but on the throne of judgment “set in heaven,” having these eyes of wisdom and intelligence to unfold all God’s purposes.

Now, then, having the Person of the Lamb set before us, we get Him taking the book; and what a picture of full peaceful power (full power is always peaceful) when He takes all the purposes of God to unfold and accomplish them! It was not so when He took the cup of trembling; then He said, “Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? “And in order that the blessed purposes of God towards us might be fulfilled, He passed through that dreadful hour, the very thought of which made Him say, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death.” He came under the full power of the wrath of God, for our full, perfect, and eternal blessing. It is the same Lamb in the midst of the throne, that drank the cup of wrath to the very dregs, that there might not be left one drop of sorrow, or trouble for those who know Him, which enabled Him as the slain Lamb, and at the same time, as

the wisdom of God and the power of God, to take the book and unfold and accomplish all the deep purposes therein contained (v. 8-10).

Here we have “kings and priests” again— “they sing a new song.” It is not here the celebration of the praises of God in creation, but in redemption, for it is in connection with the slain Lamb. If the glory of the Lord God Almighty as Creator, brought out worship, so is the praise of the Lamb in redemption adequate to call it forth. If the display of the majesty of God brought out worship without fear, so here the same who were fit to worship His majesty, have their hearts’ affections and thoughts called forth by the display of the glory of the Lamb. It is a blessed thought that He that descended so low for us, has the adoration of the whole mind of heaven; and having made us kings and priests, we have communion with the mind of heaven, even now; and mark how immediately this connects itself with our daily walk. If I were a Jew, I should want a priest; but I am a Christian, and therefore I could never so far disown redemption as to say that I want a priest; for I am a priest, and we have a great High Priest, who is “higher than the heavens,” so that we go at once to the throne of grace, for through Him we have access by one Spirit unto the Father. If I have got Christ, He is God; and never let me lose sight of this one blessed truth, that I am brought to God. Anything but Christ allowed to come between my soul and God, dims Him before my eyes. He is the great High Priest; and we enter, because He enters, into the very holiest of all; so that we are more than mere priests, for they never got beyond the holy place, but we have boldness to enter into the holy place, because Jesus is there, and we degrade the efficacy of

the work of Jesus, if our hearts do not go straight up to God Himself, in testimony to the value of the blood of Christ. All was adoration here, and with a free heart. A child is at liberty with its father; it will reverence its father, but its heart is free before him, not fearing and trembling as to what will please him. It should be so with us before God. His love is as perfect as His glory; and if He brings us near to adore, He will bring our hearts near in the confidence of the love that has brought us there.

Verse 9. “Thou art worthy, to take the book, and to open the seven seals thereof.” Here as in the former chapter we have the intelligence of the elders brought out—full, blessed intelligent worship indicated by the expression, “For thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.” Now mark, besides the tides of Christ, as Creator, as man, as the Son of God, we get here the grand thing which is brought out the moment the “slain Lamb” appears, which is redemption. And it is redemption that calls forth new praise, as it is redemption that displays everything that God is. Do I think of the holiness that cannot bear sin? I see it there; of love to sinners? I see it there; of the justice that must punish sin? I see it there. I see God fully glorified in this book, whether in His love, holiness, majesty, grace, judgment against sin, all has been fully met as well as brought out in this grand work of redemption. The Son is equally glorified also, for if Adam had never sinned in eating the fruit, he would have gone on in innocence; but what would that obedience have been compared with Christ’s, which was obedience to death, even the death of the cross? Then see the entire devotedness of Jesus; and we have God glorified in Him. “Now is the

Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him"; and all the other titles of Christ find their full display and development in redemption. How infinitely higher are God's thoughts than ours! They write folly and confusion upon every thought of man. For while men were saying, "Ah, so would we have it," and their enmity to God's Son was displayed by their nailing Him to the cross, at that very moment the love of God rose to the highest; for when man was insulting Christ to the very uttermost, then it was that salvation was accomplished. God's love rose above man's wickedness, without in the least degree lowering the standard of God's holiness: when sin was carried to the uttermost pitch in the crucifixion of Christ that only served to bring out more prominently and give freer exercise to that divine love which was at that very moment saving lost sinners.

Thus while we have seen the character of the Lion of the tribe of Judah to have been fully maintained, God never giving up one iota of His justice and holiness, and at the same time through His wondrous wisdom, by the very rejection of the Lion of the tribe of Judah, poor sinners of the Gentiles are brought in. The gifts and calling of God are without repentance; therefore Israel will be restored according to His word. But meanwhile, He is bringing in Jews and Gentiles in a heavenly way. Redemption does not set aside the Lion of the tribe of Judah as the future source of blessing to Israel, but all kindreds of the earth must celebrate His praises in redemption. "And hast made us unto our God kings and priests," etc. We see here two things, royalty and priesthood. Besides the joy of being with God, as we have seen, we are also the nearest to God in power and worship. As the kingship brings us nearest to God in

power, and the priesthood brings us nearest to God in worship, it is the blessed Person of Christ, the slain Lamb, that introduces poor sinners into such high and blessed privileges; for Christ being made King and Priest, we also are made kings and priests. All that Christ is made we are made, in Him now in the day of grace, and with Him then in the day of glory. We have the joy of this even now in our souls when walking close to God; but being still in bodies of sin and death, and thus still linked to the old creation, we groan being burdened: the presence of evil makes us groan. But when the throne is set in heaven, it will be for the deliverance of all that is now under the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God—not the liberty of grace, but the liberty of glory. Now the souls of those who believe are brought into the liberty of grace, and in the glory we shall be delivered from the body in which we now groan. Now it is the power of the Holy Ghost sustaining us against the streams of evil, but then it will be the exercise of divine power setting the evil aside. The Lord will reign then. If the Lord were ruling in direct dominion now, should we have all the misery and wretchedness that is around us on every hand? God does reign in one sense now, and in a most blessed sense for His children, for the very hairs of our head are all numbered. Yet now, as it is said, “One event happeneth alike to all, the righteous and the wicked.” But when Christ comes in power to take the universal dominion as the Son of man, He will discern between the righteous and the wicked, the evil and the good. Then the wicked will not prosper. The sun of grace has arisen in our hearts, and now it is given to the righteous to suffer for Christ’s sake. But when the Sun of Righteousness ariseth on the earth, when power

comes in, in direct dominion, then a man shall be a covert from the storm. Now man does not know where to find a hiding-place. “The dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty.” But then the earth will rejoice in the fruit of the reign of Christ. Now we are to suffer with Christ, then we shall reign with Him. “When the heavens do rule,” then the saints of the Most High take the kingdom and reign with Christ. We are not to be reigned over, but to reign with Him. Our joy will be in and with Christ, but our official place will be reigning with Him.

Verses 11, 12. “The voice of many angels saying, Worthy is the Lamb,” etc. We do not find the same measure of intelligence in the angels as in the elders. The angels do celebrate the glory and honour and worthiness of the Lamb, but we do not find them using that little word “for,” as was used by the elders, first, in connection with creation, “For thou hast created all things,” etc.; secondly, in connection with redemption, “For thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God,” etc. The church is much nearer to God than angels, being one with Christ, and our bodies the temples of the Holy Ghost. This can never be said of an angel, although they are infinitely above us as creatures. “They excel in strength and hearken to the voice of his word.” Christ never died for an angel, and therefore took not on Him the nature of angels, but was made man for sinners; nor did He send the Holy Ghost to angels; and though they excel in strength, and as creatures are greater in power, still what is this to the display of His grace to a sinner? It is in redemption that God is fully glorified, and therefore it is that the redeemed ones get the nearest place to God, because in them redemption is unfolded. What amazing

grace it is that could take up vile, depraved sinners that we are, and place us nearer the throne than those holy ones that never sinned, and always do His will! — “that in the ages to dome he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus.” Ought not our hearts to be moved by this? We cannot understand the loving-kindness of God, if we do not know the value of redemption. Affections flow from the apprehension of it, and praise will be the result. The lispings of a babe are acceptable. But our hearts ought to be able to tell an angel what Christ has done for us, and why He is so precious to us. We shall be associated with Himself in the very presence of the glory of God. The angels are round about the throne. They know what power and blessing mean, for they ascribe it to Him who sits upon the throne. They see the glory of the Person of the Lamb; but they know nothing of redemption. That word never comes out of their lips. How wonderfully we see that everything has its place in the counsels of God!

In verse 13 we see creation joining the full and universal chorus, ascribing glory to Him who sits upon the throne. They are in everlasting companionship with that divine glory. Not only do they worship Christ as God, but as the Lamb. It is as that glorified Man that they acknowledge His Lordship. He is “God over all “truly, but takes a peculiar glory as Son of man, and this peculiar glory that Christ has got by redemption, will never be dimmed. As the Lamb He will always have it. Praise to the Lamb for ever and ever! The very one whom we have loved, whom we have seen with our eyes by faith, whom we have handled as the Word of life, will be the object of eternal and unceasing adoration. What a thought it is! And we learn what the thoughts and counsels of God about us

have been, when we see this company in the everlasting glory. He who became as one of ourselves; He who stooped to take the lowest place, and as having no sin to be made sin for us, is there as the universal object of praise. The place peculiar to the church will be that of worship. It is a most blessed scene! The great thing that our hearts should rest upon, is the blessed character of the counsels of God as regards the church, for we see the church to be so thoroughly identified with Christ, that the moment God is going to bring in judgments for Christ, we find it has its place with Him in heaven. If the church is His body, His bride, He cannot leave it behind, it being the fulness of Him who filleth all in all. There is no unfolding of the book, no sound or sign of that judgment which is to be brought in, until we have been in perfect peace around the throne, before the Lamb, praising for redemption, that glorious, wonderful work of redemption. And while the rolling tide of judgment sweeps along, and like the deluge, rises higher and higher, until there be not one mountain-top left uncovered to escape upon, what we have to do is to sing of the glory of that redemption, which has delivered us from the wrath to come. The Lord grant us to find in those things which redemption has wrought out, not merely peace of soul, but understanding of all God's counsels of glory about the Lamb who has accomplished it all.

## Chapters 6 and 7

The ways of God with the church and with the world are always intended to have a practical application to our own individual souls. The expectation of the coming of the Lord changes the moral bearing of everything. There

may be many a detail we are incompetent to explain, but we get from God a positive revelation which gives another aspect to all else. “The wise shall understand.” Knowledge is not given for the sake of mere increase, but to “profit withal.” There are general principles which set the church right on many things. If I have been working for the conversion of the world through the spread of the gospel, what a different thought is presented in the three unclean spirits, like frogs, gathering the whole world together to fight against God!

In teaching we never should say anything that we did not feel to be God’s mind; and even then, of course, we might be mistaken in what we believed to be true. A great question has been raised as to the prophetic part of this book. Does it apply to the whole period of the church of God, from the beginning onward to the close; or does it give the character of God’s dealings with the earth in the great crisis in which the church is not involved at all after the first chapters? I feel quite clear that it is not about the church, but about the world. The book is given to the church, but it does not in the strictly prophetic parts apply to the church. This part shews us the elders looking down from heaven, seeing things which are going to happen to others, not to themselves. It is a history of God’s future dealings with the earth.

When Abraham was on the mountain, God came and told him what was going to happen on the plain, things in which he himself was not at all concerned. This thought is of great importance, because, with the thought of being in the judgments, no wonder we should be like the men spoken of in Luke 21, whose hearts fail for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth. “Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see

the reward of the wicked," Psalm 91. When Abraham rose in the morning (blessed morning for us!) and saw the smoke of the cities going up, where was he? On the mountain, where he had stood before the Lord, and where the Lord had talked with him. Our place is not like Noah, floating on the waters while the judgments are abroad. For him it was a question of being moved with fear and preparing an ark to the saving of his house; but we are destined by grace to be as Enoch, after walking with God here, looking down from heaven on things below. He prophesied of the Lord coming "with ten thousand of his saints"; but his own portion was on high. There will be a remnant on earth saved as by fire through the judgments; but this is not the church. What a place this puts the heavenly saints into! What a character it gives to the Christian who should be ever expecting Christ! We are not of the world, even as Christ was not of the world; we are quickened and risen with Him. By-and-by we are to be caught up in our place as associated with Christ, before He visits the earth to make inquisition for the blood that has been shed from righteous Abel to the blood of Zacharias. What God is going to do upon the earth is not our happiest study, but it helps to keep our affections set on the right objects. The Christian can say to those who are busying themselves about the politics, the riches, the hopes, the improvements, of the world, See where your world is going to end! it is not my world at all. There may be a carnal seeking for detail in the study of this book, but to know these things from God solemnises the heart, and puts the world into its proper background as a doomed system. God does communicate His purposes to us now, as He did of old, to Abraham.

In chapter 6 we have the course of the six seals. At the seventh trumpet the whole thing finishes; chap, 11:18. The scene in chapter 10 is parenthetical; it has this place given in the general history, but it is the last great scene, which is afterwards more fully unfolded. It shews Christ's tide to dominion and power. From chapter n:19, to the end of chapter 14, we have a series of subjects. In chapter 12 is disclosed the secret agency, or the dramatis persona, as men say. The springs and source of all the evil, and the hidden cause of the final crisis are here explained. Chapter 13 gives the providential instrumentality under the instigation of Satan in the worldly and the religious powers. Chapter 14 is God's dealing in judgment with respect to all these, and in testimony, with the results also. Chapter 15 is another scene altogether. The sea of glass mingled with fire shews us the martyrdom of the faithful remnant. With this is connected chapters 16 in which the vials, which are God's wrath, are filled up and poured out. Then we have in chapter 17 and 18, Babylon connected with the beast, and her judgment. Above, we see in chapter 19 the marriage of the Lamb, and then the Lamb coming to execute His judgment, preparatory to the closing scene of blessing on the earth during the millennium, followed by the eternal state.

To get the moral influence and right understanding of these things, it is most important to remember that the church is a heavenly body connected with the Lamb in heaven. I believe there has been, in a certain measure, a lengthened accomplishment of the opening of the seals. This is a general principle in scripture. Thus our Lord could say, "If ye will believe it, this was Elias which was for to come." John said, "even now are there many

antichrists," but this was in no wise the fulfilment of all that was true about the Antichrist. It was not yet the person, but it was evil and error which had the moral stamp of him who was coming. Antichrist is the great characteristic of the "last times," growing out of the corruption of the last good thing that God brought in before judgment. When the heavenly thing that God sent into the world, was, as a dispensation, spoiled, Antichrist entered. "He is the Antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son "; he also denies that Jesus is the Christ. It is the activity of the false spirit, instead of the true. Could anything more be revealed than the Father and the Son? The presence of many antichrists was not the accomplishment of the coming of Antichrist, but it was and is a state which answers in spirit and character to it. When such a state is tried to be proved to be the full accomplishment (as in the historical scheme), Christ is not put in His right place in connection with it all. But, from this book doubtless, we may discern the elements of all that evil which will hereafter be ripened—the principles now, but not the accomplishment till by-and-by. The spirit of Babylon is in Popery: but Popery exclusively is not Babylon. We go morally wrong as to what God is about, if we do not keep in view the great end which He is unfolding in the Revelation, namely, the introduction of Christ into the world as the "First-begotten," and this, too, as the "Faithful Witness," after the failure of the church to be the true witness.

The great thing is to know, by God's teaching, what God is occupied with. Suppose David had gone and put the ark into the tabernacle after Ichabod had been written upon it, it would not have been piety, however it might have been thought so; to do so, would have been like

going back and saying, “It is not Ichabod.” God was going to supplant the tabernacle and set up the temple. The ark had been carried into captivity, and God had let it go. How could it have gone into captivity without Him? as David says, “He forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, and delivered his strength into captivity, his glory into the enemies’ hand” (Psa. 78:60, 61), and this because He had given up the people. This is all simple to him who understands. “The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those that are revealed belong to us.” If a person is not spiritual, he cannot understand: he has no moral or spiritual power to discern God’s mind. But where there is spiritual discernment, things get simple and clear as daylight. “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his covenant.” Where there is the fear of the Lord, there will be the understanding of His word and mind. But the word of God will not be simple without subjection to Him.

We will now turn to the progress of the evil as it will be in the latter day. The first thing is the general providential coming in of trouble and sorrow. Symbols are a regular language, conveying certain universal ideas. It is important we should be clear as to the abstract principle. The sun, for instance, used in scripture continually, as a symbol means supreme power. It is said, “the sun of righteousness shall arise,” etc.; but it may not be always used for Christ. Sometimes it may be used of God’s enemy; Ezek. 32:7. It simply means the ruler of a given system. Trees, thus employed, signify the greatest in a kingdom as distinguished from the grass. The horse denotes imperial power in aggressive exercise; and a white horse is that power victorious.

Thus victorious, subjugating power, whether of Christ, or Antichrist, etc., might be represented as a white horse. Other features enter and decide who is meant.

In chapter 6:2, the rider on the white horse goes forth conquering and to conquer. Then war comes on (v. 4). Then comes a “black horse”: here we see anxiety as to provisions. The colour denotes mourning. Verse 8, is the “pale horse.” It is distress among nations, closing in with God’s accumulating judgments, famine, etc.—what He calls His “four sore judgments” in Ezekiel. Then the fifth seal opens to us what has been going on in the earth. It is a very definite scene. We see the souls of those who had been slain like victims for God; therefore they are under the altar of burnt-offering. Mark what they say, for this shews who they are: they cry for vengeance. They who have been killed for God at the time meant are in the spirit of retribution. They have not the blessed hope of being taken up to glory, but they cry, “How long dost thou not avenge our blood, on them that dwell on the earth?” They had been mixed up with the dwellers upon earth; they have suffered from them, and it is upon these they cry for judgment. It is a blessed thing to see divine deliverance from the power of evil on the earth. In Psalm 94 we see the same thing, in a lower measure, but the same spirit. “O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, shew thyself… Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee? “God was going to set up the throne at Jerusalem, and these godly ones caught the tone of the coming day. We do not say, “How long shall the wicked triumph?” (though we anticipate in spirit the Lord’s setting aside of evil) but, How long before Thou takest us to Thyself? How long before Thou takest Thy bride to be with Thee in heaven? The

difference is very great, and so are the practical results in communion and ways. And mark another thing, They are told that they must wait. They find their place, and the white robe is given them, but they have to wait until others are killed, and the number fulfilled (that is, those who would not worship the beast, chapter 15). They have thus a partial answer, but not a full one yet. The sentence of judgment is not executed yet, because iniquity is not filled up to the uttermost. They are getting the silent fruit of righteousness and their place above, but not judgment, because there is a distinct epoch to come in before. In chapter 20:4, the other class is completed, and then there can be judgment to the uttermost.

As to verses 12, etc., this is not the appearing of the Lord, which is much more terrible, as we see in Revelation 1:7; ch. 19:18. He will come like lightning, and His presence thus will be worse than all the earthquakes that ever were. He will come to tread His enemies Himself; whereas verse 12 described one of a series of providential events which awakens the uneasy dread of that day. They are panic-struck. Everything that seemed steady and stable is moved and overturned; and this not merely among the crowd. The “stars of heaven” here are the powers of the world, the symbols of subordinate governments. The kings of the earth and the great men hide themselves from the face of Him, that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. But it is not the Lord who tells them He is coming; their consciences utter this in their terror. Here is a plain proof that the seventh seal is not yet opened; the wrath of God not filled up. But we get the close of God’s providential dealings with the earth. Then follows the

public, open history of the Roman imperial world, that would be set up. Last of all, the final blasphemy of the beast against God must be dealt with in judgment.

Before the judgment comes out, the Lord shews His saints all cared for. In the first eight verses of chapter 7 we see the sealing of the elect 144,000 of Israel (12 being a mystic number). In verse 9, onwards, we see the countless company out of every nation under heaven. These are distinct from the elders who have intelligence. One of the elders says, “these are they which come out of the great tribulation.” The church always has intelligence. “We have the mind of Christ.” What are the blessings of this remnant? Simply relief. They have neither joy nor intelligence like the elders. It would be a great comfort to have rest in this way, but that is all. They have been through tribulation, and they shall now have no more of it; but we do not find them rilled with the Spirit, worshipping in the fulness of joy: “Thou art worthy,” etc. By-and-by will be fulfilled in the crisis of the world the time of Jacob’s trouble; but he shall be delivered out of it. So will these Gentiles also. They cry, “Salvation to our God which sitteth on the throne and unto the Lamb.” This is to me a proof that it is not the church here speaking, for there is nothing of the Father. The place and character given to their salvation is that it is from God upon the throne. It is real salvation, of course, but of a different character. It is not they who go in with Christ into the Father’s house, or are coming with Christ to the judgment. It is the throne of judgment, and God has delivered them from the great tribulation: “Therefore are they before the throne of God,” and “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” In the gospel we may say God is doing all this for

us now; He wipes away all tears from their eyes, and gives rest to our hearts now. Tears we may have for others, but not for ourselves. The saints are going in triumph to heaven; they even sit with Christ in the heavenly places, while here. They have got nearer to God in a different revelation from this. They have lived near Christ—members of His body; in an atmosphere which this language will not suit.

How much our hearts should seek while seeing God's government and care, to get into the peaceful, happy consciousness of the place that Christ has given us; that our souls may live in the enjoyment of our common portion in Christ. It is not vengeance we look for, or such deliverance as this, but Himself. The soul, knowing this, has a quiet, happy, peaceful sphere, separated from all around. It does not want the world, nor the things of the world. It can say, "I know whom I have believed." "To depart and be with Christ is far better," not for a term to our sorrow, but that the very radiance of Christ may shine in full power into the soul. Stephen, looking up, saw heaven opened, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. It is a terrible world we are passing through: vanity that attracts the flesh, and misery that rakes the heart. But in Christ we get that which makes the vanity tinsel. When Jesus walked through the world He saw nothing but trouble and misery in it, while He came to bring in blessing: "He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." Alas! for the man who is not this, but finds pleasure in vanity, and that which is contrary to Christ. It is not with ill-will, not with scorn, that the saint looks at this poor world, but his heart is weaned from it, and he does not want it. A heart that is weaned from the world can pity what is great in it, if Christ is

not known, and can comfort where there is sorrow, because he can speak of Christ as the remedy who came to pour oil and wine into the rent sin has made: he can pity what is great, because it is not Christ, and he can comfort what is sorrowful because it is Christ. Let us seek to get through this world in His spirit and mind, carrying Him with us.

## Chapters 11 and 12

We find ourselves here in the midst of Jewish circumstances, not earthquakes, horsemen, etc., as before, but the ark, the covenant, Moses and Elias testimony, etc. The reason is simple, namely, the government of the earth is connected with Israel. Israel is the centre of Gentile blessing and judgment. The church is in heavenly places with Christ, but the object round which all God's ways on earth centre is Israel (See Deut. 32:8.) There we see the grand centre round which He portioned the nations at first. (See also verse 15.) They forgot God, His anger is stirred, He scattered them among their enemies. Then, verse 36, the Lord turns His hand again upon them for good. He has mercy on His heritage, and then judges the Gentiles. (Read to verse 43.) To this point of the history we have now arrived; but the subject of Revelation is judgment upon the apostate part of the Gentiles, not the Gentiles generally. It is where the light shined and has been rejected. Here in the true sense of the word are adversaries, and we have to notice the rebellious character of this apostasy, and Jew, Gentile and church of God (so-called) are in open opposition to Him who has the right to reign. The time will come when there will be only a passive testimony for God, in those who refuse to

worship the beast; and as the iniquity ripens, there will be no testimony for God at all, when those who are in Judea will flee to the mountains.

Let us turn and see in this chapter 11 the condition in which Israel will be in that day, then the Gentiles themselves, and the testimony of God to them then. When God begins to measure in this way (v. 1), there is something to measure, but there is something left out: God says, there is something I own as My portion. First, those who are worshippers are taken account of, those who have a priestly character; they are not going with the multitude, but are within. All this language is connected with Jews; the locality is the holy place, properly so called, and the people are those who own the true God, and all the rest is given up to the Gentiles; the holy city is given up to be trodden down of the profane.

Verse 3. God has a witness. It is not the gospel, but His power over the earth. It is not the same testimony now, for He is gathering out a people to be to the praise of the glory of His grace. In these witnesses, we see there are not only those in priestly character, but prophets, and they are in sorrow— they prophesy in sack-cloth: opposition is their portion, and it is for a limited period.

Daniel 9:24. Bear in mind that Israel were to be cast aside until he saw what the end would be. In Daniel we never find the blessing fully given. Daniel is in the place of a remnant, and sees the blessing just about to be brought in. Millennial blessedness is not yet come. Here the thing closes at sixty-nine weeks, the last week is wanting. Afterwards the prince comes, not Messiah, but the anti-messiah for the overspreading, etc. He will

make alliance with the Jews (the first half-week), and in the midst will be the overspreading of desolation, utter desolation comes in because of this idolatry or abomination in Israel. Idolatry will come in to Israel (Isa. 66:17), sanctifying themselves behind one tree in the midst, etc. There is an interval, how long we know not ("it is not for you to know the times and the seasons ") between the rejection of Christ and His coming again; Dan. 11. Desolations are determined, the history of the evil is narrated, the ships of Chittim shall come; and in verse 33 of that chapter, the expression "days "alludes to the present—it is a picture of what is going on, and we are now in the unlimited period signified by the expression "days." The week, which remains to be fulfilled after the interval, is taken up in the Revelation.

The mission of the two witnesses (Rev. n) is not to preach the gospel, but they come with the testimony that Christ is Lord of the earth. There is a God that judgeth in the earth. It is true that God's eternal righteousness is connected with the Man in heaven, for the only righteous One has been rejected from earth and accepted in heaven, and now the angels are learning the manifold wisdom of God through the church, His body, down here. Then He will turn round and shew that He has a right on the earth, and He will not give it up. Then He says to His people as in Isaiah, "Come ye into your chambers," etc. This claim the men of the earth will not hear, and as soon as God gives His two witnesses leave, they devour them with fire (v. 5).

There is an allusion to Zechariah in the account of these two witnesses. Zechariah shews how this is all set up in order in Israel (Zech. 4): the candlestick of gold and a bowl on the top of it, and its seven lamps thereon, and

everything is in its place. The source of the two olive-trees is shewn—Christ in Melchisedec order, ministering the oil; shewing that Jehovah takes the name of God over all the earth, maintaining the brilliancy of the testimony, and the Jewish people as the candle of God's government. In Revelation we do not get the establishment of them on the earth, and therefore there is opposition: it is the time which precedes their establishment. We find that the character of the testimony of these two witnesses is judgment: "let favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness"—there are two witnesses, "that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established." Verse 5, there is present, living, manifest power against the people that oppose them. Elijah-power is first, and what was that? The testimony of God in an apostate people. Moses-power is last j turning everything into death. As the Mosaic plagues characterised the testimony in the midst of an oppressed Israel, so when they are captive amongst the Gentiles in the last days, there will be the same kind of testimony. Then as soon as the Lord has given an adequate testimony, they are given over to believe a lie: there is power from beneath permitted to influence them. The beast comes but with Satanic power. All power comes down from heaven. "The powers that be are ordained of God," magistrates, etc.; even Pilate's power to crucify Jesus was of God, as the Lord said, "Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above." But the question is, what use did he make of it? But in the day that is coming, after the witnesses are removed, the power will come from beneath, from the devil.

The judgment then becomes alarming, and after the Spirit: of God has raised up the witnesses, and they have ascended to heaven, the remnant being affrighted (not converted) give glory to the God of heaven. But it is too late. No wonder the Lord says of that time, it is such as never was, and except those days should be shortened there should no flesh be saved. These prophets tormented them that dwell on earth; the “remnant are affrighted.” There is alarm at the judgments disclosed, but no reception of the testimony. There is zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. The Jews had this before, and how did they shew it? By killing the disciples and thinking they were doing God service, because they knew neither the Father nor the Son. There was nothing but the fruit of alarm in them, as in Judas when he went and hanged himself. They give glory to the God of heaven, but they should have given glory to Him as God of the earth. We see in the chapter a very special definite form of evil and also of good, and the centre is Jerusalem.

In the seventh trumpet nothing is entered into, because it is the opening of the seven vials. Faith anticipates the blessing coming—no woe here. He is going positively to reign, and have things His own way. Would God have such a world as this is now, if He had taken to Himself His great power and reigned? His patient grace is being exercised, but not His right to reign asserted. The nations are angry, and that is what His coming produces. “Thy wrath is come.” They see the whole result of God’s taking all into His own hand. If the wrath is come, who are the objects of it? (v. 18).

The last verse of this chapter is connected with chapter 12 and in it we get two things: the ark of His covenant

symbolical of God’s faithfulness to Israel; and earthquakes and judgments on the earth.

The outline of chapter 12 shews the same thing as we have noticed in others: God’s purpose of bringing in the First-begotten into the world. We must know the value of the symbols, to be able to understand the language at all. The sun always means supreme power—the woman is clothed with sovereign power. Christ is to be born of her—clearly not of the church. The church is the woman out of the man, but Christ is the man out of the woman. The church is the Eve, the woman taken out of the man. Here we have the man born of the woman, and it is a far more blessed thing to be in the position of the church than of this woman. But Christ was born of Israel. The moon is seen under her feet: all the passing phases which have been her glory are all done with— Judaism in its old form is gone completely. The twelve stars are all its administrative power in perfection, subordinate power.

Verse 3 has in it the principle of strength out of weakness. It is the Roman Empire historically, but literally Satan’s power. It has ten horns, not seven, and not the human administrative perfection of twelve. The child that is to rule does nothing at all, being caught up to God, and the woman who is to be the centre of God’s power is hidden in the wilderness. The church is included in the Man, all through the Old Testament; Isaiah 50, etc.

Satan’s being deprived of a place in heaven, causes him to stir up war on earth (v. 12). There is war in heaven first, and then Satan is cast out and makes war on earth. Connect Daniel 12 and Matthew 24 with this account.

While Satan is in the heavenly place, whatever God has done in goodness man has spoiled in wickedness. This terrible power that man is unable to cope with (that the saints cannot is their own fault, it is true), which hinders God's testimony on the earth, will be cast down, and he can then rage against heaven, but he cannot corrupt from heaven. Christ anticipated this when He said, I saw Satan fall like lightning— "the accuser of our brethren is cast down." This is the last woe to the earth: Satan rages on it. A flood issues from his mouth (v. 15). He tries to overwhelm Israel, but God will not suffer it.

The subject of the chapter is the dramatis persona, as men say, of the great flood of evil coming on in that day. The testimony of Jesus is the testimony of the whole book—not preaching the gospel; as in 1 Peter 1 we see the preaching of the prophets, as the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. So here it is not the Holy Ghost sent down and making you see with unveiled face the glory of the Lord. The testimony of Christ is of a different kind, the testimony of power, not of grace. The cherished place is to be above and see the thunderstorm rolling beneath.

## Chapter 13

In this chapter we have the history of the two beasts, and they are something distinct from Babylon. One point must be remembered, that beasts are great temporal powers or empires; instead of being in subjection to God's authority, they are ravenous and exacting. Nebuchadnezzar was the first and Babylonish power; and all the four great empires have taken the same character. They rose out of the sea (unformed peoples) and became great corporate powers, ruling the world.

Notice that it is not only the ravenous character of the beast, but here the dragon gives it its power.

Being cast out of heaven, Satan rouses the earthly people in rebellion against the Lord and His saints in heaven. This character of the beast exclusively belongs to him for the half-week. In speaking of this beast or empire, the beginning of its history is given. Its origin we have in verse 1. The form of the beast is the same as the dragon in many respects. It has seven horns and ten heads. Chapter 12:3 and 13:1 compare together. The Roman Empire is divided into ten kingdoms— the world acknowledges it as the rightful power. The crowns are on the horns, and on the heads, the names of blasphemy. The heads are characterised by blasphemy, not power. Daniel 7:7 is identical with this in Revelation 13. Satanic power characterises this last empire. Satan resists Christ; and the Roman world in the beginning, by the power which was vested in the person of Pilate, was that which rejected, condemned, and crucified God's king, the King of the Jews, and stamped its own condemnation upon the act, by writing over them, "This is the king of the Jews." Thus it was not done in ignorance, but "Jesus of Nazareth, king of the Jews," was written there distinctly, and with authority. As soon as Satan is cast out of heaven, he gives his power to the beast—which had the character of beast before—he is the open opponent of a Christ in power as he had been of a Christ in weakness. Seven heads imply Satanic wisdom, and the expression [of it] is blasphemy. All the characters of power are associated with the beast here. He is wounded to death and healed—the same power, imperial power, revived. This power had been lost, but it revives and gathers up to itself all that the ten horns wield. They

worship the dragon. There is direct thorough adoration of this power which is opposed to Christ; the giving up the earnestness and the energy of the soul to all this, not actual bowing down to Satan.

He boasts as man and blasphemes God. The tongue is a little member and boasts great things, a world of iniquity, as James says. Men are just preparing for this great wondering after the beast. Society is worn out, and wants something new—some energising centre, something it can follow, for old things are broken up. All the old things were broken up at the old French Revolution, and they have never been repaired. Whatever has been set up has been only breaking and breaking ever since, but this great power that is to come will just supply the lack. He blasphemes the name of God and His tabernacle, and theirs that dwell in heaven. Satan can blaspheme the saints in heaven, but he cannot hurt them, they are in the heavenly Jerusalem of which the Lord God is the temple. Satan can never get back to heaven when once cast out; when loosed from the bottomless pit, he will not get beyond the earth. He will make war with those on the earth, but he cannot touch those in heaven; and we are associated with Christ there, and can sit in as much composure and peace above the devil's blasphemy, for we are with God, as while the "lightnings and thunderings and voices" were proceeding from the throne. It is a blessed thing to be so identified with God in being thus the objects of Satan's blasphemies. We want to get our hearts filled with the sense of this connection with God in the heavenlies, and it is this which is always in contrast with the dwellers upon earth; but just as far as we are mixed up with the

dwellers upon earth, we lose the sense of our identification with Him.

“It was given to him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them.” There are some killed, for example, the two witnesses. This could never have been before—God never allowed them to be overcome. All that dwell on the earth are swayed by this power except those who were elected from before the foundation of the world. These do not worship the beast, the vessel of Satan’s authority. There are four things specially to be remembered: first, the dragon is worshipped; second, those are blasphemed who dwell in heaven; third, those on earth are overcome; fourth, all the characteristics of the four beasts are to be found in this one. “If any man have an ear to hear, let him hear.”

Now we find ourselves, as in chapter 11:19, in Jewish circumstances. Verse 11 of this chapter introduces us to a sovereign power in his way, and he assumes to have Christ’s power. He has horns like a lamb, and yet if you really hear what he says, you find it is a power in opposition to Christ; though pretending to be Christ, he has a mouth like a dragon, he has the devil’s energy against Christ, and pretends to be the Messiah. Christ was a prophet when down here, and He will be a king when He comes again, and both these this second beast takes to himself, so that he is the Antichrist (Herod being a figure of him). We find in him the pretension to Christ’s royalty, and His prophetical character, but the priesthood of Christ he cannot claim. In the three great powers in action at this time, the dragon, the first beast and the second beast, we find a mimicry of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Spirit.

“He maketh fire come down out of heaven” (v. 13). This miracle resembles that of Elijah’s with Baal. The very thing that was done to prove Jehovah God is done here to prove Satan’s power. He mimics that which proved Jehovah to be God, and he will also mimic those which proved Jesus of Nazareth to be the Christ of God. Thus we see that idolatry will be again set up in the earth, for man after all, infidel as he may be, cannot get on without religion, because he must have something that is above and greater than himself, for his thoughts to rest on. Man by nature in every act is infamous, and he is not only blasphemous in heart, but idolatrous in ways. The character of idolatry is to consecrate what is in man’s heart already, will or lust, in absolute subjection—as much will as you please may be allowed, provided it be consecrated—to this beast. Chapter 19:20, refers to these two beasts of this chapter. It becomes quite Jewish at the end; but the character of evil working now we see from 2 Thessalonians 2. The expressions used in verse 9 of that chapter in reference to Satan’s powers are just the same as those applied to Christ in Acts 2:22. The words in Greek are identical—miracles, wonders and signs. All the pride now rolling around, and the intellect setting itself up, wasting itself for want of an object, will here find its focus. All the pride of man will be as a mere puppet show, for Satan to stand behind and pull the strings.

What painstaking care was given the apostle to warn us of these buddings of evil! We have more than buddings now— Judaism attached to Christianity, ordinances added to the work of Christ, instead of the Holy Ghost recognised as uniting the members to the Head in heaven, with nothing between. They who hold such

things deny that the members on earth are Himself; but He says of them “I am Jesus.” They have begun in the Spirit and end in the flesh. The stamp and character of apostasy is upon it: denying the Master that bought them, going back to days and months and times and years—and this with the Galatians was going back to the heathenism they had given up. The flesh makes an effort to accredit itself with what God accredits Christ with. But if we take Hebrews 10 as our stay, we shall be glad to part with all this as a mere lie: believing God’s word from verses 19-23, it will all be gone like a mere fog (the mere form of godliness). The energy of Satan is now being exercised in the mystery of “iniquity,” and this will continue so long as Satan is in heaven, from whence he corrupts all the truth God has ever given to the church. Therefore in 2 Thessalonians 2 we get the link between the mystery of iniquity which is now working, and the man of sin; between the false Christianity which now exists, and the false Christ which will then appear. False Christianity is now deceiving the Gentiles; but when it takes its ripened form under a false Christ, then it will be connected with the Jews. Those who have not the love of the truth, God says, shall love a lie. There are even now plenty of lovers of religion, and but few who love the truth. This is a sad and solemn truth, to believe and witness. May the Lord give us to be very plain in our testimony, and to have our souls entirely separated from a form of godliness without the power thereof, for when it becomes a mere form it is the direct power of Satan. Do not let us be violent in our efforts; for if we are convinced of the truth of it, we can be quiet, and let God work in His own way; and as to persons, treat them graciously, taking all things quietly. May we so experimentally know what a saint is as united to Him, as

to be following Him, and not denying His name, for the contrary would be blaspheming it.

## Chapter 14, 15, 16

Before the judgments are poured forth, not before tribulation, you get the redeemed from earth hid—their place marked out; not delivered, but sheltered before the Lord appears. The moment they see Him, it will be the defeat of the antichristian action. Those who obey the word of prophecy will not be exposed in the last three and a half years. This chapter 14 stands alone. Whether in testimony or in judgment, it contains the Lord's dealings while this evil is going on.

(1) Verses 1-5. Zion is royal grace, after failure at Sinai: Zion in Hebrews 12 is earthly. The passage takes in the millennium up and down—church blessings and earthly blessings. Zion is of great importance in scripture. "Ichabod" was pronounced by the faithful on Israel, the ark being taken into captivity; there is a thorough break up, and then comes in a new thing by the divine interference of David, and the ark is then placed on Zion. Those who had faith went to the ark in David's time. All was confusion in David's reign. The ark was brought back, but the ark and the altar are never united again; the ark never set up again in the tabernacle. The priest walked before God's anointed; but now it was before God where the ark was. A believer would say, I go to the altar, and there is the priest, but I find no ark, no cherubim; and the faithful would connect themselves with David, and then get the ark of the covenant. The high place was at Gibeon, and there God did visit His people, as Solomon: to faith the Solomon-reign was inferior to the David. This is the state of things now.

“Ichabod” is written on the whole system of things; Christ is the ark.

These 144,000 are not the same as those sealed in chapter 7; they are Judah, and do not include the ten tribes; the saved remnant of those who pass through the tribulation three and a half years, “continuing with me in my temptations.” It is “the” Lamb, not “a” (as in common editions). The remnant are in an analogous position to Christ (and now His body), only on earth, and not united to the Son of man in heaven. Therefore they are learning the song from the church in heaven, and in principle like Christ, suffering from the evil around.

There are two points distinct in repentance: two kinds we get in the Psalms and also often in our own hearts. Deliverance by power, and this answering to the ark on Mount Zion. Then when delivered, they see their horrible sin against Christ who has delivered them. It is worship as on Mount Moriah. “Cleanse me from blood-guiltiness,” etc., also Isaiah 53 is an expression of it: we have done it. This is what is now called evangelical repentance; not merely the cry of fear, “Who shall deliver me?” “Out of the depths have I cried unto thee.”

“First-fruits” (v. 4) has always the same general meaning, gathering out from the old into the new thing. These have nearness to heaven. This scene is the Lord beginning with the world. The character of salvation we get all through Revelation is coming from the throne of God—not the Father’s house.

(2). Verses 6, 7. God is setting things to rights on the earth. This same gospel was given in Eden, not the gospel of the glory in heaven as now—the peculiar gospel given to Paul. Gospel means good news in all

ages. It is “every family” in Ephesians 3:15, not “the whole family.” See Amos 3:2. Every being who comes into connection with God, angels, Jews, Gentiles, the church—come under the name of the Father of Jesus, not Jehovah.

The everlasting gospel—good news to the earth—is that which will bruise Satan’s head, and set up the kingdom. It is the same as the gospel of the kingdom, and there is nothing to hinder that being extended over the whole earth. It goes on through all the tribulation; Matt. 24. Psalm 96 is the expression of it. There is a cluster of Psalms all connected with the setting up of the kingdom: Psalm 93 gives the consequences— Jehovah reigning, and the throne established in holiness after all the raging of men; Psalm 94 is a cry for Jehovah’s coming in vengeance from the remnant; in Psalm 95 the Jews are called to come up; Psalm 96—testimony goes out to the Gentiles because Jehovah is coming; Psalm 97—He is actually coming in the full power of His reign; Psalm 98—He is come; Psalm 99—He is seen sitting between the cherubim in Jerusalem on earth; Psalm 100—all in order: they are worshipping. Jesus is Jehovah the Saviour, Jah, the Saviour, Joshua, Jesus. This gives the character to His people; Matt. 1:27.

Psalm 32 is just the character of verse 5: that the Kingdom-character of the gospel; this the Creator character. Here is all the difference.

(3) and (4). This chapter gives us an epitome of God’s dealings. Babylon falls first, then the beast. Revelation tells the end of the thing. There are many lanes leading into the great thoroughfare of judgment. The spirit of Babylon is one.

The Book of Revelation will be of special use to those living at that time. We have to do with the book: but the book will have to do with them.

There are two principles of evil at work. In the beast there is the principle of association, or despotic power. This we see in France. Babylon is a weaker system—commercial in its character, but also papal idolatry. This we have in spirit in England, everything to quiet the conscience, and anything done for the sake of peace to carry on her commerce; and so there is the setting in of all evil. Commerce destroys principle, but it promotes civilisation; they will not scalp people, but goodness depends on paying bills. Verse 10 is fear, and not the blessed attraction of grace, as we have it. The fear of God is put in contrast with the fear of the beast. The fear of the beast is no doubt great, but the fear of God is to be greater. (See verse 7.) Here (v. 12) is the patience of the saints to be tried, of those who keep the "commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." There is belief in the promises—confidence in Him, which enables them to walk as He walked, looking for deliverance from God.

(5). Verse 13. "Blessed are the dead." God is coming in judgment and in power; the dead will get their full blessedness at once without waiting longer—" dead "are those who have been slain, not those who are going to die, but those who have died.

(6) and (7). Verses 14-17. There are two judgments, one distinguishing, the other crushing. The harvest applies to what is good; not so the vintage, all is crushed in that: when reaping, some may remain untouched. The vine of the earth takes in the Jews and Antichrist. Babylon is

degenerate Christendom: Israel is called a vine. In John 15 it is not the church, because we never get the church till the day of Pentecost. We find all through scripture Christ supplanting Israel. (See Isaiah 49.) I suppose that it is in Edom that the Jews are judged: see Isaiah 63. The Mahometans and Jews with all their corruptions hold a personal Antichrist. Some suppose the reference (v. 20) is to the length of the land of Palestine, but it is tremendous slaughter.

Attention is here drawn to a second great wonder. There was one great wonder (or literally sign) in chapter 12, and in this chapter 15 there is another.

The seven last plagues give us the wrath of God, not of the Lamb—we do not get that until chapter 19. Here God is dealing with those on the earth; nor yet the destruction of the beast, when the Lamb comes forth, but the filling up of the preparatory judgments after the woes. The wrath is filled up when the Lamb comes forth.

In verse 2 we have a second set of martyrs, not those under the altar (chap. 6), who have been beheaded in an ordinary way, but those who have been under the beast, and refused to worship him. They are distinguished in chapter 20:4.

These martyrs on the sea of glass are singing the song of Moses and of the Lamb: Moses and the Lamb are connected. There are those who understand His ways by going through the same with Him; and others understand His works by His judgments on the enemies. Some “follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.” In verse 3 the critical reading for “saints “is nations, the same persons as are mentioned in chapter 5. There the celebration is about them, here by them. He who had

the lowly place there of the Lamb slain is here celebrated as “King of nations.”

The “sea of glass”; it is not merely water, purity, but glass, stability. It is not only water to wash defiled feet, as in the tabernacle service, but here it is solid purity to walk upon, and mingled with fire. They had passed through the fire of tribulation in the judgments. Two things have brought them there: it is not like the elders who are seen in heaven, as in their natural place, but they have got there, so to speak, through the judgments —saved so as through fire. They have not got clear of these dwellers upon earth, and they have to escape for their lives, like Lot. How came they down in the tribulation at all? They were doubtless faithful when in it, but, like Lot, who would never have been in Sodom if he had not liked the plain of Sodom, they have liked the comfort of the world while they could get it. To Philadelphia the promise was to be kept “from the hour of tribulation,” but here they are not kept from it, but taken through it. They were truly a testimony in the tribulation, but it was inactive testimony, not worshipping the beast. In chapter 20 there are two classes of martyrs spoken of—those beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and those who have not worshipped the beast. In chapter 6 we see those who have been beheaded for the witness of Jesus. This is the positive actual testimony of the faithful, three and a half years. In this chapter is no testimony, but a negative one—they had not worshipped, etc. We see in both that they had not been faithful as the church, or they would never have been in the tribulation. Better to be like Abraham on the top of the mountain, than like Lot in the plain of Sodom, vexing his righteous soul from day to day with

the filthy conversation of the wicked. God has sometimes to pass us through a kind of trial on our own account, as well as in testimony, which would not have been necessary if we had been more faithful. The song we learn in tribulation we sing in glory (v. 4). So with Christ. So here with the remnant. The manifestation of the judgment of God was their salvation. These nations had been oppressing them, and now they will be brought into subjection.

There is not historical order pursued here, for it is anticipative, as are all these scenes with the elders now. This remnant have to go through the tribulation to get at what is here presented. God has come in, in the way of deliverance. Enemies now begin to be made His footstool. Satan has to be cast out of heaven. He does not yet rule with a rod of iron. He has taken His friends to Himself, and the first thing is to cast Satan down. As soon as this is done, Satan begins to stir up the earth against Christ. The woman then flees: the half-week. If these two sets of martyrs were not mentioned (chap. 20:4), as having part in the first resurrection, we should be left to infer that neither had they heaven nor earth. As they did not go up with the church, and were cut off for their faithfulness, so that they could not have earth, if they had not resurrection, they would have been shut out from both, without getting a reward for their faithfulness. The twenty-four elders probably include all who have part in the first resurrection.

The vials are direct judgments here. The temple is taken possession of in judgment. The preliminary judgments prove of no use, and then these positive judgments are filled up in wrath. The former were in the character of chastening, but we do not talk of chastening when wrath

is to be filled up. Heaven in Revelation becomes the scene of judgment, and the time is between the church being spued out, and the Lamb coming forth in chapter 19. The Witness does not come out on earth until then.

Verse 3. “Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty.” This was the original title in the book. “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty.” Then the Lamb’s song, “King of nations,” all anticipative of the double judgments of God and the Lamb.

Verse 5. Remark “the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven.” (See chapter 11.) All this is an earthly thing in connection with God’s covenant. The testimony is not the gospel, but according to law—Jewish ground being merely secured in the covenant. The temple is the house (naos) —the place of approach. Compare Acts 7:44, “the tabernacle of witness” —the tent within. It is here opened for man to see what had been God’s ways within.

These angels (v. 6), in their clothing give us the figure of human righteousness (white clothing), and divine righteousness (golden girdles). They were vials of the sanctuary that the angels threw out upon the earth. “Bowls” is more simple than “vials,” but there is no difference—vessels of God’s house: the idea is golden bowls, divine righteousness, looked at in its judicial character, within. Blood was on the outside of the mercy-seat, signifying divine righteousness had to be satisfied. We have got into the house, as it were. And here is one of the things given from the throne by one who is there: “Him who liveth for ever and ever.” This stamps eternity on the wrath, as well as its being the moral nature of God. “The temple was filled with

smoke." Man is excluded from the temple which is filled with wrath, and they cannot get in. So Sinai was all of a smoke. "Smoke went out of his nostrils." It is constantly used as a figure of consuming fire, in opposition to grace clearing transgressions, etc. "No man" (v. 8) merely means no one—it often does not mean man at all. Here none could enter in, priests, angels, or any. God alone fills the house with His glory, as in the Solomon reign in type. Even the angels have come out. "God chargeth his angels with folly." None can be there when the house is filled with His glory.

Chapter 16:1. It is between God and man now—the wrath of God with man on the earth. The temple in heaven is shut up. There is a glory of God "no man hath seen, or can see"; but there is where the devil goes near. See Job and Zechariah for different characters of His dwelling-place.

Verse 2. There has been an analogous course going on a long time. The system of the earth is going on—Babylon, and other evils, even many antichrists, and God is taking things into His own hand now. The character of His dealings is like those through Moses in Egypt, quite different from the description in chapters 12-14. It is another sign, and quite distinct, "grievous sores" and "boils breaking out." All those giving themselves up to the influence of civil power will get some terrible judgment, and men will see it—a "mark," a sign upon them, of being a slave—what we should call a brand, a Taw, as in Ezekiel, for service and worship—as people mark cattle now—a mark of entire possession of and authority over. It is terrible thing to be marked by the devil. Paul suffered for Christ, having been faithful to Him, and he was branded for it. It is the same thought.

Verse 3. “Sea” is the unsettled mass of nations. The difficulty here is that every man died in it. Verse 4. The springs that should have been life became death—everything is polluted, deathful. Everything which should have been death bringing to life is life bringing death—every principle in the world turns to death. Any remnant will be kept clear of this. The “earth” is that part brought out into connection with God. There are certain floating, unformed nations besides, and these represented by the “sea.” They have been inflicting death, and now they are drinking in death. Gentile apostasy is centred up in Jerusalem.

The temple is still the place from which the judgments proceed. None can enter into it while all this is going on. In the previous chapter we had the things prepared; in this it is the pouring out of wrath. Now it is not the testimony or dealings with saints, but we see God’s dealings with the Jews as a people, something the same as the last verse of chapter 11, but there is a difference. Here it is more in the way of government, the throne; in chapter 11, faithfulness to His promises; therefore the ark of the covenant is mentioned. See also the allusions to God’s covenant-dealings with them in the next chapter; the figures are connected with the Jews and God’s covenant people. Smoke from the glory of God filled the temple—not leading to worship, as in Solomon’s time, but it is filled with wrath. It is all Sinai character, only it is in heaven, instead of on earth.

In the pouring out of these vials, we see the usual division of four and three. The first four are poured out upon the earth, the sea, the rivers, and the sun: and the fifth upon the beast, and the “sore” upon those who have the mark of the beast. The rivers of water are symbolical

of classes of popular principles, masses of people moved along by a certain class of principles, for example, the French Revolution. The sea is the great mass; the river the floating population, a particular local influence. The king of Egypt said, “My river is mine own.” All they had to drink was the power of death—the water turned into blood.

The restitution of all things, spoken of in Acts 3, begins as soon as Satan is cast out of heaven, but it is not accomplished until after the millennium.

The “sun” (v. 8) means public authorities, “and men were scorched with great heat.” Tyranny becomes intolerable when fire is poured out. The principle of the thing was seen in France, where you used to have a padlock on your lips, if they did not know what kind of a person you were. “Blasphemed the name of God”—this shews the effect of judgment when the heart is not changed.

Verse 10. The term “beast” is used, because of the ravaging power of this king. A beast’s heart was given to Nebuchadnezzar. Man’s heart looks upwards to God; a beast’s heart looks down and ravages others. A beast is a wild ravenous creature, which devours all below it. They “blasphemed the God of heaven”: but faith would have owned Him as the God of the earth as well as heaven— “because of their pains and their sores,” they ascribe them to Him.

Verses 12-14. “Kings from the east” are connected with the same subject. The barrier of the empire will be broken. The seven heads on the beast denote forms of government: the ten horns, its division into ten kingdoms. The miracles wrought by the spirits of

demons are those which are so beyond the power of natural science to interpret, that they cannot be understood in the age in which they are worked. A more advanced age might be able to understand them. The devil has uncommon knowledge of the resources of nature and science; they may be beyond the power of man to effect, but such a combination of natural things as to be within the reach of Satan. There are things very like miracles performed now through electro-biology and animal magnetism. The brain is a voltaic battery, the nerves the wires, etc., but the question is, who is to fire the battery? They could not make an animal move itself, and they could not make the animal. In chapter 13:15 it should be “breath,” not life, given to the image of the beast. It is life to man’s eye, but not really so.

The three unclean spirits are: 1, the dragon: this is infidelity, war against Christ; 2, the beast: pretensions to imperial power, given by the devil; 3, the false prophet: antichristian Judaism. The saints are endangered, and therefore exhorted to keep their garments (v. 15). “Garments “in scripture mean our daily habits or daily life. How needful it is to keep oneself in death, while walking through the world! The great thing is to keep nature dead. “Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.” “I die daily,” Paul said. “When I am weak, then I am strong.” When God’s mind, or God Himself, comes in, natural joy would be confusion and disgrace.

Verse 16. When both Hebrew and Greek are named as in chapter 9:11, there is connection between Hebrew and Greek power; but when Hebrew is alone, it is solely Jewish.

Babylon (p. 19) is idolatry; commerce, too, and worldly power connected with civilisation. The things men are judged in are not always those they are judged for. Here men are judged in wealth, because of the abominable heart which sought the wealth apart from God. So was the merchant city of Chaldea, whose cry was in the ships. The thing judged is the idolatry, but the judgment reached their commerce. When you get the abomination for which God strikes her, she is spoiled of her comfort. The “great city “means the civil association; the “great Babylon” is its recorded character, idolatry.

## Chapter 17

“Judgment” (v. 1) does not merely mean the execution of punishment, but the sentence pronounced or accusation. There are here things with which Babylon is charged: it is said of Christ that Pilate put up His “accusation”17—the thing for which He was sentenced. Babylon here has the character of the church, and yet it is the most wicked system in the world. John, having part in the poor despised church, was banished to the isle of Patmos for the testimony of Jesus; and yet he saw that which was called “the church” governing this Roman empire which had put him in prison, a constituted system controlling peoples, etc. No wonder that he marvelled (v. 6): it must have been astonishing to him. The expression means, he wondered with a great wonder, somewhat as we should say, dying the death. “They that dwell on the earth shall wonder” —in their moral character, dwellers upon earth: it is general. The place to be looked to as the scene of it is the Roman empire.

The special character of the whore is seductive influence of the masses, and alliance with the leading powers. The kings commit fornication with her, and the masses are made thoroughly stupefied—drunk with new wine—not like those who were accused of being so in Acts, but in truth filled with the Spirit. In their sober senses they would have seen the corruption, but they are made drunk. It can only be understood in “the wilderness” (v. 3), where it is seen there is not one green blade for the soul. Upon her forehead was a name written, “Mystery,” etc. If a person is drunk, you may write on his forehead anything, things that were never heard of. She would not have taken such names as Mother of Harlots, etc., if her eyes had been open. The character of it is very plain, except to the besotted mind. John was in the Spirit led into the wilderness, and therefore he could understand it. A “mystery” can only be discerned by revelation and the power of God. It is simple to him who understands, but “great is the mystery of godliness; God manifest in the flesh,” etc., is a riddle to those who have no spiritual understanding.

This false thing which has the name of “mystery,” to those who are used to it, is as rotten as possible. The priest, with all his mummery, genuflexions, etc., can laugh at it; but the simple man who is ensnared by it thinks it all piety, and he is deluded by it. Absolution is thought to be a very wonderful thing—it quiets his conscience, and then he begins sinning again. Men call it a mystery, and so it may be, because it is the devil’s work. There is only one thing to keep a man out of popery, and that is the knowledge of divine righteousness. If one has got that, he will never want to try putting a cross on the ground, and then licking the

dust. Divine righteousness can never be made a whit better by any works of self-crucifixion, mortification, etc., and therefore the man who knows he has this will not be trying works of his own to add to it.

Popery not only wants to add works, but it wants a priesthood. In Christendom, wherever there is a pretension to priesthood there is the devil. There is something that separates between me and God: there may be ever so little a germ of it, but still it is there. Priesthood in any shape is a denial of Christianity, though there may be a great deal that modifies the case. It brings a veil between me and God, as though Christ had not accomplished the work. Priesthood and clericalism, as set up by man, are both against God and the priesthood of Christ, interfering with the work of redemption as though this wanted something to be added to it. A man-organised ministry or clergy, denies liberty to God's love; and virtually says, If you do not let me cut the channel, the gospel shall not go forth. I believe in ministry, but that is the very reason I will not admit clericalism; just for the same reason that, if I support royalty, I shall not admit a usurper. If I am not spiritual enough to get to God myself, I naturally enough get someone else to go for me; that is why priesthood and the clergy are set up. Popery is denying not so much truth as the application of truth. They allow there is efficacy in Christ's blood-shedding, but how am I to get it? is the question. Oh! said Luther, get it by faith. Here is the application of it.

There is another thing that characterises Babylon—idolatry; like Balaam, who set a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, etc. When priesthood comes in, there is always more or less of idolatry also. If I know

how to come to God, I do not want a priest any more than an idol; but if not, I want both. “Abominations” (v. 4, 5) simply means idols. The word ‘abomination’ constantly occurs in the Old Testament, meaning an idol. It is connected with all that is degraded; and the moment man gives up belief in the true God, he is sure to degrade himself. If man does not look to something above himself, he will sink to that which is below him, as we see in Romans 1. The attributes of God Himself were made to be symbolised in the cherubim which the Ninevites, etc., used to worship. They stopped short at the symbol, instead of going beyond to Him who was symbolised, and this was idolatry. In Israel they made pillars of God’s throne. What men had formerly about the Creator, they have now about the Intercessor. The truth of God is thrown into a channel that suits nature, but it is opposed to the Holy Ghost.

Then the next thing is murder. Satan is a liar, and the “father of lies”; and he is also a “murderer from the beginning.” So, in the working of Satan, we find there is first idolatry, and then it leads to murder. The “woman is drunken with the blood of saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.” This is the time of prosperity to her. She is drunken. There are two characteristics given of those with whose blood she is drunken. It is not said any Christians; but they who “will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” “I have given them thy word, and the world hath hated them.” The terms, saints and martyrs of Jesus, witnesses for Him, are given to characterise them. They are not characterised as those who are settling down here upon earth.

“The kings of the earth have committed fornication with her” (v. 2). This, in a hidden way, we may find going on

now. The departure of the pope from Rome was the beginning of it. The kings of the earth are allying with the pope, in order to keep down radicalism, which is an enemy to them. The woman sits upon a scarlet-coloured beast (v. 3), and the beast must carry her, but she governs the beast.

“The beast that was, and is not,” etc. (v. 8), means the Roman empire—an expression that is intended to characterise it, not date. It “shall be present”; that is, it is the resurrection of the Roman empire in a devilish way—the perfection of power in a diabolical energy. There are seven heads and ten horns—neither spiritual nor human perfection.

Verse 14. “They that are with him are called and faithful, and chosen.” This is the bride individualised. When Christ is spoken of as Bridegroom, she is spoken of as bride, and that is in the Father’s house; but when the throne or the Lamb is spoken of, they are individualised who are connected with them.

Verse 15. “The waters which thou sawest” are not only dwellers on the Roman earth here, but China and all over the world. Wherever Christ goes, she, the mother of abominations, thinks she has a right to go. Kings mean kings as such; horns mean kingdoms—the whole power, such as France, where there may be no king reigning.

The beast was the vessel of Satan’s power against the vessel of God’s power—Christ. There is the holiness of the one city— the heavenly Jerusalem; and the scenes of corruption God judges in the other: and it is well to notice that what is after the flesh is always successful at the first, in order to put the faithful to the test. “That

was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural." Cain and his doings are first narrated, before we hear of the true seed; Ishmael, the apparent heir, was long before the birth of Isaac; Esau remained in the promised land, while Jacob was a fugitive; Saul was king before David, and, to all appearance, Saul possessed the title to God's power for a long time, while David did not resist him. We may see it in Jesus Himself, when He said, "I have laboured in vain, and spent my strength for nought"; while others said, "Aha! aha! so would we have it." Yes, and Jesus said to His disciples, "Ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice." It is God's way, in His rule of government, to allow it to go on for a time. He will put to the test whether the heart will go through the trial of being put down, but when God takes His power He will have it otherwise; until then, the Lord says, "I waited patiently" (Psa. 40): take no rescue till He comes. When did Jesus ever save Himself from all that came upon Him?

The whore sits upon "many waters." The wicked may have children at their desire, and have substance; but the saint says, When God fills all things, I shall then be satisfied, and I shall awake up in His likeness. We have a description of Babylon before the heavenly Jerusalem—the whore in chapters 17 and 18, and the bride in chapter 21.

There is imperial glory in Babylon also—all that could attract—purple, scarlet, and precious stones; but John saw by the Spirit the true character of it all—the beauty which attracts man but disgusts God, and He will never be mocked. He will have us walk by faith, and though He shews us the woman riding the beast, and the beast carrying the woman, He holds the bridle till the church

is gathered. “Babylon the great”! This is the character of it, and in this way it is the world, it is the source and spring of all the idolatry, the rival of the Jerusalem of God; and she is not the only one, but the mother of all, and in her was found the blood of saints and martyrs. As Babylon she had corrupted all the nations, and here she is drunken with blood. You always find the great opponent of truth is the corrupter. See it in the chief priests, who gave up Christ; they were more guilty than the soldiers. After paganism we have corruption from what bore the name of Christianity; and not only so, but oppression; in her the blood is found—that which called itself the holy city!

In verse 8 the beast was, and is not. The Roman empire ascends, for there is a connection between the two—the seven heads and ten horns. The Roman empire was, and is not, but comes back again, and comes under the influence of Satan, for it ascends “out of the bottomless pit.” Christ came out from God’s throne, and the beast out of the depths of the pit—an antagonistic power; one out of the light, the other out of darkness, and they wonder who are not guarded by God’s electing grace. The shadows are coming over the renewed Roman earth, the principles are at work. But verse 9 is a distinct character, the woman is on the seven hills, not on the beast—Rome, and marked to shew not merely a beast, but Babylonish power: the whole power so concentrated in the last head, that it becomes the beast. Christ wields the power of heavenly things, and in the same way (v. 12) for a season, no kingdom yet. But the ten horns receive power for one hour with the beast: they are contemporaneous—did not supplant the beast, but received power with him. We have seen, in a sense,

they have power with the woman, but here it is a person in whom the power is concentrated, but I get in the ten horns the federacy, associated with the beast, they give “their power and strength,” “their kingdom” unto the beast. Western Europe will present it, they will have one kind of general unity, not individuality of the nations but unity, and they cannot go on without a head; so they are content to give power to the beast, and they say, “Who is like to the beast?” And they make war with the Lamb, but the Lamb overcomes them and we have the church with Him. Angels are not called to this; they are upheld by grace, but not “called” (v. 14).

In verse 16 the ten horns hate the whore, for, after all, the woman will be in the way; they will not bear to be priest-ridden, and they will destroy her. All that is ripening up will be destroyed by the people in an ignominious way; for though this corruption is trying to keep down the people, it will not succeed.

This is the latter-day scene, and, in closing, I would say, it is a solemn scene; but what can we expect from sinful man? and, I must say again, there is no corruption so terrible as the corruption of the mediation of Christ. The heart that is brought to Him is astonished to see how people are attracted by the external, which has not one trace of Christ in it. But the soul that is brought to God has got divine righteousness, and if one comes to me to offer pardon of my sins, I say, I have got it. And if I receive from you, I must get it again and again; but through Christ’s blood my sin is remembered no more. The thing offered is not Christianity, for the Christian has got his place; and it has got Babylon on its forehead, and if you cannot see, you have not got a spiritual eye. The Lord help us, for all are in danger who are not on

simple ground. I have no thought that man's wisdom will do anything; but He will keep the feet of His saints. If the woman is destroyed, the horns give power to the beast: if corruption ceases, these make war with the Lamb, but the soul that is brought into peace, and holding the Head, shall be hid secretly; near to Jesus is a hiding-place, and there we shall be spared from all that is around. The Lord keep us from the spirit of the world, and guard us from the corruption of the mediatorial work of Christ!

## Chapter 18

The other angel (v. i) is not the Lord. Babylon (v. 2) "is fallen," or morally sunk into the lowest degradation. The actual fall is narrated in chapter 19:2. The consummation is openly diabolical, because Satan is cast out of heaven.

Verse 4 is a cry to the people of the Lord to come out, etc. The mixture of Judaism and Christianity will be such as never was known before: Judaism, which is really heathenism, as in Galatians 4, where Paul calls observing days and years a turning back to the beggarly elements—being circumcised to keep the law, etc. It is the religion of the flesh. Up to the cross of Christ God was dealing with all this; but when Judaism is grafted on Christianity, it is hateful to Him. What are prayed to as Saint Peter and Saint Paul are demons: as they used to introduce false gods, so now they introduce false mediators. Puseyism is heathenism. The shapes of evil, counterfeiting God, are Judaism, demonism, and heathenism. Infidel latitudinarianism is the character of evil in England, different from what it is in India. Popery slurs over sin; no matter how they sin, an indulgence

will atone for it. It is a shame for His people to be there, but still He remembers them (v. 4). People who are in the ark cannot be touched, but an apostate protection He will judge thoroughly.

Verses 12, 13. Everything not heavenly is mixed up with her: “Souls of men.” “Through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you,” 2 Pet. 2:3. There is a time “to love, and a time to hate,” and there are certain things which if a person does not hate, he has no right estimate of God. Some things ought to be hated—not the persons of course— “Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.” We must not confound natural kindness with grace; but it is easy to do it, and to be indifferent to God’s honour. The popish hierarchy has been guilty of shedding all the blood that has been shed upon earth. It is the centralisation of all the wickedness that has been done on the earth from the time of Abel downwards, and Rome will be judged for it (v. 24).

Chapters 17 and 18 are a parenthesis in the history, which is Continued from chapters 16 to 19. Chapters 17 and 18 are descriptive, not historical. In chapter 21:9, we have a description of the heavenly city after the Lamb is come, just as we get this description, in chapter 18, of this other city, the object of God’s wrath; first that which is carnal, and afterward that which is spiritual. There is the false and the true, and it is after the false is set aside that the true is put in its place. The corrupt pretended to be the heavenly thing, but the Lord will take His bride, and produce her before the world in glory.

Babylon is “the mother of harlots, and abominations of the earth.” The whole character “of it is idolatry and hostility to God. The Lamb does not execute judgment upon her, but the one true God executes the judgment upon that which had come in between Himself and the souls of men (chap. 19:1, 2).

We are little conscious of the blessing granted us, in being made acquainted with God’s purposes, even those of judgment. The first thing, of course, for the soul to be anxious about, is the possession of peace with God. But then the heart will not be shut up to that, but is enlarged of God, to enter into the whole scene and scope of glory, in which the Lord Jesus Christ delights, and in which He will have us with Him, and in connection with this scene, into the judgments on opposers and enemies, consequent on His taking His inheritance.

If we think of the past or the present, in scripture or profane history, and consider how power has been abused, we cannot wonder at the joy heaven evinces, and the song of praise bursting forth at God’s taking the government: “The Lord God omnipotent reigneth!” Trace it back to the flood. After delegating the new world to Noah, we find man despising the authority of God, and idolatry coming in; in fact, the whole course of the world is according to the prince of the power of the air—according to Satan—and not according to God; all is apostate from God. The more religious they were, the more Satan was honoured. As the apostle says, “The things the Gentiles offer, they offer to devils and not to God.” It is not simply the natural lusts contending, and the motives enlisted on the side of sin: every way, it is all the devil’s. What a change, when God shall take the

power into His own hands, and we can sing, “The Lord God omnipotent reigneth!”

All idolatry is summed up in Babylon, “the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth.” Go back to Nebuchadnezzar. The head of gold turns to idolatry. And I would note here, all that was connected with the worship of Pluto in pagan religion; and you will see that the unity of the Godhead was not the truth denied (a shadow of truth men never effaced even here, though hell and the devil were all that remained of it). That which man quarrelled with was that which reveals the Mediator Satan cannot deny there is a God, but he will try to hinder (by putting another object between) His light and love from shining into the heart and conscience, and so revealing Him who alone can give us peace. When the golden calf was made, the devil did not take away the name of Jehovah; for they said, “To-morrow is a feast to Jehovah.” So now it is not the name of God cast out; but the introduction of that which hides the truth. All Satan’s aim is to blot out the Mediator. So John, in his epistles, when heathenism and Judaism were combined in this one object, meets it by “God is light,” and “God is love.” And the saints are to be partakers of the same. So long as Satan can hinder that, he will give the name, and call it Christianity; but his object is to keep up the distance between our souls and God, and to prevent us from reaching the blessed end for which Jesus suffered— “who suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.” Blessed be God, we have such a mediator, who brings us to God, raising us up to Him; not as Satan tries to bring God down to us — “after the similitude of a calf eating hay.” The corruption of the mediatorial work of Christ is Satan’s

widespread power over the nations in the hands of Babylon,—but “Strong is the Lord God that judgeth her.”

The first verse ascribes salvation and glory, etc., to God — not to the Lamb—but to God on the throne, reigning; first, executing judgment, then reigning; to the God of heaven sitting on the throne (not coming to earth) in the characters known to the Old Testament saints as Shaddai and Jehovah, judging Babylon. He reserves to Himself the judgment which puts down Satan’s power and malice. Be not surprised at power unintelligible, yet chaining men’s minds. It is Satan’s work. It is quite beyond us, and cannot be put down till the Lord God takes the power and gives perfect deliverance. Christ cannot display His long-affianced bride until the evil is removed, that which is false and corrupt put aside, and that which is true brought out in its place. The pretended heavenly thing removed, Christ will bring forth His bride and produce her before the world in the glory prepared for her. While He is hid with God, we are hid too. Our display shall be with His display. The church and the world cannot go on together. By the Holy Ghost she is planted and set down here in the character of witness. In as far as she is true, she is hated by the world. For a brief season there was gladness, and the people glorified God; but she has to walk by faith, not by sight now. A heavenly character is hers. “Ye are not of this world.” And He cannot appear till we come forth with Him.

God will have realities. Now although He is bearing with corruption, it is only in order to the gathering His church to Himself. She having gone up and been received of Christ, He will come back with her, and be

manifested to all. May we keep ourselves for Him until He comes!

Protestantism is what Sardis characterises, and comes to nothingism—a name to live, but dead, etc. In Thyatira it is positive, active corruption. Jezebel is a religious character or Babylon, the world-church system. Jezebel is popery, producing papists. Babylon is popery governing the world. Her final condemnation we have in chapter 19:2. The rule of God and the marriage of the Lamb are kept back until this great system is judged. No wonder there is the voice of much people heard, saying, Alleluia, etc. “The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped.” Verse 8 explains verse 7.

Verses 6, 7 are the song; the following verses are the history. It is necessary to see the distinction. His wife hath made herself ready by being faithful in what God had given her. “Righteousness” should be plural, and I believe it is God owning the practical walk of the individual saints that compose the bride. They were given to have resurrection-life with Him. What is produced is the righteousness of saints, and seen before God in resurrection character—the display in glory of responsibility as to service done in the Holy Ghost by us down here. “Their works do follow them.” “Was granted that they should be arrayed in fine linen” shews it is grace, after all. The Lord is pleased to own the work wrought in us, and by us, in the Holy Ghost down here. In virtue of life in my Head I stand before God: in virtue of what He has done in me, the manifestation of that life, I stand before the saints, before man.

“These are the true sayings of God” (v. 9). “Sayings” have a very large meaning. Christ is the Word of God, and His are the sayings of God.

The parable at the beginning of Matthew 25 is not Jewish, though the hidden bride is the earthly Jerusalem. The wise virgins are true Christians, and the foolish those who profess, have only the name, in this dispensation—going out to meet the Bridegroom. The Jewish remnant does not “go out,” but Christ comes to it. The figure of virgins characterises them as individual saints, not in their corporate character as the church, though they are of the church (that is, the true and faithful virgins). In the Gospels, when the bride is alluded to at all, it is usually in this way (namely, as individual saints). The difference between the wise and the foolish virgins is not in their watching, for they all go to sleep, but it rather consists in the reality of what they have got. If they were caring for Christ, they would be thinking of the light He would want to see, and would look to the oil; but if they only cared about the company of the other virgins, they would be thinking about their dress, and many other things, rather than the light. In Matthew 24 Christ was giving instruction to those who inquired of Him about Jewish things, down to verse 44. Next, from verse 45 down to verse 31 of chapter 25, He applies to His disciples while He is away. Then, to the end, He takes up earthly things which will be known in reference to the Gentiles.

The bride in Revelation 19 and 21 is the church. The symbol of the “city,” in chapter 21 shews the glorious character of the saints. The heavenly people have more enjoyment than the earthly, in the same way that I get more happiness than the poor family I go to visit. They

may enjoy the thing, but I enjoy something quite different. The heavenly people will be a medium of communicating blessing to the earthly.

The marriage supper (v. 9) introduces the millennium.

The “fellow-servant” (v. 10) is an angel. All that John is here is as a prophet, a servant, not as one of the church, indwelt by the Holy Ghost.

“The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy.” This is distinct from the gospel—His prophetic testimony, and the people are named “servants “rather than sons.

Two words are used in Revelation generally, “diadems” and “crowns.” Here it is “diadems.” If they gain a victory, they put on a crown; if it is to signify royal power and authority, it is a diadem.

Verses 11, 12. There is a difference between warlike and sessional judgment. This is, of course, the first. The Lord is coming out to execute judgment on the beast, who took the character of the false prophet, and was cast alive into a lake of fire, whilst Babylon was burnt with fire. “And I saw heaven opened.” This expression occurs four times in scripture connected with the Person of the Lord: first, in Matthew 3, the Holy Ghost descends, and bears record that God’s object of delight being on earth, heaven is open upon Him. The Spirit, as a dove, rests upon Him, and bears witness to Him as the Son of God. Secondly, in the end of John 1, the Lord says to Nathanael, “Ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.” It is not the Holy Ghost here, but the angels, and if those around had had their eyes opened, they might perhaps have seen them, for after His temptation angels came and ministered unto Him, and in the garden of

Gethsemane one “strengthened” Him. The third time there is a difference, for the Son of man is gone up: God has taken to Himself the Objects of His delight. Then the Holy Ghost fills the saint on earth. He looks up and sees the heavens opened and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. The link is broken with earth, and the heart of the saint is taken up to heaven. The testimony of this is corrupted and lost, and we have now a great tree instead. Then here, for the fourth time, heaven is opened again, and Christ comes forth in judgment against hostile power; and, when thus opened, it is for us as well for Himself, for we belong to Him, and come with Him. “The armies which were in heaven followed him.”

The white horse is the symbol of triumph, and He who sits upon him is called “Faithful and True,” the same character in which He is presented to the church of Laodicea, though there He is the “Witness” and the “Amen.” Here it is not as a “Witness,” but as a Judge, and as executing judgment in the character of God, and He is always the “Amen” to that. His eyes are as a flaming fire, shewing how piercing the judgment is; and then “on his head were many crowns” —or royal glories. His name none knew but Himself. This is Christ’s consciousness of what He is. So, in Matthew n, He says, “No man knoweth the Son but the Father.” And why? Because no man can fathom incarnate God; and the way He maintains it is by going down and down, for “He humbled himself,” and became obedient unto death,” etc. But He is exalted, and “His name is called the word of God,” the Revealer of God. He appears in “a vesture dipped in blood,” significant of His coming forth as a warrior.

Isaiah 63 is the same scene. There He is described as treading the “winepress of Almighty God” —executing judgment indeed as Son of man; but He could not tread the winepress of God if He were not God. In His lowest services He was still God. None could have put his hand upon the leper but He without being defiled. The priest was only able to look, not to touch the leper; but here is One who could touch. It is sweet to know how near He is to us j and yet how great. His name is publicly written: “he hath on his vesture, and on his thigh, a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords.”

How Paul to Timothy rests upon the glory of His Person, when he says, “the only Potentate, King of kings, and Lord of lords,” etc., “the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.”

And Christ comes forth here to judge the quick. The subjects of His judgments are not the nations, which are connected with the throne, or sessional judgment: but here it is as seated upon a horse. This is judgment on hostile power, the place where light has been—the Gentile and the Jewish power, given to them by Satan—the Roman emperor, and the false or pretended Christ.

God sends His Son to get men out of heathenism, idolatry, etc., and they turn that into idolatry. There may well be joy in heaven when there is an end to it; for Christ now sets it all aside by judgment on the earth—but as come down from heaven. The kings and their armies gather together; but all ministers to the setting up of the Lord Jesus Christ as Prince of Peace, and we have our position with Him, and come out with Him.

Beloved friends, it is very important to see the solemnity of the judgment about to be executed on Babylon. The

effect will be to separate our hearts from all around, and keep us looking for that blessed hope, and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, keeping our garments white. It will be a struggle, but now are we the sons of God, and “when he shall appear, we shall be like him”—He will come out with us. May we seek to realise it even here, keeping ourselves distinct from everything that is to be judged, and our “heart’s desire be to see His face with joy, to be with Him who has given Himself for our portion now and to all eternity.

## Chapter 20

The beast and false prophet destroyed, Satan is bound and put into the bottomless pit. Then comes sessional judgment. It includes Matthew 25, but it is not that only, for it is going on—they sit on thrones all along—through the millennium. Then Satan is let loose and deceives the nations; namely, those who are not kept by grace: he gathers them around Jerusalem, and fire comes down and destroys them all. Then follows the judgment of the dead: the 8th verse of chapter 21 finishes the book.

## Chapter 22

The prophetic part of the Book of Revelation closes at chapter 21:8. Then we get from verse 9 a description of the heavenly city, in that shape and form: as to what it is, what cannot enter into it, and what it reveals’. This chapter gives more the outgoings of it, the river of the water of life, [the tree of life, and the leaves of the] tree for healing of the nations, etc. This closes at verse 5, and ends entirely at verse 7. Then it was, “I, John, saw these things,” and certain addresses are given which I

desire to speak about; also a general truth, bringing down the light of the heavenly city on us now.

The Lord put Israel under the law, and there was complete failure; but still He will accomplish, in infallible power, what He had promised to Israel, for He will write His law on their hearts, He will accomplish in power to Israel what He had given in responsibility. It is the same in regard to the church— He has set it in responsibility among men now.

The practical application we should derive from these promises is, that there is nothing here morally that we ought not now to be looking for. By the power of the Holy Ghost we should have a present anticipation or reahsation. Of course, when there is the full result, there will be a great difference—the body freed from sin and death, etc.; but still more, “The river of the water of life”; for it is said now, “He that believeth, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” The tree of life was the manifestation of grace, the leaves being for the healing of the nations—a beautiful character of the church, to be ministering the healing power of grace. In Israel will be seen, when righteousness is reigning, “the sinner, being a hundred years old, shall be accursed.” But here I find, even in the glory, the blessed principle of divine grace through which we came there. The earnest is given us now, “Christ having been made a curse for us.” “The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it”: the immediate throne of God is now within the church. Do we not judge those who are within? The Holy Ghost also sets up His throne in the heart of the saint, because it is the witness that there is no curse; he is not judged for sin—the word of God being the judge, a discerner

between good and evil according to God. When this is not accomplished, it is a testimony against the saint.

“His servants shall serve him.” Now there are many hindrances and conflicts with the enemy in service; but still, what I am called on to do now will then be fully accomplished; now, as far as we are spiritual, we enter into the anticipation of it. “His name shall be on their forehead.” By-and-by there will be a perfect display of Him whom we serve; but now all men ought to see the display of Christ’s name in us— to speak, and walk, and meditate as He did. In the glory it will be Christ reflected in everything; so now it ought to be. The more we search into the details of the glory in this blessed book, the more shall we learn the higher blessings to enjoy. The Holy Ghost brings it out for us to anticipate now, learning the grace that comes in, and the life that flows out. God will accomplish the highest desires that now we have for our comfort and joy to anticipate; all will be accomplished. God produces desires within us that nothing but the glory can satisfy. The Holy Ghost produces the power now to enter into these things. This shews the importance of our minds dwelling there. The lovely fruit then is seen, “Whatsoever is lovely” or “of good report, think on these things.” How bright the heart would be! What growing up to the knowledge and preciousness of Christ, if accustomed to be where God dwells! Christ was one over whom circumstances had no power, except to draw out God’s grace; and so should we be, for He is our example. Mark the outgoings of His grace to those in need. Christ was not governed, though of course acted upon, by circumstances to shew grace, the power of His affections being drawn up to His Father: there was no effect in Christ, only expressive of

what was in Him—the very fountain of life, the source of all He did.

“He that testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly.” Three times it is repeated. What has the Spirit of God declared? Two things have been shewn in this book. The terrible history of man’s pride, and God’s judgment against it. Then He takes the saint out of that scene, and sets his heart at the end of these things, even bringing before him the heavenly Jerusalem. This has always a sanctifying effect, it stops many a haughty word. In the former part of the book I see God knowing everything. This I might not be able to explain, but I see the result of all. We are called on to “keep the sayings of the book.” The soul has been given a sort of gravity in the world, not to be meddling with what will be judged. The next thing—He goes a step further when addressing us, on what has been before, or going on now, or is to be hereafter: whoever receives these things may find this stay for his soul—“I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.” There is the rest, as to all that has been performed, and what is unaccomplished: the heavenly Bringer-in of the light that is to shine in the world—the Star of heaven to arise on this benighted world.

What is the spiritual feeling of the church after all has been gone through—after the terrible schism between light and darkness? What does the church say? “The Spirit and the bride say, Come.” Those who have the place of the bride desire the Bridegroom, having the blessed fellowship together. Look at chapters 1 and 3; there you see the full expression of this. As the Faithful Witness He was seen on earth; for no man could see Christ on earth, but saw God in Him. Whether He took

the little child in His arms, or comforted the poor widow whose son was stretched on the bier, all exhibited God, and I know Him as such. He is also “the First-begotten from the dead,” witness to God for us, hereafter as “Prince of the kings of the earth.” What does the church cry at this contemplation? The Spirit of God in her breaks forth at this revelation of joy, and says, “Unto him that loveth us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.” She testifies to the world, “Behold, he cometh”: the church’s own position is of the testimony for Christ. The Spirit cannot speak to the saint’s heart without that saint giving a response. Now we get the result of all the testimony, closing with what Christ is in Himself. It turns from the city to Him who is the centre. Why am I in the golden street? Because Christ is in the midst of the city, not now washing my feet, for the place I walk on cannot defile, for it is righteousness and holiness of truth.

In the whole scene all is summed up—“I, Jesus.” He must have the heart of the church, He may tell the church many things, open to them His mind: as to Abraham, it was said, “Shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I do? “Also says Christ, “Ye are my friends.” After He has communicated what He was going to do, and done all, He says, “I, Jesus.” He Himself comes and addresses the church. Beloved brethren, when the Spirit of Christ works in the heart, it says to Christ, ‘It is You I want—come and bring in the glory.’ “The Spirit and the bride say, Come.” Not merely the bride, but the Spirit. The source and substance of what is in the heart is the Bridegroom. What is the next desire? “Let him that heareth say, Come.” He calls on the saint to join and say, “Come.” Those who have entered into the full apprehension say to others, “Come.” This is the next

step. The church at the same time has the blessing in itself, that is, the water of life, and turns round and says, “Let him that is athirst come,” because we have the waters of life—not yet in all the blessed fulness, but we are sure the river of life is flowing in the heart of each saint, however feeble. Christ said this first, in John 7, “If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink,” and now sets the church in the very same place of invitation, because it has got eternal life. See here the blessed consciousness of what the church has got: salvation—no uncertainty, though many may pass through trial in getting it; but I speak of the portion of the church. “He that believeth not God hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.” But what is the record? Not one of uncertainty, “and this is the record, that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.” There is the gospel, the answer of peace given by God to those whose souls are working in this way. Peter, in his address to the Jews, shews this: the gospel, the revelation of what is in Christ, is the answer of peace to the conscience under all the anxieties produced by having neglected Him. “He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit,” so the Christians can say, “Let him that is athirst come”— not merely say it, but go and testify to Christ as hard as ever he can.

“Whosoever will, let him come,” is another step. There is the same certainty of having life. It comes fresh from the throne of God and the Lamb. Having the water of life, I am looking for the glory in saying all this. “Behold, I come quickly.” Mark the way in which, both importunate and solemn, Jesus presses it on the hearts of His saints, to say, “Come”: “I come quickly,” as much as to express, ‘I leave on your hearts these last words’—with which He

closes the book, and solemnly adds, “Amen.” The Christian again breaks out, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” Whatever has been testified about, this is to be laid on the heart of the church. Could your heart say, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus”? Having heard this word of comfort and encouragement, can you say this? If you are not at peace, you cannot say so, but would rather the Lord would come and take you to-morrow, and not to-day. If I look for Him as a Judge, I cannot say, “Come.” If the conscience is at peace, it does not enter into the question of sin: having blessed me with every spiritual blessing, Christ comes without sin to receive me to Himself. In practice the affections enter in. You may see a person truly in Christ, and not happy in God, not before God; the conscience active, but the affections not right there. I must have my affections in my conscience. The effect of His work is to bring me to God. The Holy Ghost sets up His throne in the heart, and judges what we are not to be judged for. If, by careless walking in the flesh, or having my interest in the world, I cannot disown my state, the Holy Ghost takes these things that are in my heart, and makes me see what I have allowed, and I get exercised, troubled, and ashamed. I doubt not of being saved, but have lost the fountain of joy. My heart cannot be in this state, if I am doing things in His house that are not pleasing to Him: I shall not like for Him to come and see I am neglecting Him. Any one of these things, contrary to His mind, will hinder our looking to God. There ought to be that sifting in the heart, that the desire of our souls may rest in confidence in the work done for us; and the desire too, that the Holy Ghost may drive away everything from our affections that is not of God, and that our affections may be so

brought into our conscience, that we may say, Come, Lord Jesus; even so, come.

There is peculiar graciousness in this invitation to the world to come and take of the river of the water of life. Here is the authority of the church for considering herself as the bride before she really is so manifested. The angel (in verse 16, and other passages) is the representative of the Lord; even though declared to be an angel, he stands as the distinct messenger of the Lord Jesus, and speaks as His representative.

## Chapter 22:16, 17

The Morning Star is the place Christ has taken so as to have the church with Him in that character. Christ is the subject of prophecy as regards the earth, and then disappearing and going up: never the subject of prophecy as hid in God.

Chapter 1:5. Earthly association with Him is spoken of first. The church has her own proper place, and says, “To him who loveth us, and hath washed,” etc., and then turns round to speak of His manifestation on earth. His earthly work for me was when He washed me from my sins. He is not only the “Faithful Witness” for me, but the faithful worker. In every sense He was a faithful witness for God. But we begin not with that, but, “He loveth us, and hath washed us from our sins in his own blood”; we look back, too, and see He has all the rest. He has put us in the same official nearness with Himself to God— “king and priests, unto God and his Father.”

In chapter 4 we see the church now in heaven. The judgment of the churches down here in chapters 2 and 3; judgment of the world afterwards; and then, at the

close, a description of the heavenly city: “Behold, I come quickly,” etc. All is closed: just as revealed at the beginning, so it is at the close. “I, Jesus, have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches”—a personal word after the book is closed. The beginning of the book opened also with what He was.

Chapter 22:16, being in contrast with what had been said for the world, draws out the expression from the saints of verse 17; this shews our position till He comes. “The Root and the Offspring of David” is the Source of all, and the Heir of all—the holder, or vessel, in which all the blessing is set. This does not draw out the peculiar feelings of the church; but when He says, “I am the Bright and Morning Star,” it calls out the expression from the church, shewing her secret or private knowledge of His own personal value. In rejection while in the world, Christ was keeping up connection with it. Death comes in: the witness closed. Then redemption’s history begins— “Except the corn of wheat fall into the ground and die,” etc. Moreover, when He is manifested to earth, we shall be manifested with Him. The Bright and Morning Star stands contrasted with the blessing the earth will get. Then comes the invitation of the Spirit and the church; it is Himself she wants, and, until then, she is the full vessel of the grace of God, and says, “Come.” Israel is not that. They do not know relationship and deliverance in consequence of that, but they wait for deliverance out of the sorrow— “out of the depths.” They groan for deliverance, that is, the coming in of power to set them free.

The hope of the church is by the power of the relationship. She is the bride, she has the Spirit, and does not wait for it. Israel says, “Thou to whom

vengeance belongeth, shew thyself." Does the bride say that? Does she call for vengeance? No; she is waiting for the Bridegroom. It was that which closed the relationship with the world, that began our relationship with Christ. His death was the ending of that in which God could have anything to say to man as man. As connected with Him in manifestation (not union—never that), all closed at His death. I can say, I am dead, crucified with Christ, my life is hid with Christ in God. The centre and root, too, of all our relationship to God is Christ's death. Sins are gone, not existing any more: the be ing is gone in which they were, that is, I. We begin by death, and we are never clear unless we see that. It is not by His death I am put into union with Him, but by the Holy Ghost come down from heaven. They would not hear, killed Stephen, and the like; and then comes out this position—exclusively a heavenly Christ; and then we get the Morning Star. He is not only a Christ in heaven, but He has associated believers with Him while He does not come to the earth: His blood-shedding is the ground of it all. The revelation to Paul after this is "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." Paul got the teaching of the church, and said afterwards, "I know no man after the flesh"—I know no such people as Israel on the earth—no such Head as the Messiah. My connection is with Christ risen and glorified on high. In John 14 He says, "I go to prepare a place for you." He does not say, I will prepare a place for Israel. We are going to the Father's house. We are connected with the Father and the Son by faith while waiting for Him, and we shall be with the Father and the Son by-and-by. Christ, the hope of the glory to be revealed, is the foundation of that, and therefore it is said, "Christ in you, the hope of glory." How can we tell that? We know it, for He "shall be in you." The Holy

Ghost is an unseen Spirit in the world, but He is linking you with an unseen Saviour in heaven. This is our proper hope, as being of the bride through the Holy Ghost dwelling in her.

What is the Morning Star? The revelation of Christ to the church when He is not seen by the world—the completion of present privilege. In 2 Peter 1:19 Christ is the “day star.” The allusion in this passage is to the transfiguration, recorded in the three Gospels. The kingdom is the earthly glory spoken of. The heavenly thing is the hidden part. “They feared as they entered the cloud.” It was not a common cloud, but significant of the presence of God—the Shekinah, where God dwelt in connection with Israel. They did not see from without what was within. The Shekinah frightened those in the wilderness. Moses and Elias went into the cloud: the others did not see them then. The word of prophecy is confirmed by the glory revealed—a candle that shineth in a dark place. The Father was in the cloud. Moses and Elias went in, and the others could not see in. Paul only knew afterwards what was within.

There is to be something besides broad day. This is the night; but the Morning Star is to be seen by those watching through the night. Prophecy tells you of the day, but not of this Star. Prophecy could not tell you of the hidden Christ, “until the day dawn.” Those who are waiting for the day see the dawn, and watch for the day. They do not belong to the earth (as in darkness of night), because the spared remnant on the earth are that; but they belong to heaven as well as to the power of the day before the day comes. We get Christ Himself as He will never be seen in the day. Hence in Revelation 2:28 the address to Thyatira says, “I will give him”— the

overcomer, not only the glory of the kingdom, as revealed to Peter, but that within the cloud not revealed to him—"the Morning Star." Here the bride responds to Him—the Morning Star. Now I shall have my proper place. He has washed me from my sins long ago. The relationship is understood, and enjoyed—no need of explaining it. Did you ever hear a person explaining to a child what its mother is? The relationship is there. There is no explanation when He says, "I am the Bright and Morning Star." Those who have got hold of the relationship say directly "Come." They know Him as the One who has loved them, and washed them from their sins, etc., and they are within the veil. The Spirit leads the chant, "Come." The church has the consciousness in herself of the relationship, and the coming of Christ to receive the church could not be a matter of indifference; it could not be understood by a person who has not the living relationship. If I have the relationship, and He knocks, do I want an explanation of who He is before I open the door? Does the wife wait before she opens to her husband, when she knows his knock? "The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." Are all Christians saying, Come? No! Then what is to be done? The church is corrupt: there is the great house. But there are individual hearers; let them say, "Come." The first desire is to have Christ, and to Him she says, "Come"; the next, that all who hear should have right affections towards Christ, and say, "Come." You that hear, do you join, and say, "Come."

You get the whole circle of right affections in this verse: first, that arising from the consciousness of being the bride; secondly, desire for all the saints. Why are you lingering outside Christ? Are you waiting for judgments

on the earth? There is a desire that the saints should have no hindrance to the single eye, and readiness to say, “Come,” knowing the heart is not right if not saying, “Come.” Then is that all? No; there is a third thing—the gracious perception, that there are thirsty souls wanting to be refreshed. She says to them, ‘I have the Spirit, I have been refreshed.’ The church does not say, ‘Come to me’—the false church says that—but says, “Come.” I have not got the pure flowing of the river yet (Rev. 22), but you come. The next thing to the supply of our own need is the discernment of the wants of these thirsty ones. We can say, I have part in the Bridegroom—I have rivers of living water. We ought to be able to say, I have got the river. Anyone can say, There are rivers; but we ought to be able to say, We have them. If our hearts are in the circle of these affections, we shall say to others, Come, and have them too. Is that all? No; there are yet others invited: “Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely.” Thus the church is seen, first, in its full bridal place and desire for Christ’s coming without a question of judgment; and so in the individual that hears His voice; then follow the invitations of grace.

“He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

16 [For the remaining papers in this series, the reader is referred to the Editor’s Note, Vol. 12, page 1. They are mainly notes of Addresses, not known to have been revised by the Author, save where this is specially indicated.]

17 [But this is aitia, Matthew 27:37; Mark 15:26.]

# The Burnt-Offering; The Meatoffering; The Peace-Offering

Editor's Note18

## The Burnt-offering—Leviticus 1

There is a very definite distinction between the first two sacrifices we have here, to which the third is an appendix, and the others. The burnt-offering and the meat-offering stand alone; dependent on these you get the peace-offering, and then those of another character, the sin and trespass offerings.

Wherever we meet the actual use and presentation of the offerings, it is in the opposite order to the revelation of them here. In the revelation we get them as God presents them, as He sees Christ: but in the use of them, my need comes first. Here, it is God’s side, a sacrifice by fire of a sweet savour to the Lord: that expression is never used of the sin-offering, except in one single verse.

It gives a very definite character to these two first, that it is their aspect towards God, His character and nature. When we come as sinners, we come in respect of what our sins are, but our apprehension of what the meaning and value of Christ’s death is, is greatly enhanced by seeing God’s part in it. I must confess my sins—it is the only true way of coming; and I find there is propitiation through faith in His blood, and then I find all that is essential in these sacrifices as regards God.

There is no particular sin here: it was for sin of course, but it was not an individual confessing some particular

sin. It is striking enough, that until you come to the institution of the law, you never get sin-offerings, except in the case of Cain, of which I do not doubt myself (though I know it is a question of interpretation), that it is, “a sin-offering lieth at the door.” Sin and sin-offering is the same word; that word is never used again in that way, till the law—we get burnt-offerings and peace-offerings often.

The burnt-offering is the great basis, because it is God’s glory in what has been done for sin. We must come, as I said, by the sin-offering. “He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins”; but it is another thing, beloved friends, when I look at Christ’s offering and sacrifice, as glorifying God perfectly in all that He is, and that in respect of sin. He said, “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life,” a very remarkable word, for none could give a “therefore” to God for His love; Christ could. The difference between divine love and human love is, that God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. If man gets sufficient motive, he will sacrifice his life; but without any motive, Christ gave Himself, God gave His Son: it characterises the love. In John 10:11, He lays down His life “for the sheep”; but in verse 17, He does not say it is for the sheep. He has glorified God in death, in the place of sin, and He is glorified as man at the right hand of God. He goes up into that place where we get morally what the sacrifice was in God’s sight.

There is nothing about sins in this chapter, though sin was there, blood-shedding, death, shewing sin was the thing in question; and yet the sacrifice was absolutely a sweet savour, that blessed character of the sacrifice of

Christ, which settles every question of good and evil in God's sight. There was this terrible thing, that sin had come in, in the creature of God's predilection. People say that Adam learned to know evil, whereas he had only known good before; but that is not at all the point. "The man is become as one of us, knowing good and evil." It is knowing the difference between right and wrong.

Man was the one in whom God was going to be perfectly glorified; His delights were with the sons of men, and He did not take up angels, but the seed of Abraham; we are to be eternally conformed to the image of God's Son. In the meantime, Satan had prevailed over the first man; after lust came transgression, and all was over as regards his responsibility. His state was made to depend on one single thing that required obedience. He might have eaten of all the trees in the garden, if God had not told him not; it was not a question of any positive sin, but the claim of obedience. It was a thing to put angels to confusion, God's beautiful thing ruined! Lust and violence came in, till God had to destroy it all. Everybody knows what the evil is; you cannot go into a great city like this, without knowing that the evil is such, none but God Himself could have patience with it; it has been truly said, if trusted to one of us, we should destroy it in an hour. Man, in the hand of Satan, degraded himself and turned everything to confusion.

Another thing, beloved friends; God tried man in every way. The question was raised, was there any remedy for this? In the first place He destroyed them with judgment — then He called Abraham—then came the test of the law; all the things required by the law were duties already—the law did not make them duties, but it was God's statement of the obligation of those duties and

God’s claim upon man to fulfil them. The sacrifices were introduced consequent upon that. As to the state of man’s heart, nothing could have been more decided, than when he cast God off, for the one thing he was told not to do. Then came a totally distinct thing. Man being not only a sinner but a transgressor, God comes in goodness reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing trespasses. He came in perfect goodness close to man, touched man, so to speak—holiness in all His walk, but divine love in everything He did—made flesh and dwelt among us; not visiting merely as with Abraham; but He was down here as a man, manifesting what He was towards men. That was the last trial to which God put man, to see whether there was anything He could awaken in man towards God. Come in goodness from His Father, walking amongst men in grace, so that there was no sorrow He did not meet—and we know how it ended for the time; He was totally rejected, and that closed man’s history, his moral history. Not only had he sinned so that he had to be turned out of an innocent paradise, because he was not innocent, but he had rejected God’s Son, come in love.

But now came the accomplishment of the divine work of redemption; there was a sacrifice*. I get the blessed Son of God giving Himself, made sin in God’s sight, totally alone, and, as to the suffering of His soul, forsaken of God. I get the sin dealt with. I must come by my guilt, but this presents it from God’s end. I get absolute evil in man, and He met man with the perfect revelation of good. But it drew out hatred—that was the effect; the carnal mind, enmity against God—hatred against God manifested in goodness. I get Satan’s power complete over man; Christ’s own disciples forsaking Him, the rest

wagging their heads at Him, glad to get rid of God and good. He had gone so low for our guilt and God's glory, that even the thief hung with Him could insult Him!

With the blessed Lord Himself I find just the opposite: Man in perfect goodness, love to the Father and obedience at all cost: "that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do": perfect in the place of sin, where this question had been brought to an issue, made sin in God's sight in perfect love to His Father and perfect obedience. But further, in the cross, I see God in absolute righteousness against sin, in perfect love to the sinner; man in absolute badness; Satan's complete power; man in absolute obedience.

That laid the basis of it all; it brought angels desiring to look into it, to see the Just suffering for the unjust! It was not weak mercy giving up holiness and righteousness, but the absolute expression of majesty and righteousness. "It became him," that if God's Son were made sin, He must be dealt with as such, there was no escape! He gave Himself for it, "a body hast thou prepared me." Totally alone there, none to comfort Him, strong bulls of Bashan around; He says, "Be not thou far from me, O Lord," and He had to be forsaken of God.

The condition man was in was that it was his delight to get rid of God, and God, too, not come to judge him, but to reconcile him to Himself! But God's eternal counsels were in it, and Christ gave Himself. All that God is, was brought out and made good there, when man under Satan's power had succeeded in getting rid of Christ, He giving up Himself. God was glorified in Him. There was the secret work of God, God using the very thing by

which Satan sought to frustrate it, to accomplish it. Satan's power seemed to have its way when he got rid of Christ from the world, but all was then brought to an issue before God; and that gives the immutability of the blessing. All was finished on which everlasting righteousness is founded. It was not a state of innocence whose preservation hung on yet unsatisfied responsibility: the unchanging blessing of the new heavens and the new earth, depends on that—the worth of which cannot change.

Morally speaking, the cross maintains it all. The question of good and evil, raised in the garden of Eden, was settled in the cross. I get the blessed Son of God, never using His divine power to screen Himself from suffering, not using it to hinder the suffering, but to sustain Him in it, to enable Him to bear what none could have gone through without it. When I come to God in this way, I apprehend what sin is, not merely my actual sins, but that in me dwelleth no good thing. I get One, hanging upon the cross, made sin before God at the very moment when the full character of sin was manifested in the rejection of Christ. And there, where man was wholly a sinner, and Christ stood in that place for him, all that God is, was brought out. Where could you find full righteousness against sin? In no place but the cross, which gives perfect righteousness against sin and love to the sinner in that same blessed work, and that in a man, and when sin was brought out in its worst character.

Look at Him at the grave of Lazarus; a wonderful scene! The Lord was there in perfect obedience, for when they sent the tenderest message to Him: "Lord, he whom thou lovest is sick"; He abode still two days where He

was. Death was weighing upon their spirits: what made Him weep? He was not weeping for Lazarus. Death was there, and it seemed all over; but no, “I am the resurrection and the life.” I am come into this scene where death is lying on your hearts. I am the resurrection and the life in the midst of it; and when that was shewn, which even Thomas saw was on His path, He goes out Himself to die! There did not remain a slur or stain upon what God is. Not only was His righteous judgment against sin shewn, as it could be nowhere else, but His love, in that He spared not His own Son. That work and act of Christ, went up as a sweet savour to God; He gives Himself in perfect devoted love to His Father; perfect love was manifested, and all that God is. “Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him”: outward dishonour, but moral glory; what was in the nature of God, and what was in man as hatred against God, all brought out, Christ giving Himself up wholly and totally, that God should be perfectly glorified; so that in that sense of the word, God was a debtor to man for the infinite glory brought to Him, and that where sin had come in, where death had come in! He hung there as made sin, and God is more glorified, than if sin had never come in. It is a wonderful thing—nothing like it! He does bear our sins, blessed be His name, but when we see the blessed Son of God made sin, there is nothing like that! None of us can speak of it properly, but I trust your hearts will look at it and feed upon it.

But what I have not yet referred to is, that the offerer was to do it, for his acceptance. I leave the offering now, for the man who comes by it. “By faith, Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he

obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts." Coming by that sacrifice—it is important our hearts should get hold of it— I am accepted in the Beloved, in all its sweet savour. I go to God in the sweet savour of all that Christ is; not simply that my sins are put away—there I can stand in righteousness as to my sins before God—but coming by that in which God delights, He delights in me as in it, loved as Christ is loved; it brings into fellowship and communion with God, as to the value of Christ's place. I know He takes perfect delight in me—a worthless creature in myself—and the more I know it, the better; but there is no condemnation for them that are in Christ Jesus. I go to God in Him, in the perfect sweet savour of Christ. It is not a question of any particular sin, but I go to God with the consciousness of being received and delighted in; I go, as the fruit of the travail of His soul. God sees in me, the perfection of Christ's work, and it is for ever and ever; but it rests upon our hearts now.

We must come by the sin-offering, but we get in this a great deal more; no actual sin spoken of, but the sense of what His glory requires, accomplished in Christ where sin was, so that there is nothing also in the character of God not perfectly glorified, and that in love to us. Not merely my sins are put away, but I go offering Christ, so to speak. I present Christ, and God testifies of the gift. I say, what is the measure of my righteousness? Christ; and therefore we are received to the glory of God. And now, in weakness and infirmity here, speaking of our standing before God, it is in all the delight He had, not merely in Christ as a living Man, but in all the perfection of His work in the place of sin, where all that He is was glorified—obedient unto death.

I do not like saying, Where are your hearts about it? but — what I do desire for us all—Does my soul go to God, owning that righteousness of God, that love of God, the gift of God in it, and that He testifies of the gifts?

May He give us to see, what we never can fathom, what it was to that Holy One to be made sin, He who was the delight of the Father's bosom; that our souls may feed on Him, eat His flesh and drink His blood—not only know that we are washed from our sins.

## The Meat-offering—Leviticus 2

In the burnt-offering, beloved friends, we had the way in which Christ, sin being in the world, offered Himself without spot to God. Here, we have more His perfectness in detail, brought down to us. The priests ate part of the meat-offering, they ate nothing of the burnt-offering. We get what Christ was in His perfectness down here, all the characters and traits of that perfectness, but brought to us; the burnt-offering was not brought to us, but was burned entirely before God. Sin was there, atonement made—not sins, but sin—and it was a perfect sweet savour to God. Here, it is more the detail of what He was as a man, but burned with fire—the test of His perfectness.

Verse 1. Here, I get the general character of the Lord: fine flour, perfect humanity, "this man hath done nothing amiss," as the poor thief said on the cross. Then the oil (the Spirit) and frankincense put upon it: perfect in Himself, without sin, in every sense, and then the Holy Ghost sent in bodily shape like a dove, and abiding on Him. He could not join Himself with Israel, fof they were sinners and unbelieving, but there was a remnant called out of God by the ministry of John the Baptist, and He

goes with them in their first right step. When He thus came out publicly, the Holy Ghost came upon Him. He takes His place, in a public way, among this remnant who were going right, under the testimony of John the Baptist, and so, blessed be His Name, He does with us in our first right step. We need redemption to bring us into the place where He stood by reason of His own perfectness. He was sealed with the Holy Ghost; we get it because of the blood; the leper was first washed, then sprinkled with blood and then anointed with oil. He made the place into which we are brought by redemption. Heaven opened, a Man upon earth, upon whom the Holy Ghost descends and abides; and the Father's voice came, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." But He must die, to bring us into it. The gift of the Holy Ghost was confined to Him until redemption was accomplished, He had to finish the work and take His place on high.

We get the fine flour, and the oil, and the frankincense upon it, the perfect sweet savour of His life to God; not the sweet savour of the sacrifice, but all His life His words and works, a sinless Man, passing through this world; all He said and did was by the Holy Ghost. He was the Anointed Man, which is what the name Messiah or Christ means. "He whom God hath sent, speaketh the words of God, for God giveth not the Spirit by measure."

Verse 2. Here we get what was very sweet, as to the path of Christ, in which we have to seek to follow Him. The handful was all burned to God. Christ, looked at as Man, was burned to God; "the flour thereof, the oil thereof, and all the frankincense thereof." Here I get the perfectness of Christ in His path—that He never did anything to be seen of men; it all went entirely up to

God. The savour of it was sweet to the priests, but it all was addressed to God. Serving man, the Holy Ghost was in all His ways, but all the effect of the grace that was in Him, was in His own mind always toward God; even if for man, it was to God. And so with us; nothing should come in, no motive, except what is to God. We see in Ephesians 4:32; ch. 5:1, 2, the grace towards man, and the perfectness of man towards God as the Object. “Be ye imitators of God as dear children.” In all our service as following Christ here, we get these two principles; our affections towards God and our Father, and the operation of His love in our hearts towards those in need: the more wretched the object of service in the latter case, the truer the love and the more simply the motive is to God. We may love down and love up; and the more wretched and unworthy the persons are, for whom I lay myself out for blessing, the more grace there is in it. “God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” But while that is true, yet as to the state of my heart, the higher the object, the more elevated the affection. With Christ it was perfect. How can a poor creature like me be an imitator of God? Was not Christ an example, God, seen in a man? And we are to “walk in love, as Christ also loved us, and gave himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God.” He gave Himself for us, but to God; it was God’s grace towards poor wretched sinners.

If we look at ourselves, we shall soon see how motives get mixed up, and things come in, even where there is right true-hearted purpose; and that is where we have to watch. In Christ, all was perfect; all, every bit of it, as to spring and motive, was for God’s glory in this world. No thought of men, as to pleasing them, but that singleness

of eye which looked to God alone, though full of kindness to man—loving down, in that sense, but ever looking up, with His God and Father before His eye, which made Him perfect in everything. He was perfect, of course, could not be anything else.

Now, it is not that the priests could not smell the sweet savour of the sacrifice, but it was not offered to them, it was all burned to God: as regards His own path, not a feeling that was not entirely to God—for us, but to God. It was that which was perfectly acceptable to God.

Verse 3. Here is where we are brought, looked at as priests, our eye opened. It was the food of the offering of Jehovah, but it is our food too; we must be priests to have it, it is most holy to the Lord. I may see external beauties in Christ, I might write a book on the beautiful traits in His character— but that is not Christ's life. It is an entirely different thing when the priest gets it as God's food. (I am bold to use the word, for scripture does so.) The priests ate it, while as to the frankincense everything was burned wholly to God. In the burnt-offering the priest did not eat anything; it was the absolute offering of Himself to God. There was a sustaining power, a perfectly holy power, and all perfectly acceptable to God; but then at the same time, it is what we feed upon as priests. We get our souls formed into delighting in Christ, by realising in our spirits, what God Himself, the Father, takes such delight in. It is a blessed place; we need, and have to seek spiritual apprehension, to find what it is that makes Christ the delight of the Father—what was the expression of that grace, always well pleasing to Him.

We follow His path in the Gospels, and we see always perfect love to us poor things, but everything perfectly and absolutely done to the Father. Turn to Matthew 17 where we get a bright example of the condescending grace with which He associates us with Himself, while shewing Himself to be the Son of the Father, in divine knowledge and power. It was just after the transfiguration, where the heavenly glory of the kingdom was revealed; His ministry as come into the midst of Israel, according to promise, closed, so that He strictly forbade them to say that He was the Christ. But what does He give them instead, if not yet in the glory revealed on the mount? This tribute was not to the heathen emperors, but what had been ordained in Ezra's time for the expenses of the temple services. They come and ask Peter, Does not his Master pay it? in fact, was He a good Jew? Peter says, Yes; he does not look further. But when he comes into the house, the Lord anticipates him; He shews who He is, He knows all divinely, the Son of the great King, Jehovah, and He joins Peter with Himself; children of the great King of the temple. Then He shews His divine power over creation, and makes the fish bring Him the money and the exact sum,19 and again puts Peter with Himself; "that take and give them for thee and me." We find the place He took in lowliness down here, but while taking the low place, bringing us into the high place with Himself. We are changed from glory to glory as we gaze upon Him, but it is the humiliation side, as in Philippians 2, which wins our affections.

Satan sought to get Him out of that absolute singleness of eye, in which He was perfect: "command that these stones be made bread"; but He had no orders to do it, no

word out of the mouth of God: that was His manna, and He came as a servant. In Philippians 3 you get the other side—Christ glorified, and Paul running after to win Christ; the energy which hinders other things getting possession of the heart. But it is the humiliation side we get here—Christ humbling Himself, making Himself of no reputation, that I may run in the same path and spirit, for the glory of the Father. Was He ever impatient? Did He ever do a single thing for Himself? It was always God, His Father, in one sense, His disciples and the poor world, in another. And where the affections are drawn out, it is always on this humbled side. It is touching to go through the gospels, and to get sufficiently intimate with Christ, to see His motives in everything; but this is much to say, and requires to live much with Him; but this is blessing. When I get "thee and me," what a strange putting together that is! And He does it with us too: knowing who He is, the Son of the Father down here, He says, "thee and me." If you get to trace Him through all the path, you never get anything but perfectness.

When I think of the death of Christ, His love to the Father, taking the cup the Father gave Him to drink, I find my delight, my soul bowed down at the thought of all the love and obedience that was in it. And He says, "Therefore doth my Father love me." It is God's food too! We shall soon see how far He is beyond our thoughts.

Now (verse 4) we get some details, to bring out Christ more perfectly. "Unleavened cakes." The general truth was there before, but here we get no trace or form of sin in Him: nor indeed employment of mere amiability of nature, or what refreshes nature; neither can be in a sacrifice. Unleavened cakes with no honey in them.

Leaven is not found in an offering except on the day of Pentecost, when we come in; there, consequently there is. The cakes were offered to God, but not burnt on the altar for a sweet savour, and a sin-offering was offered with them. There are two characters here: Christ, looked at as man, was born of the Holy Ghost, no sin in Him; we are born in sin, and get a new nature, but He was personally perfect, no leaven in Him at all. Instead of leaven, it was fine flour mingled with oil—as to His flesh, He was born of the Spirit. Then it is added, "unleavened wafers anointed with oil": Christ received the Spirit as man, down here, to walk as man, in the power of the Holy Ghost, in obedience; and then, having gone up on high to the Father, He sends the Spirit down upon us. The Father (John 14) sends Him, that we may cry, Abba; and on the other hand, Christ sends Him from the Father, as the testimony to what He is at the right hand of God. We cannot get the anointing and the sealing, that is the Holy Ghost, till we are washed with water and have faith in the efficacy of Christ's blood.

Verse 6. "Thou shalt part it in pieces"; every bit of Christ (in figure), every word He said, everything He did, all was perfect, the expression of what was divine in a man down here: not only that His general life expressed the fruits of the Spirit, but every word, every work, all absolutely perfect. Now, we may in a general way walk in the Spirit, but we often fail. But I can follow Him any day, and every day, and find "nothing amiss." It is a wonderful thing to look round this world of sin and wretchedness, and be able to trace one Person everywhere and every when, and find nothing but what was perfect. No matter what it was—obedience, love, grace, firmness—all that came out was the expression of

what was perfect, in and for the place where He was. Beloved friends, I am sure I trust you do, but I would exhort you, in that way, to feed on Christ; “he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me.” In studying Him down here, the soul gets intimate with Him; we feed on that on which God our Father feeds.

Verses 7-9. Here I get another element. When the fire of God’s judgment tested Christ, there was only a sweet savour. Now, if we get tested, alas! often the flesh comes out—I do not say always. He got tested by the evil of man, the terrible-ness of death, the power of Satan, and finally by the judgment of God (the proper meaning of fire as a figure), and nothing came out but what was absolutely a sweet savour. God says He is the elect and precious stone, and to the believer He is precious too!

Verse 11. “Brought to the Lord,” that is the point; I must have a Christ, wholly and entirely giving Himself up to God. “Nor any honey”: mere sweetness of nature cannot come in. There are sweet things which God Himself has established, but Christ was entirely outside all these things: not as condemning them—when His work was over, He could commit His mother to John. There are things which God graciously gives us here, but you cannot put them as a sacrifice. They are of God in themselves: only sin has come in and spoiled the whole thing. The honey itself was not wrong. The coming of Titus comforted Paul; he got in the conflict, like Jonathan, a little honey on the top of his rod, so to speak. And the comfort was of God, who comforts them that are cast down. The poor woman at the well, the thief on the cross, were Christ’s comforters. Honey cannot come into the sacrifice: neither the sin of nature, nor mere natural joy, can come into the sacrifice of

Christ. The condemning it is all a mistake; Christ carefully maintained what God had originally established: but now, we get a drunken husband beating his wife, children who are a torture to their parents; for sin has come in, though the relationships are of God. But when you come to what is for. God, there can be no more honey than leaven.

Verse 13. Another principle here. I get “salt,” that is not sweetness. It is complete separation of heart to God—the salt of the covenant of our God. God in sovereign grace has taken me up, and separated me to Himself; it is the positive side, which preserves me for God and with God; and that, beloved friends, is what we are to desire: it is not merely no leaven and no honey; that is the negative side. There is no separation by ourselves in us; we cannot make holiness: it is holiness to the Lord, the heart separated to God in everything; a separation of heart and spirit with no pretension in it, for we are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body. Through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, the everlasting covenant, we are brought to God. Do I go and leave God to go to some vanity?—I do not say sin: I do not care what it is—the savour of Christ, of God, is gone. But in Christ, and walking with Him in the heart, I see a Man always separated in heart to God; it stamped everything.

It is not that we are to be heroes every day. I may see a person energetic in his service, but it may not come directly from God; it is a totally different thing, as regards our service, when it does. Look at 1 Thessalonians 1:3; Revelation 2:1, etc. You get here the three things spoken of in 1 Corinthians 13; faith, hope, love. In 1 Thessalonians 1 I get the principle of direct

association with God in each operation of grace, which gives it its power and character. It is work, labour, and patience, but “work of faith, labour of love, patience of hope of our Lord Jesus Christ before our God and Father.” I may go and serve the poor—very right and sweet—but is God’s love in it? Patience is a very good thing, but am I waiting for Christ to come? In Revelation 2 there was work and labour and patience; but they had left their first love; the freshness and spring was not as it had been, not coming forth from and in immediate intercourse with God, so as to carry it in the power of God to the person’s soul. There should be the salt of the covenant of our God j it is obligatory to have our service right, though sovereign grace; always serving in immediate intercourse with God. It is not merely that there is no sin, leaven, or honey, but positive spiritual energy, that associates my heart with God in all that I do. Only remember, that with us, there is no holiness without an object, “changed into the same image from glory to glory.” We cannot have holiness in ourselves; that is God’s prerogative; we cannot do without that which is perfectly blessed before us—only God has so bound us up with Christ, that while He is the power of the life in which we walk in it, He is the expression of that divine life in a man down here, and beholding Him in glory, we are delivered from the motives which would have hindered our walking thus, and furnished with those which form us into His likeness.

Verse 14. Here, I get Christ as the first-fruits to God. And another thing: He has been in the fire. All this blessed grace in His life has been fully and perfectly tried, even to death and judgment—not looking at Christ’s death as atonement, but looking at Him in His

trials to see whether nothing but a sweet savour would come out. The only time when He asked that the cup might pass from Him, it was piety. When it was the terrible cup of God's wrath, He could not go through it without feeling what it was: it was piety, which shrank from the forsaking of God, it was the thing that tested His obedience absolutely. He had been tried by man's hatred, by Satan's power in death and the terror of judgment; but it was a very different thing, when He had to drink that cup, the Holy One of God to be made sin and He before God as such— the One eternally in the bosom of the Father, having to say, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" But here was His perfectness; "The cup that my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" He was tested and was always perfect. Supposing it had been possible He had not gone on, it would have shewn all His obedience to be imperfect, that when perfectly tested, it would not stand. But there was not a single thing but His own absolute divine perfectness that stood! His disciples forsook him. All else were against Him, and when He turned to God, it was, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" There was absolute testing, and He went through the fire as a sweet savour. "Therefore doth my Father love me." Sin, death had come in, Satan's power; and He goes through it all, in the power of absolute obedience and love to His Father— the testing to the end. There is the perfection of the thing which we have seen; perfect in its origin, perfect as sealed by the Holy Ghost, and now perfect when tested to the utmost, obedient unto death. Therefore God also hath highly exalted Him and given Him a Name which is above every name. He has gone back there as Man, in virtue of what He was down here. And here, beloved brethren, is what we have got to

think of; all Christ's perfectness in His life, and on the other side, perfectness according to the covenant of salt in His death: not then saying, "I know that thou hearest me always," but, though doing that which perfectly pleased the Father, of which He could say, "Therefore doth my Father love me," yet, as to relief and comfort at the time, none from man (there could be none from Satan), none from God. The basis of eternal blessing was laid then according to the glory of God.

I have got Him in all His life through, as the meat-offering, to feed upon, study, get acquainted with—to feed upon thai which was perfectly offered to God.

The Lord only give us to do it, and then, when we meet Him, it will be joy.

## The Peace-offering—Leviticus 3

This portion is different in character from what we had before, and closes this particular class of offerings.

The burnt-offering was not for particular sins, but it was atonement: Christ made sin for us (the difference may be clearly seen in Hebrews 9: compare John 1) but offering Himself entirely to God, so that in the fact of being made sin, the highest perfection of love and obedience was found: all the perfectness of Christ Himself towards God, and surely of love to us; but more —all that God is, perfectly glorified.

Chapter 2 takes up Christ as a man upon the earth, the character of Christ as thus come: burned in the fire, that is, tested by the perfectness of divine judgment, and nothing but a sweet savour: all the frankincense went up to God. It is a wonderful description in detail of what Christ was in all His path—no leaven, no honey, no

earthly affection, or comfort in His sacrifice (He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief), but salt and a sweet savour to the Lord. In one case the cake was broken into pieces, and every piece was anointed, to shew that everything He did or word He spoke was by the power of the Spirit.

Chapter 3 gives us not only the offering, but the fellowship of the saints in the offering. While in the previous ones Christ Himself was presented, He is here presented along with our partaking of it: they ate it: the blood and the fat offered to the Lord, and then the offerer partaking in what was offered. Other elements were connected with it; but in all this there was nothing to say to sin—an immensely important principle as to what is properly worship.

In the burnt-offering, there was nothing of positive acts of sin, but we get the notion of sin being in the world, and approach to God referring to its presence there, and Christ glorifying God, as a victim for it, doing such a service that He could say, “therefore doth my Father love me”; but the work in itself was a perfect glorifying of God, as He could not have been glorified otherwise. “That the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father hath given me commandment even so I do.” There was perfect love to the Father, besides the question of our sins, and perfect obedience: perfect love when He was forsaken, and the obedience was perfected when it cost Him that forsaking. His motives too were perfect: love to us surely, but love to His Father, obedient when God was forsaking Him. The more terrible the suffering, the more dreadful the cup, the greater the sacrifice. It is such a comfort for us that that question of sin before God has been perfectly gone into

and settled. That solemn question, Christ takes up and puts Himself forward in grace to glorify God in it and by it: where man was against Him, the devil against Him, all the world against Him, the disciples ran away, comfort He had none, and in death, God Himself forsook Him. When everything outward, human and devilish was against Him, and He cried to God, then He was forsaken of God: it was the righteous judgment of God against Him, because He was made sin for us: then He goes as man to sit down on the right hand of God. That is all settled; and I can look at Christ as the sweet savour, in the absolute perfectness in which He offered Himself to God and was tested in His obedience. Then in chapter 2 all the blessed perfectness of Christ in His life, tested, tried, broken to pieces, comes out.

In chapter 3 we get worship: they fed upon what God fed on. In our association with God, our intercourse with God, in worship, there is nothing about sin: it is that which is all gone, through Christ's offering Himself for us, and then I come to God with Christ in my hand, so to speak, I present Him to God and I feed upon Him. I come with that which is perfectly acceptable to God. It is not that there are not faults and failings in us—but here I dwell on the offering itself; it was a perfect burnt-offering made by fire unto the Lord. All that was in the inwards, everything that is in Christ was absolutely offered to God. I get the blood, which was the life; the fat, the sign of the energy of nature, all given to God—no thought with Christ, no act, no object, but His Father. It was for us, thank God! but still absolutely to God: no infirmity, no listlessness of heart, but all given to God entirely, all the inward fat burned to God. Mark, not bearing our sins—that is never called a sweet savour

except in one particular case. He was made sin, and that was not a sweet savour, though He was never so holy and perfect as then.

When we come worshipping, it is not even about Christ as the One who put away our sins; I can approach to worship because of that, my conscience being purged; but worship is in the sense that the thing I am feeding upon is a sweet savour to God, what my soul feeds on, nourishes itself by. The worshipper is connected with the sacrifice, and the question of sin is not touched in it, though blood always supposes it to have been there: it is the food of God become my food. It is a blessed thing to see Christ's perfectness; that every thought, feeling, motive, everything He was, every movement of His heart was absolutely to God. "In that he liveth, he liveth unto God." (I take the principle merely.) In everything in which there was energy, there was no energy of self-will; it was a perfect giving of Himself to God—the only One in whom it ever was in that perfectness. "Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us," 1 John 3:16. We ought to walk like Him, love the brethren, lay down our lives for them, but then it should be to God.

I bless God, that in His sovereign grace, His blessed Son took my sins and bore them upon the cross; but when I go to God to worship, it is as occupied with that One who is perfectly acceptable to God. Abel came with the fat of his lambs and God gave testimoney to his gifts. Here, the worshipper comes and feeds upon it, and the Lord had His food of the offering; it was what characterised it. And see how close it brings us to God; why, so to speak, I am sitting at the same table with God, feeding on the same thing He is feeding on (only all was offered to Him and so I eat it)!—the Lord's food of

the offering. I sit down and eat, there is no question of my sins, but of the sweetness of Christ—I talking to God about it; our true intercourse with God is that. “He that eateth me,” etc. Here I get that the very thing my soul is feeding on, delighting in, is the food and the delight of God; we get this nearness to God, the soul enjoying what God Himself is delighting in; the offerer comes to God by it, has intercourse with God about it. It is not prayer, the peace-offering was never prayer; when I pray, I go to God about my wants, and prayer will occur even in the highest place—for when I think of the blessedness of Christ, I say, Would to God I were like Him! and it turns to prayer; but still that is a different thing from worship, though it may and will accompany it. I pray as regards my need; I worship in the sense of what I have got. God delights in what Christ is—inexpressibly of course; my soul draws near with Him in my hand, and I find I am going on with God. It was put upon the burnt-offering, identified with it. But all this worship of God supposes no more conscience of sins. “Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.” It is no question whether I can be accepted or not, but coming with Christ in my hand I come by Him, as having offered Himself, in the consciousness that my soul is occupied with that which is God’s highest delight. A wonderful thought! it shews what we ought to be and what our worship ought to be; and what we eat turns to be part of ourselves.

The character of the peace-offering was, it was presented to the Lord, not as bearing our sins; all true worship of God supposes the question of sin to be totally settled for ever. Chastening, we may get in passing through the wilderness, but the question of imputation, of having sins on us before God, is done with for ever.

Sin is a dreadful thing, but it was all settled between God and Christ, when He was made sin for us. But the heart is apt to stay there in thinking of that. Well, without that, we could not get into heaven; but the proper worship of heaven consists in delighting in what God is, what Christ is, when He offered Himself a sweet savour to God. We cannot come at all except by that sacrifice: we turn to God and we find Christ bore our sins; but what I press now is, that as regards that, the whole thing is settled. “Where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.” “When he had by himself purged our sins he sat down.” We are not like the poor Jews—I enter into the holiest, but more than that: have I nothing to bring, my heart no offering to bring to God? Yes, in Christ there is that in which God delights, and I come to God presenting Him.

Chapter 7:13. Besides the unleavened cakes leavened bread was offered; here we have got ourselves. I come with the offering that has been slain, with Christ in my hand, and I find too all the blessed perfectness of the meat-offering, His perfection as Man, the fine flour, no leaven at all: God delighted in Him as a living Man. I get it anointed with oil, mingled with oil, the perfectness of His manhood and besides that, now leavened bread; there am I, the worshipper. If I come to God, I own the sin, the leaven in me, but that cannot be burned as a sweet savour. I come with the leaven. I cannot say I am sinless, as Christ; I cannot be “that Holy thing,” but I come with Christ in my hand. I come with the knowledge of my imperfection, but with that in which I am most perfectly accepted. God takes knowledge of that by which I come; all sins blotted out and forgiven, but I cannot say I have no sin, that is all a mistake; it is

leavened bread, the leaven within, and we cannot help its being there, though not allowing it to act. The point is, I go with the sense in my soul that I have leaven: if I say I have no sin, as a present thing, I deceive myself, and the truth is not in me. There is no forgiveness for sin; for sins there is; but “what the law could not do,” etc., “God condemned sin in the flesh.” I get deliverance from any thought of this leaven hindering me, for I find God condemned it when Christ died. I do not talk of His forgiving it, it was all gone when Christ died. I cannot say I have none in me, but I can say I died with Christ, and I am hot in it. “I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name’s sake,” i John 2:12.

There is no such thing as an unforgiven Christian. It is very interesting to see the work of God in a soul on the road towards peace; all that has its place; but that is before I have got the knowledge of the blood which cleanses it all, of the blessed truth that the blow which rent the veil and opened the holiness of God upon me, presented me there without a veil, but fit to stand in it. A Christian is a forgiven person; but I cannot say sin is not there. When I see the sin, I say, why God must condemn me for it! and in one sense it is quite true, He must; but why condemn you when He has condemned it in Christ already? I do not come denying that I am leavened; I own it; but what I present to God is not myself, it could not be burnt for a sweet savour, and I have a title, in that sense, to forget it, because God has dealt with it in Christ, and then I come with unleavened bread to keep the feast.

When the offering was a vow, they could eat it for two days; when a thanksgiving, for one day only. If my heart

is full of Christ in the power of the Spirit of God, it connects all my worship with the value of Christ's offering to God, it is associated with that before God, I have fellowship with God as to it. But supposing I go on, and sing, say a hymn, and instead of thinking of the blessedness of Christ and of the Father's love, I get enjoying the singing; I disconnect the worship from Christ. Take our common worship; is it connected with Christ's acceptableness to God? if not, it has lost its savour; apart from that sacrifice, what is it worth? There may be enjoyment of the ideas, it may go as far as that, but it has lost its savour, and that is a thing that creeps in very easily. I cannot be with God to know the blessedness of what I have, unless it is connected with the sacrifice to God. And what a thought, beloved friends! that when I do go, it is with the acceptableness of Christ, with what God finds His delight in! If I go to pray—all perfectly right—I am a poor needy creature, who wants everything from God: but worship is another thing; I go with that in my hand which I know to be of God's delight. I go, Christ having died for me, my soul having the consciousness of God's positive delight in the sacrifice of Christ, and if my worship in any part gets separated from that, it has lost its sweet savour.

One other thing. The priest who offered it, ate part of it. It was a joy to all, but Christ takes His part, His joy in it too. God has His food in it, I have my food; but the priest has his part too. It is the fullest association of God with Christ and the worshipper. It was for all who were invited too—love to all saints, the heart takes all in to love. It shews what true worship is, when I get there: it is not merely my sins are borne, but I get my delight in what I know is God's delight, and must be. It is what the

whole community of the saints must delight in, and He says, “In the midst of the church will I sing praises unto thee.” It connects all with the glory in blessedness: being such in ourselves, we anticipate in the weakness we are in now, the worship of the saints in eternal ages.

I desire that the two great principles and substance of the thing may rest upon our hearts—that I am there with God, the heart giving itself up to God in thanksgiving. I go to God with this offering of Christ, and I know He does not impute anything to me; when I look up to God, I know He cannot. Here, God has found in Christ what His soul feeds on—what He delights in—we may say it reverently. I delight in it, a poor weak creature, and I know God delights in it. He receives me in worship according to His judgment of Christ.

How far do our souls so enter into God’s thoughts, that when we come to God in worship (all our lives ought to be in the spirit of worship) it is in the spirit of our minds, as connected with God’s value for the offering of Christ, in our every-day walk, never to lose sight of what the sweet savour of that offering was to God? The Lord only give us that it may be thus associated in our hearts with what Christ was towards His Father!

18 Notes of Addresses, 1880.

19 The word translated “piece of money” is Stater, just two Didrachmas, the name of the coin due for one, also found here.

# Omniscience—God’s Searchings

## Psalm 139

It is a solemn thought for the soul to be under the searching of Omniscience itself. Yet this is the foundation of solid peace to him who believes the gospel of the grace of God. The searching of Omniscience, moreover, gives real value to the present priestly ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ; and it will be found also the only ground of practical holiness. In this respect there is an essential difference between him that is spiritual, and a man even of deep thought and high intellect. He that is quickened by the Spirit is frequently able to interpret things strange and paradoxical to others. “The spiritual man judgeth all things,” and he knows “the end of the Lord.”

Every human being has been searched by Omniscience, whether he is conscious of it or not. This will be made clear “in the day when God will judge the secrets of men.” The searching of “the thoughts and intents of the heart” by the word of God now, is the means of bringing God’s knowledge into application to our conscience before that day. And when this is the case, then are we conscious that our thoughts are understood afar off, and that there is not a word in the tongue, but the Lord knoweth it altogether. He has “beset us behind and before.” He can look backward, and He can look forward also. All our history is before Him, as if it had been written after we had run our course. “O Lord, Thou hast searched me” is the language of the Psalmist—not “Thou art doing it now, or wilt do it hereafter, but thou hast done it already.” “O Lord, thou hast searched me and

known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, Thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou winnowest [marg.] my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways" (v. 1-3).

We do not like to have our paths winnowed. We like to be accredited by men for our zeal and devotedness. But when our paths are winnowed, all our thoughts are discovered and opened to us. If God acted toward us according to our experience of ourselves, what believer would not have his peace disturbed? The practical experience of "the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of our hearts" is from bad to worse. Herein is the great error of that which is termed progressive sanctification. God is not forming a people for their own, but "for His praise." He is shewing them what they are in themselves, in order to shew them by His Spirit the blessed suitability of Christ to all their need. If God be winnowing our path, it is on the ground that He has searched us already, known us altogether, and provided for what He knows we need. "The word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of sold and spirit, and of the joints and marrow." This is a painful process, either pricking the heart, and leading to godly sorrow (Acts 2), or cutting the heart (Acts 7:54), stinging the conscience, leading to murderous anger. And the word of God is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. And when the word thus performs its office, it leads us to value the priesthood of Christ. "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest," etc.

We can never get from under this searching process. “Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee” (v. 7-12). The Lord Jesus says to the church of Thyatira: “All the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts.” When God quickens a sinner, dead in trespasses and sins, He makes him to know what it is to be, not only a sinner by acts of disobedience, but a sinner by nature, that sin “dwelleth” in him. And this He does by searching him, and winnowing his paths, and making him, in measure, see himself, even as God sees him.

The Lord Jesus did not commit himself to those who believed in His name, when they saw His miracles, “because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man; for he knew what was in man,” John 2:23-25. With the fairest outside, both as to candour and religion, He knew what was in man. Others might have judged, that conviction was the groundwork of their faith; but such is man’s heart, that miracles do not produce solid conviction. Jesus knew this, for He knew all men. Israel of old saw “the great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians.” Then believed they His words, they sang His praise. “They soon forgat his works.” And when the Lord again visited Israel, this was the testimony, “Ye also have seen me, and believe not.”

“Though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him.” His own select disciples, the eye-witnesses of His miracles, forsook Him and fled, when He was betrayed into the hands of men.

When the searching of omniscience discovers to one, what it really is to be a sinner, and that good does not dwell in him, that is, in his flesh, it discovers, also, that the ground on which God is acting towards him is that of the fullest grace.

The God who knows all our hearts, knows that these hearts are beyond measure worse than all the sins we have committed. His verdict against man is still the same that it was before the flood, “the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth,” “every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually.” All the progress of man has not set aside this verdict of God. We must recognise then that God knows us, knows us just as we are, knew us from the very outset, as He says to Jeremiah, “Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee; and before thou earnest forth out of the womb, I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations” (Jer. 1:5): or as later with the apostle: “When it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb and called me by his grace,” etc. (Gal. 1:15). God knows us from the beginning to the end of our course; His estimate of us is, “the flesh profiteth nothing”; and it is well, if we lay down this estimate as our first axiom. But then the same God has spoken to us in the gospel, of the remission of sin. But it is remission of sin according to His omniscience, therefore of all sin —and if God speaks to us of the righteousness of faith, it is according to His omniscience, “everlasting righteousness.” “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and

to-day, and for ever," has thrown the efficacy of what He Himself is into all that He has done. He has offered one sacrifice for sins, of abiding efficacy. He has "obtained eternal redemption," and "brought in everlasting righteousness." He has "perfected for ever them that are sanctified." He is "consecrated a priest for evermore." All the value of the work and offices of Christ flows from the glory of His Person. The whole question between God and the awakened sinner is settled upon the ground of the unalterable value of what Christ has done. In this sense, the word 'progressive' is human, not divine. "It is finished" excludes the idea of progression. "I know that whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it: and God doeth it, that men may fear before him." 'Progress' is necessarily associated with change, but truth is immutable. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." We have all truth in the word, and the Spirit to guide into all truth. The work of the Lord Jesus Christ is commensurate with, yea, rises infinitely above, all our need as sinners. There are things reported unto us by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, to tell out heaven's estimate of Christ's sufferings, and the glory to follow, which angels desire to look into; 1 Peter 1:12.

The great hindrance to solid peace, is a reasoning still in our own minds, as to whether we are really as bad as God knows us to be. It is expecting to find ourselves better and better in ourselves, instead of seeing that God acts upon His own omniscience as to what we are, and not upon what we are thinking of ourselves, and presents to us His own estimate of Christ's work and priesthood. The gospel is "the gospel of God," Rom. 1:1. It is God who bears witness to the total ruin of man, and

it is the same God who bears testimony to the complete efficacy of Christ's work. This is of all importance; for no one perfectly knows the badness of his own heart, and no one perfectly knows the perfections of Christ. We shall be learners throughout eternity of Christ's perfections.

"I will praise thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well" (v. 14). Most marvellous! Look at man; is he not most skilfully and wonderfully contrived? See in the same person the loftiest flights of thought, and the most debasing passions! Physically and morally, we are fearfully and wonderfully made. If we regard the second Man the Lord from heaven, Immanuel, God with us, the One testified unto by Jehovah of Hosts, as "the Man my fellow," Him who fills the highest heavens, and yet was down here a babe in a manger, who could command the waves, and still the storm, but was buffeted by His creatures—how fearfully and wonderfully made! But we are looking at the Psalm in another aspect, and who so fearfully and wonderfully made, as one quickened by the Spirit, the believer in God's testimony to His Son? The believer holds to two heads. As naturally constituted, we are under "the law of sin and death." Men may deny that man is so constituted, but the fact is before our eyes, that no progress man has made, no advancement, no cultivation, no invention, has liberated him from "the law of sin and death." This is what human philanthropy cannot achieve. But it is here divine philanthropy begins. "God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ," Eph. 2:4, 5. "The law of the Spirit

of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death," Rom. 8:5. How fearfully and wonderfully are believers made, holding both to the first, and to the Second Adam! And when we look within, how fearfully and wonderfully made! Our souls know what it is to leave things here behind, and to find Christ excellently precious: and then some vain trifle comes in, and pulls us down, and makes us more intensely interested about the passing trifle, than all the solid realities which are in Christ Jesus. Those who have learned something of themselves, know how often their songs of gratitude and praise are succeeded by murmurings, as with Israel of old—yea, they know how the atheistic thought, that would dethrone God, has battled with the spirit which would fain praise God for redeeming grace and delivering mercy. Those who are taught by the Spirit of truth, are learning the unmitigated evil of the flesh.—"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." In practice we often contradict this truth, probing into that which is below, and only learning disappointment. But God is never disappointed when we are disappointed. He allows us to be disappointed with ourselves, in order that we may better learn our need of, and be satisfied with Christ. It is hard and painful to us, to be stripped of self, to be searched, and winnowed. We become disappointed with the world, disappointed with other Christians (and this may be needful), but when God winnows our path, we learn to be thoroughly disappointed with ourselves. The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth His handiwork. But "we are his workmanship." We are not workers, for "by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of

yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship." And this we are "to the intent, that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God" as well as that "in the ages to come, he may shew forth the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us, through Christ Jesus." The church of the living God is God's peculiar workmanship. There is a false church, the workmanship of man under the guidance of Satan, a foil to the true church. If Christ has a bride, there is a harlot audaciously claiming this honoured place. If God has His city, the heavenly Jerusalem, man is rearing Babylon (let us beware of her delicacies). If there are those who are sealed with the seal of the living God in their foreheads, there are those who have the mark of the beast. But the church of the living God is so peculiarly the workmanship of God, that whenever man has attempted to uphold, strengthen, or form it, he has undermined, weakened, and marred it. God is a jealous God—and He is very jealous of man's presumption in interfering with His church.

"My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect, and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there were none of them" (v. 15, 16). We may remark in passing, that "substance yet being unperfect," is one word in the original. Our translators have made use of a strange word 'imperfect,' in order to shew that the sense is not that of imperfect. The new-born babe is a perfect human being, as truly as a man. The rudiments

of man are all wrapped up in the babe. The eye of God sees all these rudiments, before they are unfolded. When a sign was given from heaven to the shepherds, it was, “Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you. Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger”—a strange sign! yet the testimony of heaven (and faith’s acknowledgment) was to that babe, as Christ, Jehovah.

Disappointed as we must needs be with ourselves, let us well mark this, that with respect to the members of Christ’s mystical body, God sees in every one of them, the rudiments of that which shall shine forth in the day of Christ, to the praise of His glory. We might avail ourselves of many things in nature in illustration, as for instance, the fragile egg of a bird. That egg is perfect—but we do not see in it the bill, the foot, or the wing on which the future lark shall rise toward heaven, trilling its sweet song. But God sees all these there. He did not tell Abraham, A father of many nations will I make thee, but “I have made thee.” It is written— “Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate, to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified.” God must speak His own language. There are links in the divine chain—and our experience may come in, as though to separate them; but God sees in each “vessel of mercy,” one “afore prepared unto glory.” The members of Christ’s mystical body are being here formed out of strange materials, and in a strange place, for that hour when they shall be glorified saints. Angels

see God's works in creation, in providence, and in those things in which they are the executors of His will, but they see nothing to compare with the wonderful workmanship of God in quickening into life those who were dead in trespasses and sins. But how unlike are such to glory! groaning in bodies of sin and death—groaning in the midst of, and with, a groaning creation—how unlike glory! But God sees us "yet being imperfect." He sees us through and through, and He sees us as His grace has made us to be in Christ. He too has made provision for us in Christ, for all that He knows we need. "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life."

There is a blessed turn in the Psalm, at verses 17, 18: "How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand," etc. This is a blessed theme, the theme of God's thoughts—higher, as the heavens are higher than the earth, than our thoughts, the theme of God's fathomless and illimitable grace. Here there is real liberty. Do we know what it is to have our own thoughts, so narrow, so beggared, so mean, beaten down by God's high, generous, liberal thoughts—His thoughts of us as to what we are in Christ? "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man, therefore [says Jesus] that hath heard, and learned of the Father, cometh unto Me." Jesus is the great thought of God—God's thoughts are expressed to us in Him. It is not an unfallen angel, but a sinner quickened by the Spirit of God, who can thus get into the deep thoughts of God. When he is winnowing our ways, how precious are His thoughts to us: we

sometimes try to put one another to shame, to degrade one another—but God works for an expected end. He only humbles us, in order to exalt us; He suffers us to hunger, in order to "prove us, and do us good at our latter end."

The time is come when judgment must begin at the house of God. He will search each individual Christian, and make him consciously know the ground on which he can stand before God. "If it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? and if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" We can understand the meaning of the word 'scarcely,' when our path is winnowed. It does not imply either uncertainty or imperfection in the salvation which is of God, but we learn that salvation must be of God, and our constant need of it. Finished and complete in itself, faith apprehends it as continually needed, as though our whole life was one of escapes, and "He that is our God is the God of salvation." "He hath delivered, he doth deliver, in whom we trust that he will yet deliver." Those who, in exercise of soul, find out what is in their own hearts, well know that all that is going on in the world around them, is but the manifestation of the very evil, the principles of which God has been discovering, and they have been judging, in their own hearts.

There is a present restraint, under God's hand, on man's evil. Once for a moment God removed it— "This is your hour, and the power of darkness." Again He will remove it, and men will be given over to "strong delusion, to believe a lie, that they all may be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." The present moment is a solemn one, popery and semi-

popery spreading on the one hand, rationalism and infidelity on. the other. Of our own selves we must judge righteous judgment. “Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God” (v. 19). If He is sifting His own people, He will judge all this proud Christianity, whether sacerdotal or sacramental efficacy, or despising lordship and government. But is the knowledge of being delivered from the wrath to come to settle us in self-complacency? By no means—but under the sheltering certainty, that God has searched and known us (as expressed in the first verse of this Psalm), we can turn this truth into a prayer, and say, in the words of the concluding verses, “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” (v. 23, 24). None but he who knows the shelter of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the mercy-seat of God, and is conscious that God has already searched him, and known him, could put up such a prayer. God must be acknowledged as omniscient. We need Him to help us in searching ourselves, because we are partial in self-judgment. The beam is in our own eye, the mote in our brother’s eye, and nothing but the Spirit of God can enable us to get the beam out. It is He who searches the reins and hearts, who has said, “Your sins and iniquities will I remember no more,” and it is because He remembers them no more, that we can ask Him to shew us what debtors we are to His grace.

There was once a man of like passions with ourselves, one who had cursed, and sworn, and denied his Lord, but for whom that Lord had prayed, “Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not;

and when thou art converted strengthen thy brethren." And after this terrible sifting, when the Lord searched him, twice he answered readily to the challenge, as oft repeated— "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." But the question was repeated a third time: "And Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, Thou knowest all things—thou knowest that I love thee." The Lord, in order to get at the bottom of our hearts, may have to remove a great heap of rubbish, such as self-confidence, pride and vanity, but He knows what His own grace has done for us, and He will find His love at the bottom of our hearts; He had to remove a great deal from Peter, a mass of fleshly confidence and forward zeal: He may have to take away from us much of that in which we have gloried, but after all, He will bring out, "Thou knowest that I love thee," personal affection for Himself. In the winnowing of our paths, much may have to be winnowed out that has been cherished more than Christ Himself, but there is at the bottom faith in Christ, and love to Christ. What a mixture of double-mindedness, of pride, of vanity, there is in the best thing we do! Our prayers, our praises, and our service, are so poor and worthless, and yet we are proud of them. We seek praise from our fellow-men for the very things we have to confess, as tainted with sin, before God. What need therefore, to bare our hearts, and say, "See if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." We, perhaps, are not able to detect some particular evil in our own souls, and others may not suspect it. There are instances in which we may thankfully say, "I know nothing by myself"—yet how needful to add, "yet am I not hereby justified; but he that judgeth me is the Lord." But when the Lord applies

Himself to His priesdy discerning judgment, as the One who searcheth the reins and trieth the heart, we may be led to one discovery after another of some crookedness of motive, sufficient of itself to disturb our peace, but used by the Lord to lead us into “the way everlasting.” And is not this way Christ Himself, the only way, the true way, the living way, the way everlasting?

How prone are we to depart from this way, therefore is He pleased to search out our own ways, that He may lead us therein—to shew us that Christ must be practically to us that which He declares Himself to be in His word, “The first and the last,” our “Alpha and Omega.” Happy is it, if we are under that process which, however humbling to ourselves, and humiliating in the eyes of others, leads us still to justify God in using it, and to say, “Search me, O God.” All is well that leads us “in the way everlasting,” that beats us out of our own ways and brings us there, that makes us in result value Christ for the way, as well as at the outset, and the end — Christ learnt as our portion to live upon, as well as known for the pardon of our sins.

The Lord grant to all His people the blessed secret of self-judgment. “If we judge ourselves, we should not be judged.” But if we do not, and are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, “that we may not be condemned with the world.”

# God’s Ways And Testimony

## Jeremiah 2

There are two distinct points in the ways and testimony of God as regards us: first, faith is the condition of soul in us which, as it is in exercise or otherwise, may either hinder or favour the enjoyment, which habitually the testimony of the word is to give to us. Then in presenting the object of faith to our souls—the Father’s love, the Son’s work—the word of God applies itself to the conscience and heart; for where the conscience is not in exercise the heart will not be, and all will be hollow. When the affections are dull then self comes in, and I attach these holy affections to myself; for when I am thinking about my affections I am thinking about myself. But when the conscience is in exercise we are thinking of the object presented: otherwise the heart is turned in upon self, the Lord is forgotten, and weakness ensues; consequently we sink into a feeble state; but then the word of God presenting the object of faith applies itself to the conscience, bringing that into exercise, and thus the heart is brought back to God.

There can be no true love to Christ while there is the sense of wrong done; for I cannot love a person I have wronged. What is needed then is the consciousness of the wrong done. “I have sinned, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.” When the conscience is aroused, and the heart is brought into play, we rest in the presence of God. The Spirit of God may humble us on account of what we have done, but when conscience is in play it brings out our whole condition before God. It is not the law coming in again, but God presenting

Himself', thus there will be right affections, and the conscience will be in exercise. Self-confidence and self-exaltation in every form are always the effects of an unexercised conscience. Only put a man in the Lord's presence, and that will keep him lowly, and in a spiritual state of discernment; but there is nothing out of which we so easily get as the consciousness of the presence of God. So also in our prayers. You may often be sensible that you go on praying after you have lost the consciousness that you are speaking to God, still the soul goes on expressing itself; even when led by the Spirit the consequence will be that the manner will be all wrong, though the words may be right. Well, though all this be true, whenever the Lord recalls a soul He recalls it to His own presence. He will act on the conscience; He will speak plainly to us. Why? Because He is conscious of the relationship which ought to have produced the conduct befitting the relationship which we have forgotten. "Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him." When the Lord recalls a soul to Himself He may reproach it with having forgotten the relationship in which it stood to God, and God to it; but He cannot reproach it as not having known that relationship. The power of every rebuke is founded on the relationship, and God remembering the relationship acts on the ground of it with all the affections belonging thereto. Thus every rebuke comes to us as the expression of the most wonderful tenderness; and the more deeply we learn that there is no failure in God's affection, the more deeply we lament our short-coming and failure in that relationship which never fails.

God said to Jeremiah, “Go, say in the ears of Jerusalem”; but, alas! Israel would not hear. Now this was most disastrous; but God remembers His relationship to them, and says, in Hosea 2:16, “In that day thou shalt call me Ishi”; that is, my husband, “and shalt no more call me Baali”; that is, my Lord. Evil as their state was, He recalls with all its force and energy the remembrance of their relationship— “Go, cry in the ears of Jerusalem.” It is not, “He that hath an ear let him hear,” but God goes and speaks in their ears. Oh that He may speak in our ears! When God. spake comfortably to Jerusalem then He spake to the heart, and that was after chastening; but here He is at another work, speaking in the ears of Jerusalem that they might hear what God had to say to them. He could say—the true Servant— “The Lord God hath opened mine ear” to hear what God had to say to Him, and He was not rebellious, neither turned away back; but Israel “had forsaken him days without number”; they had done a terrible thing, such as no other nation had done. “Hath a nation changed its gods, which are yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit.” And again, “Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the Lord. For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.” And now that God is sending a message after them, does He say, ‘Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, I remember thy sins”? No, but “I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thy espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown.” He is recalling what Israel was to God Himself: I remember the outgoings of thy heart towards Me; “I

remember the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals."

Now what a thing it was for God to say to Israel, 'I have not forgotten what you were to Me in the days of thy youth, when the heart first turned to Me.' In all this we have the same principle as "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations," when they were quarrelling which should be the greatest. And so Israel were always murmuring, thinking their leeks and cucumbers better than God; but God remembers the principles on which Israel acted— "When thou wentest after me in the wilderness." They got much of this world's goods in Canaan by following God; they got cities that they had not built, wells that they had not digged, palm-trees that they had not planted, and the like. All these things were the consequences of following God; but He does not mention these. But "thou wentest after me in the wilderness, which was a land of deserts and pits, a land of drought, and the shadow of death, a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt"; 'thou wentest after Me in the wilderness, where there was nothing to set your affections on but Myself; I Myself was the whole and sole object of your affections'; and this it was that God remembered. He overlooks all failure, and the condition which God notices is that He Himself was everything to them; and this is what characterises a heart when first converted to God—the Lord is everything to it. What is the world to that heart? Dross and dung. Everything, cares and pleasures are alike forgotten, everything counted as nothing, except what is found in God Himself. The praises of Israel were freely given— "I will prepare him an habitation"; "my father's God, I will exalt him," because they had found

Him who was everything to them, and the world and all it had to give a mere nothing.

Now let us look at the other side of the picture, and see the desperately bad state which the heart of Israel had got into, remembering they are but types of us. They were dissatisfied, and cried, “Would to God we had died in Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and ate bread to the full.” And again, “Wherefore have you made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us into this evil place? it is no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates; neither is there any water to drink.” In the wilderness there is nothing to see, nothing to look at; and this is what Israel wanted. God says, “I brought you into a plentiful country to eat the fruit thereof, and the goodness thereof; but when ye entered ye defiled my land, and made my heritage an abomination.” They felt their own importance, and forgot the Lord; they had the blessing, and did not want the Lord of the blessing (v. 6-8). And is not this true of the church of God? We bring in self, which is but a broken cistern, and depart from Him, who is the living fountain and power of blessing, forgetting that “a Syrian ready to perish was my father.” Consequently there is moral weakness, and Satan gets power. A believer cannot get back into the world: a mere professor may, and enjoy it; but a Christian cannot. An Israelite could not get back through the Red Sea again. You cannot think of yourselves and the Lord together with satisfaction to your own souls. The Lord’s presence in the soul will bring self into utter ruin and nothingness. We have only to let the Lord have His place in our souls, and that will put us into our place. If I am walking through the world, shall I find it a wilderness? To be sure I shall; but then I shall not be thinking about

the wilderness if the Lord is my joy and my strength. Are your hearts saying, This is a land we cannot see? If so, what does that prove? Why, that you are looking for something to see; and this is the thought you will find in your hearts, “It is a land not sown,” although you may be ashamed to own it. But God remembered Israel when they thought it worth while to follow God for His own sake. We feel bound to say it is a happy thing to be a Christian; but when we are alone do not our hearts say, “It is a land not sown”? If it be so with you, do not rest until the Lord Himself alone satisfies your soul; for you should delight yourself in Him. Lot saw a well-watered plain and a city, and then dwelt in it on the earth, and consequently was in the midst of judgment; while Abraham sought a city out of sight, and he enjoyed the blessing and comfort of God being with him, go where he might. When the soul is down, like a ship when the tide is low, it is in danger of shoals and sandbanks; but when the tide is up there are no sandbanks, because the ship is lifted up above them all. Thus when the soul is happy in Christ it will go on peacefully, independently of all the trials we may be called to meet with in our fellow-saints. We are called to walk together through the world, and a mere natural fitness will not do for that. No, we can only go on so far as Christ fills the soul; and thus going on in the tide of divine goodness, forgetting everything else, we can walk together happily, being occupied with Christ, and not with each other.

But notwithstanding what Israel was, still God does not forget Israel. And why? Because He remembers her affection in the day of her espousals, “when thou wentest after me in the wilderness.” The soul, when occupied with God alone, is holiness to the Lord. God

says to Israel, “If thou wilt return, return unto me.” It is of no use to attempt to set the soul right except it be set right with God. Israel was “holiness to the Lord.” Now holiness is not innocence. God is not what we call innocent, but holy. He perfectly separates between evil and good. So Christ Himself when on earth was separated unto God; and when about to depart out of it, He says, “For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified through the truth”; for the meaning of the word “sanctify” in this place is separation to God. So it is with the church of God. She is separated from the world unto God, taken out of creation for Himself, the first-fruits of His increase. There will be a harvest of blessing when Israel and the nations are brought into blessing, but the church is the first-fruits of God’s increase. God remembers this, though the church may have forgotten it; but if we know what it is to get back into the affections of God, we must enjoy the love that fails not; for God says, “I remember.” The soul then apprehends what the church of God is in the affection of God, and not what it is down here. Christ was the corn broken and bruised, and afterwards the wavesheaf before God. So the church is to be in a low and oppressed state, and afterward to be exalted to where Christ is. God will have the whole harvest, but the first-fruits of His increase is that which occupies His affections.

“What iniquity have your fathers found in me?” Have I failed towards you in goodness? What is the matter now? Is the Lord changed? Is He worth less now than when thou wentest after Him in the wilderness? No; but we have got far from Him, and have walked after vanity, and have become vain. We have enjoyed His blessing,

and have got fat and kicked, and consequently have fallen down into the weakness and wretchedness of our own hearts. When did the Lord bring up His people? When the very circumstances through which, and into which, He brought them was the proof that the Lord was bringing them there; for He brought them into a land of deserts and pits, where they had no need to lean on “a broken reed, whereon if a man lean it will go into his hand and pierce it,” because they leaned on God Himself. “Neither did thy raiment wax old upon thee, nor thy foot swell, these forty years.” And why? Because “the Lord alone did lead them, and there was no strange god with him.” So was it with Gideon; Jud. 6. He remembered what God had been to Israel in the day of their espousals, saying, “Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?” And the Lord looked upon him, and said, “Go in this thy might.” Thus we see that Gideon’s remembrance of what God was to Israel in the day of their espousals was the secret of his strength. In Gideon was a soul near enough to God to say, “Where is the Lord?” and then what a burden is taken off the heart. Only let us place ourselves before the Lord, and see if He does not come in remembering the day of espousals.

If I am thinking of the cucumbers of Egypt, the wilderness will not suit me; but if I am thinking of the Lord, I shall have no thought at all whether I am in the wilderness or not. The affections of my soul will be going on with God’s affection for me; for He ever remembers “the love of thine espousals” when He first revealed Himself to our souls. It is true we may see chastening, but God never forgets the work of grace in our souls. He never forgets “the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals when thou wentest after Him in the

wilderness, in a land not sown." And now thou art "holiness to the Lord"; and though God will have His joy in the harvest of the earth, yet thou art the first-fruits of His increase.

## On Matthew 13

In these parables we have the character and importance of the word shewn, and its effects. The object of revealing truth in this manner is made known to us by the Lord in His answer to the disciples, saying, “Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.” Parables, then, we find, unfold the word to those who already know Jesus; and they are spoken consequent upon the unbelief of the Jewish people, amongst whom the Lord had previously ministered, and cast out devils, and healed the sick, and who then, in the very principle of apostasy, had asked a sign. The character of this evil and adulterous generation is spoken of as having corrupted themselves; their spot is not the spot of God’s children; they are a froward generation, children in whom is no faith; and here it is as though He were just declaring, “I will hide my face from them, and see what their end will be.” And this is the reason why He speaks in parables. The spirit of unbelief was clearly developed in the Jews after His taking the utmost possible pains with them, and then He hides His face from them, telling them their condition is this, “When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation,” Matt. 13:43-45. Having seen this then, we

see that the parables are the unfolding of mysteries to those believe.

The Lord, as the Apostle of our profession at His first coming, spoke the word of God; and when He returns to judge the world, He will judge by the word which He has spoken, as He says, “The word that I have spoken the same shall judge you.” The Lord’s testimony was of grace, expressive of all that God was in grace to sinners. And when He comes again, He will come judging by it. Having given the mind of God, He returns to heaven; and then He returns as King to judge by the word which He had spoken.

In the first of these parables, we find the Lord going forth sowing the seed. I would speak of the effect and operation of this. The six following parables have a very distinct character.

The first three unfold what goes on in the world, consequent upon the sowing of the seed; and the last three, the mind of Christ internally as regards the effect.

First we have the seed sown in the field; and parallel to this is the field bought for the sake of the prize which He knew to be in it. The grain of mustard-seed becoming a tree in which the birds of the air lodge, is the indiscriminate place of shelter afforded by the organisation of professed doctrine: on the other hand, we have the pearl of great price, and understood in its value by a merchantman; here we find the spiritual understanding of Christ, and what every Christian has in his measure. The leaven, which is a corrupt and a hidden thing, leavens the whole three measures of meal; that is, a given part is filled with it. The whole from the

field is gathered, and the whole of the net is drawn to shore, and then comes the separation.

We always find in the interpretation of parables and symbols, more is included than the parable or symbol states. So here, the explanation states what the Son of man should do when the angels are sent forth. And here we get the Lord's judgment consequent upon the effects of the seed sown and that which follows—even that all things that offend and do iniquity shall be gathered out of His kingdom and cast into a furnace of fire, where shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth; and then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. The interpretation here embraces more, and carries us farther than the parable itself. So in Daniel 7. We have first a vision declaring the power of four beasts, and of a little horn which should come out of them; then their destruction, and the setting up of another kingdom: but it is in the interpretation, in verses 18 and 22, that we learn that the saints of the Most High shall possess that kingdom.

These interpretations carry out the child of God into the next dispensation. In the parable of the tares, the servants ask if they shall gather them out; that is now, at the present time: but the interpretation shews us what takes place consequent upon the time which the parable describes. Christ came into the world and sowed wheat, the devil sowed tares; this is not simply unconverted men, but the operation of Satan to injure and mar the work of God. There were unconverted men before Christ came, and Satan presented adequate temptation to man's pride, covetousness, and self-esteem to guide them to his principles; and this is the wise man of the world. But there is another thing now. Satan comes to

introduce mischief where God had introduced good. The world is not now in its natural state. Jesus as the Apostle of our profession has come and sown good seed; but while men slept, the enemy has come in upon this, and sown tares to injure and corrupt the profession of the church. It may be great and flourishing in appearance as the tree; it may fill the three measures of meal as the leaven; but it is a corrupt thing.

But to confine myself to the parable of the tares; it is not only the weeds of the field, that is natural evil, but the subtle evil of the tares growing up to a harvest of judgments; that is the church nominally: but where were they to be let grow together with the wheat? In the world. There is not to be the judicial process of excision here. The Son of man sows; the Son of man, as king, gathers out of His kingdom all things that offend and do iniquity; but what is this but the condemnation of a judicial process of excision in the world now by the saints? This is not to be executed until He comes.

I take notice in passing that this has nothing to do with discipline, because this is exercised in the church, on the children, or on those we hope to be such; while the proposed excision was to be exercised on the tares—those known to be tares—that is, discerned iniquity.

The parable of the net cast into the sea comes within the class which is the subject of the spiritual apprehension of disciples only, and is addressed only to them, its very subject being within the scope of their understanding only; while on the other side it presents the gathering of a company out of the world, in which good and bad are alike found, the process on which is the subject of their

occupation and apprehension, and which the fishermen who draw the net carry on and not the angels.

Note here, the servants or the fishermen are not occupied with the bad. Extermination from the world was not their business. Here the dealing with good is the subject of the parable; the explanation determines the portion of the bad. So the tares are gathered into bundles to be burned; and before they are cast into the furnace of fire, the wheat is gathered into His barn. We find in this the separation of the saints from the evil, and not the carrying into effect the judgment of the wicked; the good are gathered previous to the judgment upon the ungodly. In the parable, we find they are told to gather together the tares in bundles ready for the burning, but they are not told to burn them; then the wheat is to be gathered into a barn, a place of security. But in the explanation, there is the gathering out of all things that offend and do iniquity, and, they are cast into the furnace of fire; and then the righteous (before gathered into the barn) shall shine forth in the kingdom of their Father. The principles of iniquity and the providence of God now go on together. First, the tares are gathered, and then the wheat; then the tares are judged and the good shine forth: that is, first of all, we have the practical separation, the providential gathering of the wheat out of the way of judgment into the barn, and then the actual judgment of the tares, and, consequent upon that, the wheat shines forth. When the fish are separated we have (not the good shining forth in glory, but) the good gathered into vessels, and then the bad destroyed.

In this parable of the tares we find Satan was waking, and men were sleeping, and the effect produced is the

mixture of the evil and the good; and this is now the work of the devil, mixing evil with good in this world; and we can still say “an enemy hath done this.” Competence to remedy it is another thing. But let us settle this as a first principle: that if we see evil and good mixed in the profession of Christianity, this is the work of Satan; and, remember, the tares are not simply unconverted men—there were plenty before the Lord came— but the tares are the work of Satan consequent upon His coming.

Is the thing the Lord proposes, in sowing the seed, to set the world right? No, for the servants ask, Are we to root out the tares? and the answer is, No, they are to grow till the harvest. In the world the process of mixture will go on till then, when the Lord will interfere Himself. Here then we have the express revelation, that the idea of setting the world right by the word comes not from a spiritual understanding. But the Lord’s answer to whence these things came, and whither they should be, is, I have bought the world for the sake of the treasure that is in it; and the saints learn to their comfort, that the good are gathered into vessels while on the shore, that is, while they are practically together, and of course while they have to contend with open and subtle evil; and this we must expect in the world, until He gathers out of His kingdom all things that offend and do iniquity.

In the practical application of this, it is of great importance to see that the mixing anything with God’s wheat is sanctioning the iniquity of the world. If I see anything with the spirit of the world, or the power of it stamped upon it, I see a plant which is not of the Lord’s planting; and if I see this mixed with Christianity, that which is of Christ, and that which is not of Christ, I say,

“an enemy hath done this.” We have been slumbering, but the enemy was awake. The spirit of a believer necessarily involves total separation from the world, for where there is a spirit to join the world, there is not the Spirit of God, but the spirit of the world. But this state of things will not go on for ever. I would ask you, dear friends, whether there be in you this recognition of the total separation in spirit which these things mark out to us? If this is not the case, we are either the natural weeds of the field, or what Satan has sown to do mischief. You may be those God will convert, but you are one of these, or you have the principle in your hearts, and the love of the world is enmity against God.

The thing of price to my soul is that Christ is coming. The beauty and glory of Christ is clearly opposed to the things of the world. Are your hearts under the control of the spirit of obedience? or if the Lord were manifested, is it the thing you delight in? Because He will appear the second time without sin unto salvation. And you who love Christ, cannot you discriminate between Christ and this heartless evil world? Have you given up its interests and its intercourse, save in doing good? Can it be that the things by which Satan governs our hearts are topics of mutual interest to Christians and to the world? No. All that is of the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. The world is alienated from God, and if mixed up with the saints, it is “an enemy hath done this.” The saints of God, taught of Christ by the Spirit, know that it is an enemy. May the Lord press its truth, dear friends, on your hearts, that you may be separated from the world. The Lord shew you it is impossible to mix these things, and keep you from the wish to do so.

# Waiting And Working For Christ

## Matthew 25:1-29

In these two parables we see evidently the Lord dealing with the responsibility of those who have been called out for Him; some of them not only called, but called upon to act, whether in thoughts, or feelings, or outward actions, in reference to His return to them.

The coming of the Lord is not merely some special doctrine, but is what ought to, and at first did characterise the Christian; not merely the fact that He will come again (every person that calls himself a Christian believes that): the present expectation of the Lord characterises the Christian. Here they went out to meet the bridegroom. Again the apostle says of the Thessalonians that they were converted to wait for God's Son from heaven—they were converted to wait. So in Matthew 24, it was not that they denied His coming. "But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming": it ceased to be a present expectation. So with the virgins, "they all slumbered and slept": it was not given up as a truth (though in fact it has been given up in a great measure), but it ceased to be a present expectation. Therefore when the Lord is exhorting His disciples He says (Luke 12:35), "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord." Then He adds, "Verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and come forth and serve them." He ministers to their blessedness. What I press, then, is, that the more you look at the scriptures, the more you see that it was

constantly as a first principle before the hearts of the saints.

The Thessalonians were not converted above a month. The apostle was only a few weeks with them; a persecution arose, and he was sent away, yet there he had fully brought it before them. There is no epistle so full of the Lord's coming as the two to the Thessalonians, the first as to the joy of the saints (the Lord taking them to Himself), the second the solemnity of His coming in judgment. They were quite recemly converted to God, yet they had learned all this. It was the thing brought before their souls: "Ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven." Two things characterised them: they went out to meet the bridegroom, and they served Him meanwhile. They were like unto men that wait for their Lord. As we all know, even unconverted men know perfectly well, if saints were waiting for Christ their whole lives would be changed. There is not a man does not know it. Do you think people would be heaping up money, or dressing themselves in finery, to meet the Lord? If this was acted upon, it would change everything in our lives; that is what the Lord gave it for. "Let your loins be girded about"—a figure for all the heart in order, the state you are always to be in—like a porter at the door, "that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately." That is what the Lord looks for in the saints.

This truth is everywhere strikingly presented all through 1 Thessalonians. This characterised them there. Their faith to God-ward was spread abroad: the world was saying, What an extraordinary set of people! They have given up all their idols (and you can have idols without

being heathen), and have got one true God, and expect His Son from heaven to take them up there. The world was in one sense preaching the gospel, declaring what these things were. Because they were waiting for His Son from heaven, their walk and ways in respect of that became a testimony that all the world talked about. They were persecuted for it, but that is another thing. In the second chapter he speaks of the coming in connection with joy in service, Ye are my crown and joy—I shall have it when the Lord comes, “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?” In the third chapter it is connected with holiness—“To the end he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.” He is looking for the practical effect in conduct. Then in the fourth chapter he explains how they will go up. “Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.” As He was coming to execute judgment (I mean on the living), so when Christ comes to judge this world, we come with Him: a blessed part of it—our thorough association with Christ. He still speaks in the same way in the fifth chapter, where it is more judgment and the day of the Lord, with some remarkable signs. “For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night; for when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape.” The elements of the thing are seen now, the full time is not yet come, but it is a solemn thing. It seems a contradiction: people are saying, Peace, peace; yet their hearts are failing them for fear, and for looking after those things that are

coming on the earth. It is just what is going on now. Progress, progress, everybody says, and yet all in confusion, and they do not know what is coming.

But my desire now is to look at it as to the saints. All the Epistles (except Galatians and Ephesians) take up this; and the Gospels. When the Lord was comforting His disciples, how does He begin? “Let not your hearts be troubled… I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you I will come again”—the thing He first of all holds up. My object is to shew the way the word of God kept it before the hearts of the saints, that they might live in that expectation. When the Lord was ascending to heaven, the angels say, “Why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner.” If the Lord was leaving comfort in the hearts of His disciples when going away, He says, “I will come again and receive you unto myself.” If angels are comforting them, they say, “He shall so come in like manner.” It is thus practically pressed on the disciples. The last word in scripture is, “Amen. Even so come, Lord Jesus.”

Accordingly, the more you look into scripture, the more you will see not merely that it is a truth taught, but a truth held up before the hearts and minds of the disciples, that they should habitually be looking for the Lord. It would change everything; it is no use saying it would not: every unconverted person knows it would. They would do their ordinary duties, of course, and be the more diligent in them. This is the special blessing in Luke 12: “Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching.” He ministers to them heavenly blessing. Then when He goes on to

service, “Who then is that faithful and wise servant whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.” When I get the state of the heart watching for Christ, it is heavenly blessedness with Him: when I get service, it is the kingdom.

Thus we see here or elsewhere, in the word of God, the coming of the Lord is kept as a present thing before the heart. If I take the unconverted person, there cannot be a more solemn thing than to be kept in constant expectation; he cannot say the Lord will not be here to-night. The Lord alone knows when He is coming. They were to wait for Him. If the saints were waiting, there would be the testimony; and do you not think the unconverted would find it out? They might hate and persecute them; but they would know that the saints had something that they had not, something which characterised them in their walk and affections. Two things are needed for this. There are two characters in which the Lord comes: He takes them to be with Himself; and then comes the question of judgment. First, then, the judgment must have no kind of fear or terror for me j but, on the other hand, to really expect Him, the coming One must be the object of my affections and my delight. If you told me some Prussian was coming, I would not care about that; but if it was my wife or my mother, how different! To have it really as our desire, then, all questions as to judgment must be settled, and we must have our affections on the Lord. We get this by the first coming of the Lord. We wait for His Son from heaven—even Jesus, which delivereth us from the wrath to come. There is wrath coming; but we know the Lord’s

coming is before the scene of judgment, and it is the coming of the One who has wrought salvation: we wait for the One who has delivered us. Judgment to me is not a subject of fear.

A word on this: what God has done in the coming of the Lord Jesus (I speak of His first coming) is this—all that would have to be dealt with in judgment at His second coming has been, for the believer, so dealt with on the cross: He who is to come as judge, has come as the Saviour. That is what I get in the gospel. He who is to come as judge, has come in an entirely different way and character: He has come as a Saviour. “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself”; “He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin.” Suppose I believe the testimony that the Lord is coming and am not ready for it, I fear judgment; then I turn to the first coming and see He has delivered me from the wrath to come. God has dealt with the world as to its sins in grace before He deals with it in judgment. He deals with them as sinners, as responsible and lost, but not in judgment—He came “to seek and to save that which was lost.”

Suppose my heart looks, then, at Christ, I ask, and this is important, How was it He came into the world? My sins brought Him. But what was His motive in coming? What put it into God’s heart to send Him? Was it any asking of mine? Any wish I had for Him? None. When He did come they rejected Him. Thus I am brought to the simple blessed truth— “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son.” I get the knowledge of what was in God’s heart as proved by His acts. He has thought of my state when I was a mere sinner and needed His love— “God commendeth his love towards us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.” I

have thus the heart of God, as the spring and source of all this—that His own Son has become a man, and has put away the sin that He would have to judge me for if He had not so put it away. I get Him as a Saviour before He becomes a Judge. Just see the place this sets us in. I see God occupied with my sins already on the cross. When? Long ago. I learn this as a fact, that He has been occupied with them: He knows all about me. I see Him there bearing my sins in His own body on the tree, and faith says, “The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” He bore my sins; He sweat great drops of blood at the thought of it, but He has done it, and was made a curse, in the same blessed love. He has bowed His head under the weight, this terrible weight, and goes through it. All was against Him. Satan’s power was there—broken by it, but still there; and all that God is against sin. Thus He goes down to death and the grave, and is risen in glory now. Where are all the sins He bore? Does He bear them in glory?

I get this truth, then, that the Saviour has thus given Himself for me, and God has been occupied with my sins before Christ comes as judge. The apostle speaks of it as the “terror of the Lord,” 2 Cor. 5:10, 11. But when the believer comes before the judgment-seat, he finds there the Person who has put away all his sins, and has the peaceful settled consciousness that his sins are all gone. “Having made peace through the blood of his cross,” God has attested the value of it by raising Him from the dead and setting Him at His own right hand: and has given you the peace, that you might believe and know the love that God has to you. “When I see the blood I will pass over you.” He has set forth Christ to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, and instead of

fearing His coming I rejoice. I could not desire His coming if a stranger: but we see the way Christ has interested and brought back our hearts. “The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” Out and out Christ has given Himself for us, not only His life—His precious blood—but Himself. Thus I find One who loved me, and purged my conscience; Heb. 9:14. And not only is my conscience perfectly purged, but my heart is free to be on Him, because I have learned the perfect love of Him who gave Himself for me.

Now I get the flow of blessed affections: the Lord Jesus is coming—now I care for it! The one whose visage was more marred than any man’s, who loved us, and charged Himself to put away our sins, who drank the bitter cup, and has taken away my terror—taken it away justly too. That is where the believer is. Then I say, Oh, what I would give to see Him! the One who hung upon the cross for me, where Satan’s power was and God’s wrath, but with a love stronger than death! Nothing stopped Him, the love with which He loved us, going through that which no heart can fathom—the bitterness of death and the cross. It is finished and done. And the One who thus loves me becomes the object of an affection which completely commands the heart. The heart longs and desires to see Him, and He gives the blessed assurance that we shall see Him, and (what is more) be like Him. “We know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”

The thing, then, that is set out before the Christian is, that Christ Himself will come. He is waiting now, but He will come and receive us to Himself, that where He is we may be also. And therefore the heart waits thus; Christ

is waiting, expecting till His enemies be put under His footstool. He is not slack concerning His promise. As to the desires of our hearts, I am waiting to see Christ, to be like Christ, and I have the certainty of it because I have His word— “We know that when he shall appear we shall be like him.”

There are the two things that make the heart ready, to be in a condition to wait: His first coming to salvation —“The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared,” and “looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us.” The grace of God has brought salvation. Then we have the whole Christian life summed up: denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope: grace has appeared and brought salvation, and we look for glory. The passage sums up the whole condition, only that besides, the Holy Ghost is given us that He may be the earnest of the inheritance. A Christian is a person who stands between the first coming of Christ (the Holy Ghost dwelling in Him), and the second coming. He looks back at the perfectness of what Christ has done, and he looks forward to be with Him and like Him, while he is expecting: just as a mother would expect her child from a far country—constantly expecting because her heart is on the one that is coming. That is what forms the affections, to be waiting for Christ to take us out of the world. The friendship of the world is enmity with God; our hearts with Him, we are waiting to be taken out of it. The Christian has to wait God’s time, yet knowing the value of Christ’s first coming as taught of God, and the Holy Ghost dwelling in him, he has learned to love that

One, and is waiting for Him. Salvation is accomplished, and the hope certain, because Christ has accomplished it. Thus we have seen the blessed ground upon which the Christian has his hope—that is, the value of the first coming of Christ as a Saviour. We get this so distinctly that the whole object of His coming in judgment hast been met, for the believer, by His coming in grace. Now His coming again is to us all joy and blessedness; He comes, and raises or changes us, and makes us like Himself in the glory: the first coming gives the ground.

Now, when you come to apply it, first there is what we have in the parable of the virgins: there is the spiritual warning of the appearance of Christ. “While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.” I press this, that you will find—so careful is the Holy Ghost to keep this thought as a present expectation—that neither in this parable nor elsewhere, does He present a circumstance, which would force a person to put it beyond his own lifetime. Thus, as to the form of the parable, the virgins that went to sleep are the virgins that awoke. Similarly in that of the servant. The Holy Ghost will never give anything beforehand, so as to weaken the present expectation. It is a moral thing affecting the condition of the soul: the evil servant says, “My Lord delayeth his coming.” This is the judgment of the professing church.

But to apply the parable before us individually— “They went out to meet the bridegroom.” That was their business, what characterised them. All had their torches, their profession: the foolish had no oil. “The bridegroom tarried”: now I get the fact, not what ought to be, but what was; for all slept. How is it, it is asked, that men for hundreds of years saw nothing of it? They

all slept, wise as well as foolish— “While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.” They slept together, they woke together. What would be the meaning of separating them while asleep? But the moment they woke at the cry, “Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him,” He calls them back to the place they were originally in. “Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps”—immediately they had some work to accomplish. Now comes the separation: “And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil, for our lamps are going out.” After the awakening cry, the Bridegroom delayed long enough to test the heart, whether there was that real grace which kept the heart waiting for Him. Now it was the time of judgment for the foolish virgins, not of their getting oil; they were not fit to go in. Here it takes the character of warning: while they all went to sleep together, the moment they were awake to the fact of not having grace, they could not stand. There could not be a more solemn warning. “Watch therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour.” Now let me ask, Is this so in your case? Are your affections enough upon Christ to be watching for Him, because you do not know the moment— still watching for Him (for “we shall not all sleep”), so that if He came you could say, This is the Lord, we have been waiting for Him? Are your hearts actively waiting, set on His coming, bowing to God’s ways as to the time, but still waiting as to your hearts’ affections for Christ; your lamps burning, your loins girded, so that you could open to Him immediately if He was to come this moment? It is the state of the heart I look to, so that if Christ were to come this moment, it would be that which you were looking for. Then will all His saints be with Him, and all glorified.

Now, the other thing is service. The twelfth chapter of Luke gives us not only watching but serving. So here (Matt. 25:14-30) it is the servant. You get more of the sovereignty of God here, than in the analogous parable in Luke, where it is more the responsibility of man. Here the Lord gives to every man according to his several ability: to one five talents, to another two, etc. Every one will be responsible for his wealth, but this is not a talent. The talents are what Christ gave when He was going away. He gave gifts—apostles, prophets, and so on. He did not give money! I quite admit the responsibility of it, but it is not the point here.

Thus, then, when Christ went away, He called His own servants and gave them according to their ability. When He comes back, He reckons with them. He that had received five talents made them other five; he that had received two had also gained two. But their lord was dealing in grace and wisdom, and says to both alike, "Enter thou into the joy of thy lord." Then comes the third: what characterised him was want of trust in the character of his master. It was not a question of not having oil in his lamp, but he says, "I knew thee that thou art an hard man," etc. He did not know the blessedness of the grace that is in Christ's heart. The others had the mind of Christ; they trusted His heart, and were therefore good and faithful servants. Thus I find the responsibility of service resting upon the knowledge of the heart of Christ. One said, "I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth"; he judged by his own selfish heart; the others trusted the heart of their master and acted on it. He trusts us if it is only a cup of cold water, or the gift of an apostle; He trusts His servant and expects him to act. If you have

five talents, trade with them; if a cup of cold water, trade with it. I get this blessed principle that, perfect grace having been exercised, and you see how it is so, the heart in cheerful readiness trusts the grace—trusts the Lord Himself.

Now, take the case of Peter, and you will see how it is connected with the conscience. Peter had to learn himself; he had confidence in himself, and it all broke down; he little knew Christ. And now just see how the Lord deals with him. He says, “Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not,” and it did not fail. He needed to be sifted: it was good for him, as it is often for us, to be sifted and humbled. If he had been left to himself, it would have been all over with him. But here was the Lord just going to be crucified, answering for Himself against His bitter enemies: but you never find Him in any place or circumstances where, if one wanted Him, His heart was not free to go out to the need. He looks at Peter, whose heart is broken down: he caught the Lord’s eye just at the right moment, and weeps bitterly for his sin. Now, when He comes back to Peter, there is another lesson. He says, Well, Peter, “lovest thou me more than these?” That is what he boasted of doing. He does not say, Why did you deny Me? but “Lovest thou me? “etc. He tests Peter’s heart to get it right with Him. “Thou knowest all things,” says Peter, “Thou knowest what is at the bottom of my heart.” And then, when thoroughly humbled in the dust about the sin, Peter is given to take care of the things dearest to Him. As soon as He had entirely broken Peter down, and taught him not to trust in himself, then He says, If you love Me, feed My sheep. In the exercise of perfect grace He trusts

Peter because He had taught Peter not to trust himself. Look now how Peter stands up and says to the Jews, “Ye have denied the Holy One and the Just.” Did he blush? He can bring the very things he had done himself on their conscience. Why? Because his conscience is as white as snow. He had learned to trust His love. He can charge them with the sins he had done himself; his conscience is purged. He has been thoroughly probed, but he can through the work of Christ and the power of the Holy Ghost stand up and speak of his own terrible sin. Just as I can say to a sinner, You are lost in your sins: that is what I was myself.

It is this confidence in Christ that is the spring of all true service; that entire blessed confidence in the grace of Christ, in His heart for us, who are unworthy of anything. He has trusted us, and the heart trusts Him, and the servant goes on to serve Him and trade with his talents; with the consequent effect, that we enter into the joy of our Lord, with Him and like Him, in the sense of His love because He is love. And there will not be a soul that it will not be my delight to see there. I am sure that, after the glory of Christ Himself, it is the next best thing to see the saints with Him and like Him. What is the great desire of the heart now but to see them as like Christ as possible? Then it will be perfectly. He comes and takes us there, and brings us into His joys— “Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

If you want to go on well and brightly, then, it is resting on the perfect work of Christ at His first coming (the Holy Ghost dwelling in us), and looking for that blessed hope, with true liberty of service, and the confidence that, when He comes, it is to enter into that blessed place of joy with Him. It is His own joy that He gives.

The joy of our hearts is to think that He is coming, and soon, to receive us to Himself.

The Lord give you to understand that the soul stands in the efficacy of His work at His first coming, so that with unclouded confidence you may look for His second coming, saying, “Even so come, Lord Jesus.” The state of a soul in the church really hangs upon that: the simple, constant, blessed expecting of Christ to come for us.

# “My Delights Were With The Sons Of Men”

Luke 2

Familiar as we are with the thought, it is after all a wonderful thing that the Son of God should come into this world of sinners, and still more wonderful that He should die for them. Into this world the Son of God came, fully bringing out what we are, by the way in which He was received; but at the same time His coming was full of joy and blessing for us. He was the immediate object of the express delight of the Father; then He died and rose again, and so brought us into the same place—into light and blessing with Himself.

It is a wonderful thing, in the first place, to have God come into the world, grace and truth in the world; and that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not a question of our duties, or of future judgment; but it is into the midst of this world of defilement, violence, corruption, evil, and enmity against God—into the midst of it He came. What makes it so especially wonderful is, that He came as a babe (though miraculously born) as one of ourselves, a real true man in this world of woe. Still there was more: for it is a totally different thing for God to deal with men as children of Adam, as to what they are, and what they can bring to God, and what their righteousness is— there is a great difference between looking at a man as responsible to God—and God dealing with Him according to His own thoughts. This is the truth, when grace is rejected. It is not that God overlooks our responsibility; but it is a totally distinct thing for God to reveal and fulfil the thoughts of His own

heart, and for Him to investigate those of ours. Dealing with man on the ground of what he is, and what he has done, goes on to judgment. In Christ he is revealing the thoughts of His heart.

Thus we get His own intentions before ever the world was; the purposes and counsels of God, which were not in the first Adam at all, but in the last. That runs through the whole of scripture from the very beginning. As soon as ever man had sinned, grace opens the door to reveal it: there was the seed of the woman that was to bruise the serpent's head. Adam was not the seed of the woman. The promise did not refer to the first man at all, nor was it a promise to him; but it was a revelation that there was one coming, the seed of the woman, who should bruise the serpent's head and destroy his power. Therefore there was ground for faith to lay hold upon. Promises and prophets were always referring to the same thing. "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed": "To him give all the prophets witness." Prophets had to deal with men, and bring the law to their consciences; but here is one in whom all the thoughts and counsels of God rest, and in grace to poor sinners— "All the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen, unto the glory of God by us." "All things are for your sakes," though all surely for God's glory.

Another thing in connection with it is, that it is only when we come to Christ, that we can reconcile the purposes of God in the full blessing of life, and man's responsibility. Heathens and Christians have disputed over it. In the garden of Eden there was the tree of life, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil: life on the one side, responsibility on the other. Man failed, ate of the tree of knowledge, and could not get to the tree of

life. Now the law took up the same principle—here again you have responsibility and life—and said, “Do this and live.” The Lord Jesus Christ, the second Man comes, does His Father’s will in everything, and sovereign grace takes up our responsibilities; He takes the consequences of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and He is the life. He bears the consequences of responsibility in His own body on the tree. It perfectly meets all our need, and a great deal more—God is perfectly glorified; and we get eternal life in Him, and the joy and blessing of it all in the full result of all these counsels of God, to be conformed to the image of His Son: nothing short of this.

Though the responsibility is proved, yet to be like the Son of God in glory has nothing to do with my responsibility. No man could have dared to think of such a thing; but it was the mind and counsel of God in Christ. It did not come out till after the cross, for we could not have had any part in it but by the cross. Before ever the world was, it was the thought of God to have a saved and redeemed people brought into the same place as, and associated with, Christ. Of course the preeminence is His. “Thy God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.” Who could pretend to be the “fellow” of the Son of God, if it were not the fruit of the work of the Son of God? The mind of God rested on Him in connection with man.

The first Adam is totally set aside, having been tested, tried, and proved, up to the cross; then the Second Man is brought in. God never would set up the last Adam along with the first: the first Adam was a fallen man, the last was the man of God’s counsels, and He sets Him up instead, when we had failed in our responsibility. Titus lays down (Titus 1:1, 2, 3) the other principle. “In hope

of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began" Then it was the hope of eternal life. 2 Timothy 1:9 gives the same truth: "Who hath saved us… not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" These thoughts and purposes of God were given us in Christ Jesus before ever the world was. Now if you look for a moment at Proverbs 8, you find a remarkable passage connected with this. There I see that before the world was created, Christ was there as wisdom, daily the Father's delight, and having His delights in the sons of men ("delight" is the same thought as "good pleasure").

We have then man put on his responsibility, and the first thing he does is to fall; he distrusts God, and that before there was a lust. He listens to Satan, he questions the love of God, he eats the fruit, and he falls. Then comes the law; man sets up the golden calf, and broke it. Last of all God sends His Son— "It may be they will reverence my son"; but "now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father"; "they cast him out." That closed the history of responsibility.

It was when man was a sinner and had broken the law, that the Son of man came into this world in grace. "Now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." He calls it the "end of the world" because man's moral history is ended— grace is not ended. Man is not less intellectual than before; he can invent railroads, telegraphs, and I know not what; but what have these things to do with the moral character of God or man, or with heaven? Death has come in, and this is all over. There are no telegraphs in heaven! Men are blinding themselves; there is not one

single link with God, of thought or feeling of heart, but plenty with this other world. Remarkable persons there are; but all belongs to the fashion of this world that passeth away, and when man's breath goes forth his thoughts perish. You may put up a monument to him, but it speaks of death! God has put this world into man's power and he has invented much; but, are children more obedient, wives more faithful, servants more honest? And since we have had all these developments of intellectual capacity, taking it even on the lowest level, are people happier—more to be trusted? A world in which people cannot trust each other, is a miserable world! What is called progress, does not give more confidence from man to man, to say nothing of God. There is not a single thing in it connected with the soul.

Man's history was thus closed at the cross. First, lawlessness, then law-breaking, and then enmity to God; then comes that blessed perfect work of the last Adam, who met the need in His own Person, and brought in the full accomplishment of the purposes of God. He has brought man into an entirely new sphere by death and resurrection, and eventually glory, and has settled the whole question of responsibility.

But God speaks to our hearts, and says—and I desire that you should take this to your hearts— 'Now you must understand what I am doing: I want to get your hearts into perfect confidence with Mine, by the testimony of what is in My heart, and as to your sins I have settled that.' This is the blessed truth, that when God could not bear my sins, instead of putting me away, He has put my sins away, and I stand before Him according to the value of that which was done in putting them away. What I have on my heart to shew you is, how God brings us into

the consciousness that when this work is done, the bad tree is done with. Not only had I sinned, but I was a sinner, and the question of what I am is perfectly settled. It is not character, for there are no two alike; each one of us has a different character. I may say, that is a humble trait in me: so I may say of a crab-tree, the flowers are more beautiful than those on an apple-tree; but what do I care for the pretty flowers when the fruit is bad? I cut the whole thing down! That is what God has done. When I have a spiritual judgment of the thing in my mind, I do not think of the pretty flowers on the wild tree, but of the fruit. So with man: God has sentenced the whole thing entirely; it is all cut down, and grafted with Christ, and then I expect fruit.

When I turn to look at the thoughts and counsels of God, I see His “delights were with the sons of men.” His “good pleasure” was not in angels; they are witnesses of His keeping a creature unfallen, but we are witnesses of His redeeming a creature who has fallen. There is no purpose about angels; He did not take them up, but He became a man. Now we get the moral character of the world tested by Christ. He came in goodness, not requiring anything from men, but bringing goodness to them. If you look at His life, He came in a power which removed all the present effects of sin. Death disappeared before Him; devils, disease, sickness, all fled away. He comes in a power sufficient to remove all the effects of Satan’s power, and He does it in grace. That is the character of Christ’s work: there was no miracle that was not the expression of meeting a need in man, or of setting aside Satan’s power. The cursing of the fig-tree is the only exception; there, responsibility was in question: He cursed the fig-tree, and it is the

judgment of man. Israel was under the culture of God. He looked for fruit, finds none, and says, “Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever.” The flesh is judged, set aside; and my heart is brought to own it—brought to the acknowledgment of its sentence at the cross.

Let us look at the Lord, the second Man, coming into the world. I see the place that He gets in this world; but when the angels begin to celebrate His praises they go much further. What is the sign of the Son of man coming into this world? First, of course (but on that I do not now dwell), the promises to Israel must be fulfilled; but this is the sign (Luke 2:12), “Ye shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.” An inn is the place where a man is measured: it touches the pride of man. The first floor for the rich, the garret for the poor: there was no room for Him! No room in the great inn of this world! He could go into the manger when He was born, to the cross at the end, and meanwhile have not where to lay His head. Is that the way you estimate the blessed Lord Jesus Christ? We are accustomed from education to exalt Him; but that is the world’s estimate still, there is no room for Him! The world is never changed till the heart is changed; it is just what it was then, with the addition since of the rejection of Christ. Is this then your moral estimate of the world, that the Son of God got no place in it? That here He began with the manger, and ended with the cross, and meanwhile had no place to lay His head?

The Son of God comes in grace, and that is what sounds from heaven when the angels praise. It is beautiful to see them delighting in man’s blessing, though they themselves were passed by. They are celebrating His

praise— “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men.” Do our hearts understand and estimate this, that God’s heart was delighting in the sons of men, not by a general mercy, but by His being a man? There I have the object, the Person, before God’s eye. He has come down into such scenes as these, and God says, Sinner though you are, I want your heart to trust Me; and that you may do so, there is My Son come down, and as a babe. God’s love was beyond a human thought. Why do they say, “Glory to God in the highest”? It is because His Son has become a man. It was not in the fact of angels’ glory, but when I get this lowly babe, that has not a place in the world, then the angels come out with this song.

There is nothing like this wonderful fact, “The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.” I get the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, present with me, a poor sinful man, that I may know how God reached me first where I was. He has come down to me as a man, and to prove God’s good pleasure in men. The result, “peace on earth,” is not seen yet, but you have “glory to God in the highest.” I have now this blessed truth, I have learnt where and how God has met me. If a man was a leper, He touched him, when another would have been defiled: He used His holiness in grace to reach the most defiled.

At the end of Matthew 3 He takes up this wondrous place for us: Jesus comes to be baptised of John, and says, “Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.” He takes this place, the moment the Word of God has met the heart of these poor sinners, and He says, I must go with them, because the Spirit of God has wrought in their hearts. It is that which defines the place of the

Person. He takes His place amongst us; and mark, He was always the same Person from the manger, at twelve years old, and all along His path. But now He cannot let His people take one step, in what God had wrought in their hearts, without saying, I go before, I go with you. The Christ that could tell the woman all that ever she did was not there for judgment. If a person was convicted of sin, the Lord had been there. What for? To judge me? No, to bring me to Himself in grace. Now mark the wondrous bringing out of this place: “And Jesus, when he was baptised, went up straightway out of the water: and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is rry beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” The heaven opened! There was never a person there before on whom heaven could be opened, and to whom a voice, the Father’s voice, could say, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” There was not a thing in Him, but what heaven could delight in. This is to me a wondrously blessed truth. In this world is the Lord Jesus Christ, the man in whom is the Father’s necessary, perfect, delight, and He owns Him as His beloved Son; and then the Holy Ghost comes down to seal and anoint Him. I have the place man must have according to the counsels of God, and heaven is opened on the world.

Another thing comes out, if possible still more wonderful — man gets into this place, which is in the thoughts and counsels of God for him. It is then that Satan is fully manifested. And here I get the first revelation of the Trinity: but it is when man gets into this relationship, with the thoughts and actings of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, all in connection with man, and

heaven opened: and it is that all the counsels of God might not only be in counsel, but in fulfilment and manifestation. To think that Christ, the Son of God, should thus come, not for a judgment on sinners, but to open heaven for sons! It is the pattern place of the saints. When He had thus publicly taken His place in grace with us, then God says, I will own you as My Son, and the Holy Ghost comes down and seals and anoints Him. And "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts."

But whatever the grace, you will always find that the Person Df Christ is maintained secure. Heaven is opened to Stephen, and he looks up and sees Christ there: he is full of the Holy Ghost, and he looks up to heaven. But heaven looks down on Christ. Here Stephen had an object, but Christ was the object of heaven. His Person is always maintained and secured. Thus we are brought into the same wondrous place as this wonderful One. We always find the Person of Christ pre-eminent, but we find the saints brought into a place where He can take us, and call us the "fellows" of the Son of God, with whom we are brought into fellowship. Take another example of this, the mount of transfiguration. Moses and Elias are shewn in exactly the same glory as Christ, but the Person and place of the Son of God are most fully maintained. Peter thought it a great thing for his master to be like Moses and Elias, but when he says, "Let us make three tabernacles," the voice from the cloud says, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him." Again, in the case of the tribute-money, Jesus says to Peter, "Of whom do the kings of the earth take tribute: of their own children or strangers?" "Of strangers." He was the great king of the temple, and yet,

lest He should offend them, He disposed of creation to find money to give, and says, “for me and thee” thus bringing man into association with Himself. His Person is maintained, but this blessed Son of God cares to win the confidence of our hearts.

But though thus in association with man, He was there alone. “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground, and die, it abideth alone,” John 12:24. There are three glories that are His, brought out there. He is Son of God, chapter 11; He is owned as Son of David, riding upon an ass; then the Greeks come up and the Son of man must be glorified—that is the revelation of Psalm 8. But if He was to be the Son of man, He was to be over all the works of God as man— “He left nothing that is not put under him, but now we see not yet all things put under him.” As yet He is seated on his Father’s throne, not on His own. He is Son and heir. What He is doing now is gathering out the joint-heirs. He is only waiting for that, and when they are all gathered He will come. And the thing that we are all waiting for is that He should come. Then we shall be like Him, and with Him in glory. But He was alone until, as the corn of wheat, He fell into the ground, and died. But the moment redemption is accomplished He can say, “Go to my brethren.” And, “I ascend unto my Father and your Father.”

Mary Magdalene was watching at the sepulchre. She was so near to the heart of Christ that all the world to her was but an empty tomb, when Christ was not there. Her heart was right, though her intelligence and her place were wrong. She was seeking the living among the dead! The disciples went to their own home—sad work! So Mary gets the message, “Go to my brethren.” He called His own sheep by name— “Mary.” Then she

thought she had Him back again, but He says to her, “Touch me not”: You cannot have me back for the kingdom yet. He lets Thomas touch Him, but He was telling far more to her. Now the moment that redemption is accomplished, that the work is done, He can say, according to Psalm 22, “I will declare thy name unto my brethren.” Having been heard from “the horns of the unicorns” (a figure of speech of course of impalement, of intense suffering), His first thought is, I must have my brethren in the same place. He was alone till He died, now He was risen into the new place, and He can say, My Father and your Father, My God and your God. “In the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.” It is the song of perfect redemption, and He leads the praises. He puts them into the relationship, and when thus brought and gathered together, He sings in their midst. All this is fulfilled in John 20. Now if Christ is leading our praises, is redemption uncertain? I should be out of tune if I were not joining. Is He to sing one song of praise and I another? That would be discord, not harmony. He has brought us into the same place as Himself, and triumphantly He leads our hearts to join in the song He sings.

Let us see the full and blessed perfectness of that work. We were under the power of sin and Satan, and God’s wrath had come in. What do I see this blessed One doing? Displaying God. He puts Himself alone in our place, to finish and complete that work where God must be glorified on account of sin, and man brought to be saved. If God had passed over the sin of Adam and Eve in the garden, I should have been able to say, sin is no matter, but when I look at the cross I cannot. There I see God perfectly glorified in every respect by a Man, and so

much the more because sin was there. If God had cut off Adam and Eve, it would have been righteous, but no declaration of His love. So it was not possible for the cup to pass from Him; and at the cross I get God's full dealing with sin in righteousness, but with infinite love. It is beyond our need. God's majesty was maintained where all had been trampled in the dust, and now the Son of man is gone into the glory of God, and is sitting on the Father's throne, the witness that love has had its way, that grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

I have the pattern then, when the Lord was upon earth, of my place with Him. I see the work done on the cross, that was needed to put me into it, and then I learn what the work is worth. It is worth the glory of God in heaven. And now I have the place before God, which is the consequence of that. I can rejoice in hope of the glory of God, and I have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby I cry, "Abba, Father." He has brought us into the place that the counsels of God required. We are in relationship to God as a Father, and Christ is the first-born among many brethren. He brings us into this in John 17: "The glory which thou gavest me I have given them … that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me." Then speaking of the present state, He says, "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." The Holy Ghost thus conducts down the fulness of the Father's love to the Son into our hearts. It is perfect.

It is all unutterable grace, and therefore humbles us to the dust. But, has not God a right to have thoughts for Himself? Surely He has. He is going to shew "the

exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us by Christ Jesus," and if so, nothing is too good for me. Can you think that it is so? What else can I think? Shall I think my own thoughts when He has sent His Son to die for me? The poor prodigal thought, "Make me as one of thy hired servants," but never says it when he comes to his father. He confesses his sins, of course, but when he has had the kiss and has been clothed, there are no more thoughts of the son. All is the effect of the thoughts of the Father, so that even the servants are rejoicing that the son is brought back. What the Father thinks has come out. I can now say, with a purged conscience, I am nothing; but I am loved as Jesus is loved; not only saved by Him, but blest by Him: "Thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me." Is this where our thoughts are? He passes on everything that was His to us, though it may be we are toiling along down here. If I walk in the Spirit, if my mind is full of Christ, I have no occasion to think of myself at all. If I have not to judge myself, I can think of Him; but if I fail, then I have to humble and judge myself. And the normal state of a Christian is to do all "in the name of the Lord Jesus." It may be the commonest affairs of daily life, buying and selling, furnishing my house, or dressing my body; but it is a very simple rule and cuts away a great deal.

We are sanctified to the obedience of Christ. Let me say one word on this obedience. I say of my child, who wants to go another way, but who yields to me, It is very pleasant to see such obedience: but it was not so with Christ. He never had a will to wish to go the other way. When the tempter came to Him, he said, "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." What was His answer? It was as though He said, Nay, I

am a servant, I cannot command, I obey; “It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.” That is the obedience of Christ. The Father’s will was His motive for everything. There are thousands of things we do from habit, and we say we must do them: there is no “must” for me, but Christ’s will. I have to learn what His will is; for we are made epistles of Christ, and the path we are to walk in is to manifest the life of Jesus in our bodies. Everything I do should be the expression of the allegiance of my heart to Christ; and the manifestation of Him to others. The standard of walk is, what is “worthy of the Lord,” not of man. Sometimes it is very difficult to be peaceful, patient, gentle, when a man wrongs and insults one; but were you not the enemy of God, and did not God forgive you when you were His enemy? Well, you forgive your enemy. I quite understand the difficulties, but we have the blessed privilege of walking as He walked. If you want to do this, go and study Christ, learn what His path was down here, after you have learned your place in Him on high. It is a great comfort that, in looking at Christ, I not only see the thing I ought to be, but I get the thing I ought to be, “grace for grace.” “We all with open face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory.” There is real growth there, not in fitness and acceptance, but in likeness to Christ, and it ought to be growth every instant. We are in this place of Christ then before God; and what I would press upon you is to study Christ, so that we may be like Him here. There is nothing that so fills the soul with blessing and encouragement or that so sanctifies: nothing which so gives the living sense of divine love, that gives us courage. The Lord give us this courage, and enable us to

study Him. “He that eateth me, even he shall live by me.”

## The Saviour And The Sinner

Luke 7:29-50

This is one of the passages, found here and there in Scripture, which brings out in strong relief the grace of God, and what is in man's heart too.

Here we get the Pharisee, this poor sinner, and the Lord Himself. We see these three characters, these three hearts all together: the man righteous in his own eyes; a person outwardly in wickedness; and then the heart of God, and the way in which He looks at and judges these two cases.

What precedes in the history is this: John the Baptist sends two of his disciples to ask, "Art thou he that should come; or look we for another?" (v. 19), and this gives occasion to the Lord to speak of God's ways and dealings, the principles of which are of all importance to us. John had come with his solemn testimony, but the conscience did not bow to it. Then came the gracious testimony of Christ, but the heart was not moved by it. "But wisdom is justified of all her children." God's ways, whether in the testimony of John the Baptist, or in that of the Lord Jesus, are justified by the children of wisdom. The Pharisee is here, and the poor sinner: then comes the question, which is the child of wisdom?

We get a most important principle here: these publicans and sinners "justified God" both in the testimony of John, and in that of the Gospel. When we know what we are as sinners, we justify God, never ourselves; and then in His ways with us He justifies us. The moment we begin to justify ourselves, it is only the utter darkness of

the human heart. We find these two testimonies. John the Baptist came requiring fruit, calling to repentance: the publicans and sinners justified God in this: the axe was laid at the root of the trees, these poor sinners acknowledged it and repented: they justified God. The first good fruit that is produced is always the acknowledgment that we produce bad fruit. Then came the blessed Lord, telling of sovereign grace that rose above all their sins; they justified God in this too. The man that justifies God in condemning him most thankfully justifies God in sending His Son to save him. Those who owned the truth of God's judgment, and that they deserved it, confess their sins; Matt. 3:6. Are we willing to justify God in condemning us? John was so strict he would not even eat with any one; he could have nothing to say to these sinners: that was the reason they said, "He hath a devil."

"There is none righteous, no, not one," Rom. 3:10. This is plain enough; the "great white throne" will not make it plainer. "That every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God," Rom. 3:19. This is God's testimony, and in the gospel of grace too. Now we see around us numbers of religious people, going on decently and reverently; but their delight is not in God. Take such a person, and see where his heart is; leave a man alone three or four hours, and he thinks of his cares, game, pleasures, never of Christ. Christ has no place at all in his heart. We all have the idea that we shall be happy in heaven; so we shall, perfectly, blessedly happy. But put the natural man there, and he would get out as quickly as ever he could: there is nothing above he would like. When the blessed Lord came down in grace, man would not have Him. If you

take a false religion, you never find a man ashamed of it; you never see this among Mahometans, heathen, or even in corrupt Christianity. Take a Christian, a real Christian, is he not ashamed to confess Christ before men? He is ashamed of himself for it, surely. You never find a person ashamed of a false religion, but you find Christians ashamed of the true.

Take man as man, and every mouth is stopped. Do we justify God in condemning us? The child of wisdom says, “It is true, I deserve to be cut down: I am a child of wrath; I justify God!” When that is the case, at once we are thankful for grace. When I am personally convinced that I deserve condemnation, I say, ‘I justify God in the grace that rises up above all my sins: I do not justify myself.’ The Son of man came in grace carrying the testimony of goodness wherever there was a poor sinner who would receive Him. God’s wisdom in this double way is justified. Wherever there is truth in the inward parts, we justify God. Then as to the fact of the history, we find who this child of wisdom was. We see it was not the Pharisee who set up to have a righteousness for God. The woman justified God’s testimony by John (I do not mean in fact, but it was the same testimony); she acknowledged her condemnation; but she justified God, too, in another way.

We cannot pretend to be righteous (I do not speak of what grace produces, but of the natural man); we do not love our neighbour as ourselves, we are not troubled if our neighbour’s house is burnt down as if it were our own. If I take the law of God, we may deceive ourselves about loving God with all our hearts, but a man must be a dishonest man if he says he loves his neighbour as himself. Paul could say of himself, “Touching the

righteousness which is in the law blameless" (Phil. 3:6); but the moment the law said, "Thou shalt not lust," it might as well say, 'Thou shalt not be a man.' If I take the law, you see it is most useful; it probes the heart, and brings the consciousness that we have not kept it. Take all who are here; God has said, "There is none righteous, no, not one." Can any of you say He is mistaken? It is perfectly true that, unless we are probed, we are all disposed to have a good opinion of ourselves; we are all disposed to be Pharisees. When a man is in this state, Christ is not the object of his heart at all: he calls himself a Christian, but, if he is honest, he will have to acknowledge that Christ has no place in his heart.

In this wonderful history in Luke 7 we get these three hearts unveiled: the man's heart, not that of an open profligate sinner; the heart of the woman who was such; and God's heart. We see, too, who was the child of wisdom.

The Pharisee, who is curious to know about Christ, asks Him to dinner; but he gives Him no water for His feet, and no oil. He is curious to know this preacher, and he thinks himself perfectly competent to judge about religion. The Lord noticed it all. There into this fine house the woman comes, confounded as to her sins, but her heart fixed by what is in Jesus, her whole heart going out to the blessed One. The Pharisee sees the woman washing the Lord's feet with tears, and anointing them with ointment, and he says within himself, That is no prophet. When the conscience is reached, it is under judgment; but when it is not reached, a man thinks he is perfectly competent to judge whether God is right or wrong. "And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master,

say on. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed him five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged." He says to Simon, You are right—shewing that He was more than a prophet. "Seest thou this woman?" Her whole heart is upon Me. We see, too, a person who has had the Lord Himself in his house, and he is settling that He could not be a prophet!

Where the conscience is exercised, it never judges, but it is judged. We all have a natural conscience, that is perfectly true: God took care man should have that, but the intellect of man knows nothing of the things of God. If my intellect could measure God, I must then be the master of my subject: If I understand mathematics, I am master of that subject; if my mind were capable of judging of God, my mind would be the master of God. When conscience awakes and says, "Thou art the man"; you have been sinning against God, there is no attempt then to judge. All true knowledge of God comes in through the conscience. Nothing but faith, which is the eye of the conscience, can put man in his right place with God. God brings me to justify Him: He is a holy God, I am not holy. That is the way the knowledge of God comes in. God is love: that is true, of course, but this is the way true knowledge of Him comes. The Pharisee thought he was all right, but in the presence of the Lord in grace he settled that He was no prophet. The mind of man is pitch darkness when we justify ourselves, not God.

When we turn to the poor woman, we find her owning in the fullest way her sinfulness, confounded by it; but what had she found in Christ? What does Christ mean? Who was He? What brought Him here? Was it our wishing, our asking? We rejected and crucified Him when He came. I find God acting when man was an utter sinner, all mouths stopped, then God manifest in flesh comes down amongst men. What brought Him down? I see in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ, and more fully still in His death, that "God so loved the world." This love of God had come into the world, so that sinners could look to and trust Him, while owning their sins.

The two names of God which express what He essentially is are light and love, light which is the purest thing we can conceive, and love. You see the law did not reveal God. It gave a perfect rule for the children of Adam, but Christ is not that (I do not say that He is not a model for Christians): but He is God Himself come into this world as light and love, shewing me my sins because He is light. Shew me any society you please where men are enjoying themselves, bring in Christ, and this spoils it all. But then if God is light He is love too. When God has shewn me, as light, all that I am, I find I am in the presence of the perfect love which brought Him here; and now, instead of fancying I can meet the judgment, I have God Himself here shewing me what I am. The heart of this poor woman and the heart of God had perfectly met. "God is light," and the woman had not a word to say for herself, but God is also love, and so she goes into the Pharisee's house. The light and the love manifested in God are both revealed to this woman's heart: the light shewed her that she was an utter sinner; the love was what brought her there. She

did not yet know that she was forgiven, but there was this blessed revelation of God which required nothing from her, but which was for her just what she wanted.

Christ was God in this world come to win back the confidence of man's heart to God. I get this blessed One in this world, and He says, Are you ashamed to shew yourself to a decent person? Well, come to Me. He was here in this world, using the holiness that could not be defiled to carry the perfectness of His love to every poor sinner. We see a perfect example of this in the poor leper of Matthew 8:1-4. If a man touched a leper he must be put out, according to the law. Well, this poor leper saw the power that was in Christ, but he did not know His heart, and he says, "If thou wilt thou canst make me clean"; then the Lord put forth His hand, and touched him. I find the blessed Lord using the holiness that could not be soiled, that He might touch man in his sins! When my heart has seen that, I have got both truth and grace: truth in the knowledge that I am a sinner, and grace in Christ. The poor leper might have said, I am vile, not fit to shew myself to God or man, but I find One who can touch me.

Christ is God come down to sinners in their sins. The law could only say, If you do not do this, you are cursed. Christ comes to these sinners, and He shews us what we are; but He shews us also what He is: love, that brought Him down to us as we are, the vilest, the most wilful, sinners. Have not you committed sins, all of you? Well, how much sin will shut you out of heaven? Why did you sin? Because you liked it; your conscience tells you so. You cannot say to me, You are a big sinner, and I am a little one. Suppose you have committed ten sins, and I eleven, then am I to be shut out, and you let in? If I find

two crab-trees, one bearing one crab, and the other one hundred, I say the one is a crab as well as the other. How many sins had Adam committed when he was driven out of paradise? One. That one sin proved his distrust of God; and his confidence in Satan. One crab proves the tree. It is quite true that some are living in flagrant sin, like the poor woman: it would be well if they were like her here! There is no good in sin, but there is good in being convinced of it as she was. God must deal with all sin, and this is what He does. If you have not found Christ, if you have not been washed in the blood of the Lamb, you are under judgment. The woman could not talk about theology, but she has found God, and what is in God's heart.

The Lord could say to the Pharisee, You are perfectly dark as to your own heart and as to God's heart. If you gave no water for My feet, this woman has washed them with tears; if you gave Me no kiss, she has not ceased to kiss My feet. Everything she had she has given Me. You had the Lord in your house, and you did not know it. Then He says of the woman, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." She had really met God's heart, as expressed in Christ, though she could not explain how it was: light was in her heart, love too, and they met. Why do I go to the cross? God manifests there His righteousness against sin, and His love to the sinner, and I justify God in His blessed love: as a child of wisdom I justify wisdom.

Then we get Christ's answer to the woman's faith: "Thy sins are forgiven." She did not know it when she came in, but she loved Christ, she trusted Christ; and now the sins are all gone. He said to her—it was not a mere

doctrine in the air, but He gives her the comfort of it—"Thy sins are forgiven." God has sent love and light here, but He has sent forgiveness here also, "according to the riches of his grace," not narrowly, closely, measuring our need. He pronounces this judgment upon her, "Thy sins are forgiven"; as He did to the thief, who was fit to go to paradise, "Verily, I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." The dying robber was bearing the fruit of his ways before man, but Christ was bearing it before God, and therefore he was a fit companion for Christ in paradise. This is true of every believer. "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light," Col. i:12. "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified," (Heb. 10:14): this sanctification is entirely uninterrupted because Christ gives it perfection.

People call in question what the Lord has said to the woman, "Who is this that forgiveth sins also? "What is the good of preaching the remission of sins, if you do not believe it? Do you think, when God calls you by His grace, that He means you to be happy with Him or not? If we do not know we are forgiven, it is impossible to be happy. John, writing to all Christians, says, "I write unto you, children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake," 1 John 2:12. You will not find after the day of Pentecost unforgiven sins in a believer. Did Christ die for half my sins? I believe Hebrews 10: "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." Though I deserve death and condemnation, I believe that Christ, in the fullest grace, has taken my place, and He did not sit down till the work was perfectly finished. If the work that puts away your sins has not been done perfectly,

when is it to be done? Can Christ die over again? Can another Christ come and die? “Without shedding of blood is no remission.” Christ cannot shed His blood over again, but the work by which He put away our sin never loses its value in the presence of God.

All through the Gospels we see that it is the soul that clings to Christ, touched by His love and grace, that learns most: that is where light and understanding come in, and so here the first full testimony of the Gospel is given to this woman— “Thy sins are forgiven?” Did He deceive her? “Thy faith hath saved thee”—a blessed word! If you have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are saved. What did He come for but “to seek and to save that which was lost”? It is an accomplished work, that can never be repeated. There is no veil now: we are brought into God’s presence by Christ’s work. If our sins were as scarlet, they are now as white as snow, because this work of Christ, perfectly accomplished, puts me before God in the value of it.

Mark another thing. He says to the woman, “Go in peace.” “Peace I leave with you.” Are you before God in the perfect peace He was in? He has made peace by the blood of His cross. He met God there on the cross, and the testimony of the Gospel is that of a finished work. Now, let us remember, the Lord’s love takes all pains that He might do this for us: His sweat was as it were great drops of blood, when He was only thinking of the cup He was about to drink. I justify God in condemning me, but I justify Him also in saving me. He is righteous and holy, and He could not bear the sins; but He is love too, so He put away the sins.

Whatever I do now is to be done in the name of the Lord Jesus; I am called to walk like a child of God. All duties flow according to the place we are in: duties cannot exist till we are in the place to which they belong. How can I have a child's affections if I am not sure if I am a child? You must be a Christian before you can have Christian duties. We have duties as men, but we are lost on that ground. Be assured of this, that Scripture is perfectly plain on the point that we know our relationship with God. We own the judgment that was due to us, but we know the relationship in which we are. "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." This is the effect of the presence of the Holy Ghost. Am I to doubt the value of Christ's blood-shedding? Does the Holy Ghost make me doubt? God says, "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." I do not doubt it: the Spirit cries, "Abba, Father." Ought I to doubt it? We shall go through exercises—the deeper the better; but the love of God has been revealed, and the fact is that I was a poor sinner, but here this blessed One came into the world when I was such, and died for me when I was such. The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are all engaged in this work.

Have your hearts been opened to see the unutterable love in the Son of God coming to die for you, and that God has accepted this work? We shall have conflict with ourselves surely, conflict with Satan and with the world; but we are in perfect peace with God. God calls us to own our sinfulness, but to know His love. The Lord grant, if this is not yet your case, that you may submit yourselves to God's righteousness. Then "thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

## A Servant For Ever

Luke 12:35-41

These verses, and indeed the whole chapter, shew how the saints are viewed apart from this world. There was a scene around which was plotting against them. They were not to fear— “Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.” But there was something in it that they were to fear; they were to beware of hypocrisy (v. 1), for all would be disclosed. He presses that they should have their treasure in heaven. It is not as people often say, “Where your heart is, there is your treasure”; but, “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” They were taken out of the world to serve in it; and He encourages them to have entire confidence in the care and love of God watching over them, and tells them that in God’s mind and thought they were of value—of value to God. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without His care. “Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows.” He is your Father— “Fear not, little flock; it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” You must trust Him. For the present they were obliged to have their loins girded. This was not rest. They were to be tucked up ready for work and service; their lights burning, and they watching—ready for their Lord.

While that was their character in this world, there was a world that belonged to them—to the Father, and He was occupied with them about that world, though taking care of them through this. We have thus the constant abiding of His love. The Son of God has taken “the form of a servant,” and He will never give it up. He is the

Lord Jesus Christ, one with the Father, God over all, blessed for ever; but that gives the more force to His being a servant. He has had His ear pierced through with the awl at the door-post. The Hebrew servant, when he had served seven years, if he said, “I love my master, I love my wife, I love my children, I will not go out free,” became a servant for ever; his ear, the sign of obedience, was bored. That is what He has done, and it is His glory—outward humiliation, but divine glory and love.

Love always delights to serve, but selfishness to be served. He is love, and He delights to serve; but if He is to serve us, He must come down low, and He comes in a love that is above everything that hinders; and the more He humbles Himself, the more I can see a love that can only be of God! It is this that is so touching in His life. He sits weary with His journey on the well, and says, “If thou knewest the gift of God, and”— not, who it is that speaketh to you, but— “who it is that saith to thee” (who it is that has come low enough to say), “give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of mm, and he would have given thee living water.” He was a divine Person sitting talking to her, and He was her servant. He says again, “I am among you as he that serveth.” He was their only Master and Lord, but being above all, He has the privilege of taking the title of servant; and having refused to go out free, He has taken this place of serving love, for ever. It is His glory, and has nothing to do with His Godhead, except to shew His unutterable grace.

We find in Philippians 2 His coming down to take this place. “He made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant.” He served God; served us too in grace. He took the place in willing love. “Lo, I come to

do thy will, O God." And He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. He lays the form of the glory of Godhead aside (Godhead He never could lay aside), and thus we find His perfect, infinite love. Where should we have been if He had not taken the form of a servant? Lost for ever. But there was love enough in Him to come to this place. He goes to death, and there I find the power of divine love in His service. Nothing stopped it; Satan's power was there; man's bitter and base ingratitude, as He says in that beautiful fiftieth of Isaiah, "When I came, was there no man? when I called, was there none to answer?" He goes on: "Is my hand shortened at all that it cannot redeem? or have I no power to deliver? Behold, at my rebuke, I dry up the sea," etc. As Jehovah— God—He did as He pleased. He not only did miracles Himself; but what proved His divine power much more, He gave others power to do them. "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my father," John 14:12. He is working in that perfectness of love in this world, and nothing stops it at all. "The Lord God has given me the tongue of the learned that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary." I have not ceased to be Jehovah, but I have taken the place of a servant, to take up every sorrow you are in. And see the return—men found it an occasion to reject Him! "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting." Nothing stopped Him—death did not stop Him. He came to die; and felt what it was to die as none of us can; for He has taken the sting out of it. He came to be "made sin," and felt how dreadful it was; for He was holy. He came to bear the wrath, and felt what it was; for He

knew His Father's love. Desertion was there and betrayal, and the cup He had to drink was there. He felt it all; but in it all, divine love was there to serve and go through it, to serve us wretched sinners.

There was the power of divine love, when everything was gone (for God had forsaken Him), except bitterness and death, Satan's power, and the wrath of God. There you get divine love, and service too. It is a divine power and a power of love to us—to His Father, but to us too—a power that carries Him through everything, when everything was against Him; divine love that made Him serve through it, till it was finished. Then I adore the love that led Him to be made sin for me. There was the full testing of the love that carried Him through all. It is deeply instructive, though very dreadful to see there what man is. What do I expect of my friends if I am on trial? At least that they will not forsake me. They all forsook Him, and fled! In a Judge? I expect him to protect innocence. Pilate washes his hands of His blood, and gives Him over to the people! In a priest, what do I expect? That he will intercede for the ignorant and for them that are out of the way. They urge the people, who cry, "Away with him, away with him!" Every man was the opposite of what was right, and that One man was not only right, but in divine love He was going through it all!

First, I get Him serving me in His life; then, when He served us in death, in spite of ourselves (for man was against Him), there He was alone, all forsook Him, and God hid His face from Him. He went into the desert (Mark 6), and had no time to eat, but when the people come He ministers to them; "He could not be hid." If He is in agony on the cross, there is a poor thief to be attended to. He tells him, "This day thou shalt be with

me in paradise.” If He sits weary on a well, and a poor wretched woman comes, He waits on her. All through He takes the sorrows of human nature—weariness, hunger; but with a heart that never was weary when a service of love was to be performed; a Man who does not shrink from all the vileness and wretchedness of the world; a Man in all the perfection of holiness, carrying divine love to serve every need. It was, what was divine, in a Man who took the lowest place, and there is nothing like it. It is most sweet and blessed to see it, and to see He had no will of His own in it. When they tell Him, “He whom thou lovest is sick,” we should have thought He would have started off at once. No, He abode two days still where He was, He had no commandment from His Father. We see it was to shew His Godhead. Still, as a servant, He had no word, and He did not stir. It seemed very hard. His home, if He had one on earth, was that house at Bethany. You never find Him going out of the place of a servant, and He was never anything but the perfection of love in it. That service He took, and performed, and finished, and now His service is over, and He is going to glory; Luke 12. In John, where we find more the divine side than the servant’s side, He shews that His going to the Father does not change His service, save the character of it. He is not serving among men, but He is serving His people up there. When He was going away, there came the thought that, now He is in the glory, His service is ended. That would not do for His heart. He says, In the glory I am not going to stop serving those poor things. Could His heart stop serving them? No, it could not! He is the Advocate, we find in the Epistle of John, and that is not in the world. He does not take it up till He goes to heaven. How could a heavenly person know the sorrows, temptations, and

trials of us, poor sinful beings? He comes down here, sinless, of course; and, after being acknowledged by the Father, He is led of the Spirit to be tempted in the wilderness, because we were there. As soon as He has given the pattern of the place in which we are by redemption (Matt. 3:16, 17), He says, I must go there; and He is led of the Spirit (we are often led by other things) into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. Now (John 13) He is going to glory, having so glorified God here as to have an earned place there, as well as having a rightful one there—an official place as well as a moral one. The world will not have me. I cannot stay here with you. You cannot have rest here; it is polluted. I can serve, but not rest here. He must go up to God. I must go on serving. He says, “If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.” I cannot have part with you in this sinful place, and I must fit you to have part with Me on high. Though we are washed so as to have part with Him, we pick up dirt by the way; but He is our Advocate, and is still serving. He brings the heart to be humbled and broken at having dishonoured His name, and it is restored. His blood is on us, but He is still washing our feet. I must make you clean, according to my idea of cleanness. That is what He is doing now. It is blessed love, but it is service. Is He going to give up this satisfaction of His heart in serving us (it makes us adore Him)? He is not going to give it up, and never will. He is a Man, and a Man for ever; that is what we have in this chapter. He is more than that, for in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

There is one thing new for God, and that He could only do: to come down a Man here. No angel could do it; but God could come down, acting in divine supremacy and

love. I cannot take the form of a servant, for if I am not a rebellious sinner, I am a servant. (I may have got into rebellion as one— that is another thing.) A divine Person can “take” on Him the form of a servant, and that is what He has done.

He says, “Let your loins be girded.” Here I am in the middle of a world that says, “To-morrow shall be as yesterday, and yet more abundant.” I am to be expecting Christ; the world goes on (He alone knows how long); but “the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night, for when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them.” That is the character given it. “As in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the days of the Son of man.” (There is sin, and still more now, but that is not the point.) I believe that—not that it is the portion of believers—then I must have my loins girded. I cannot go on loosely with a world that is not going on for ever. There ought to be a better motive: the heart drawn out to Him—oh! if it were only that. They go on saying, “To-morrow shall be as yesterday,” etc., and yet terror is in their hearts; for there is uncertainty—nothing to reckon on for a day, or a week, or a year. He calls all Christians to take their places with their lights burning—the distinct, unequivocal testimony of what they are, carrying their lights as servants, and not going on with a careless world that is going to judgment. You cannot say when it is coming. The saints will be with the Lord before then. Can you say that it is the first thing the Lord will do—take you up in the air, to be for ever with Himself? Can you tell what day He is coming? Are you ready for Him? You do not know what hour He is coming. I believe it is hastening on rapidly. The saints were converted to wait for God’s Son from

heaven, and when they lost that, all the mischief came in. It is their character—not a bit of knowledge, that is stuck up as a chief thing in teaching; but that is what you are to be. If you were constantly waiting for Him, would it not change you? Finding duties to do, and doing them—quite right; but would people be heaping up money or treasures when they know He is coming? They enjoy themselves while they can, and then comes death, and they hope it will be all right. If you are expecting the Lord and ready to open to Him, it gives a character, “Ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord “—like a man that has his hand on the lock of the door; “that when he cometh and knocketh they may open unto him immediately.” The Lord keep us in that readiness of condition and heart as servants, waiting! That is our present condition when the Lord is not come. You cannot float down the stream of the world that is going to the ocean of judgment. You are to be looking for Him. If, by His first coming, I have been saved and justified, I look for Him to come again, that I may be where He is. Here we get what the believer’s portion is who is waiting for Him.

Now, what follows? The characteristic of a person who has his ear open to the Lord, is watching. “Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat (that is a figure), and will come forth and serve them.” I find Him serving then, in divine love, still in the same character. He comes and brings us to heaven—to His Father’s house, that where He is, there we may be also. While you were in that wicked world, He says, I was obliged to keep you on the watch, in a state of tension, with

diligent earnestness to keep the heart waiting, but I bring you to a place where you are to sit down, and it will be My delight to minister to you.

It is one of the greatest comforts to me that I shall not want my conscience in heaven. If I let it go to sleep for a moment now, there are temptations and snares; there, there is no evil, and the more my heart goes out, the more good it is. Here I dare not let it, but I must watch and pray. I shall not need that in heaven. The full blessedness of it is, the Lord being there, of course; and next, the saints being perfect. What does the heart desire that cares for the Lord's people? That they should be just what Christ's heart would have them. That will be there; He will see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied. Then there is after that this comfort, that my heart can go out—here it cannot—to God and the Lamb, and to the saints in measure too; but then, roam as it will, there is nothing to roam over but a Paradise where evil never comes, and it can never go wrong.

He comes then, and takes us there, and what heaven can find there for the heart to feed on is spread on the table of God. You shall rest there and feed on it, He says, and I will gird Myself and come forth and serve you. I am not going to give up My service of love. Thus, while I have the blessedness of feeding on what God has to give, I have increased satisfaction, that if I put a morsel of divine meat into my mouth, I receive it from the hand of love that brings it to me.

When He brings us there, all is turned round. Here He says, you must have your lights burning, and be watching; when I get My way, I must put you at ease, and make you happy. "Then shall the Son also himself be

subject." He was serving here. It was man's perfection to serve—the very thing the devil tried to get Him out of. If he had, it would have been doing His own will; but "thou he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things that he suffered." But when all things shall have been subdued unto Him, He is subject after that. In the meanwhile He has been on His own throne; now He is on His Father's throne, our High Priest; but He will take His own throne and power, and reign, bringing everything into subjection. Then it is not serving, but reigning: afterwards He gives up the kingdom in that sense to His Father, for everything is brought to order. In the millennium it is a king reigning in righteousness; but then it is a new heavens and earth, wherein dwells righteousness. Innocence dwelt in the first Paradise; sin dwells in the present earth; and then, in the new heavens and earth, it will be "wherein dwelleth righteousness." He gives up the mediatorial kingdom, as it is called, to God, and takes His place as a Man, "the first-born among many brethren." He never gives up a place, in which He can own us as associated with Himself in the blessedness of first-born of many brethren. As all was ruined in the first Adam, all shall be blessed in the Last. "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." Then I find myself enjoying everything that God can give to the objects of His love, and enjoying it with Christ then at the head of everything—Son of God and Son of man; we associated with all the blessedness, and He administering it to us, so that the heart can taste His love. And He does not just bring us there, but it is to all eternity. He has purchased us too dearly to give us up. His love will be in constant exercise towards us. It leads

us to adore Him more than anything that can be thought of; but we can trust a love that never ceases in heaven.

You see here His heart going out to do it. Then you must have your lights burning. “Let your light (not your works) so shine before men,” that they may know where your works come from, and “glorify your Father which is in heaven,” that they may attribute them to God. I do whatever God tells me to do, and it is a testimony to Christ; people say, that is what comes from a man being a Christian! It is that there may be no uncertainty as to what we are, a well-trimmed lamp, the testimony of the life of Christ, that it may be manifested what I am, and what I am about—a pilgrim and a stranger, in a thousand different circumstances, the ordinary duties of life to perform, but one service, to be the epistle of Christ. I may be a carpenter, or a shoemaker, I must be a Christian. In various relationships, servants, masters, in eating or drinking, in our houses, wherever it is, I must be a Christian.

What characterised these servants was waiting, and they got the blessing. “Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find so watching.” Ah, beloved friends, are you watching, waiting for Christ practically? I cannot be watching, and going on in my own way. Are our lights burning, or have we slipped down to the ease and comforts of this world like other people? That is not having our loins girded. And it is not as a doctrine we are to have it only.

He refers to serving in verse 43, but the reward is connected with another thing—made ruler over all that He hath; it is the kingdom, the lower part. In my calling, I look up; in my reigning, it is looking down. It is better

to look up than down. The watching person gets the Person he is watching for. The calling is better than the inheritance— “Heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.” You find in Revelation 4 the elders sitting on thrones (“seats” they put in, for they thought it too much for us to be seated on “thrones” and crowned when He is there, but that is what it is); but when the nature of God is proclaimed, they leave their thrones, and that is the higher place. When they were on their thrones they had their own glory; when they are prostrated, they adore His glory. So, in “the transfiguration, the voice came out of the cloud (the cloud was always the sign of Jehovah’s presence in Israel), and they went into the cloud; that was more than the kingdom. A voice came from the excellent glory, and where it came from, they went into. It was a great thing to be standing there on the mountain, but still greater to go into the cloud—the Father’s house, and they were afraid. It is a wonderful thing that the ruling is for us (v. 44); but it is not the greatest thing. His love takes us into the enjoyment with Himself of every place He has—not the Godhead of course— but of everything He has received from the Father as Man. He, in divine love, gives it to us; He gives not as the world gives. It gives liberally sometimes, but it gives away. Christ does not give away; He takes us where He is, and gives us what He has—His own peace, His glory.

It seems strange to Peter that the Lord should wash his feet. But where should we be if He did not wash our feet? In one sense we ought to be ashamed; but where should we be? If He were not a servant now, we should have our feet dirty, poor creatures that we are. Then it will be fulness of joy, His ministering of God’s table in

heaven to us, and half the happiness would be lost if it were not that. Now the Lord takes pains to assure us of His love, to persuade us of His love. “You are of more value than many sparrows.” He says, do not fear, and then gives the strongest motive to serve Him. In the epistle of John He does not say we ought to love Him, because He first loved us—it is quite true; but He says, “we love him.” Where there really is the sense of the Lord’s love to us, there is the return of it. If you hear a child saying— oh! if you only knew my mother, her patience, her love, I am so tiresome, she never fails in affection, I cannot tell you what she is! I say, that child loves its mother; it has the sense of its mother’s love in its soul, and that is love. It is the going back of the heart in the consciousness of the blessed love He has to us. The inflow of the love, with a new nature capable of receiving it, is the love.

How sweet and blessed is it thus to see how He has come down! He has not loved us from on high. He never says to the poor sinner, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden,” till He had come to them. He never called for confidence in His love, till He had come to them Himself, however vile they might be. It will surely make us adore Him. A divine Person come to be a servant, that our hearts may know His love, and He wants us to know it. Does the Father say, This is My Son whom you ought to love? No, He tells His affection for Christ to lead us into it. Therefore, we are in fellowship with the Father. What is that? It is having the same thoughts and joys in blessing, the same feelings and affections in blessing. Depend on it, if you get near to God, it will not make you think lightly of Him. If you get near to the greatest man in the country you will find out

his foibles; but being near to God will never give you want of respect to Him; you find out what God is. It is not dangerous, as people often say, to be on the mount; but to have been there. When Paul got out of the third heaven, he wanted the thorn in the flesh. Then there was a danger of his saying, no one but you, Paul, has been there. Everything is dangerous for the flesh to get hold of—law, gospel, and everything. Being near to God, never lets the flesh in.

If the Spirit is the spring of our thoughts and feelings, He can never give us anything but thoughts of the Son. We are poor, feeble things, and He is infinite, there is that exception, of course; but if I look at Christ's death I say, Look at that obedience; there is love to the Father, and giving up Himself, and love to us. Look at His devotedness, obedience, and giving up of self—love beaming through the agony of the cross if ever it did! Did not the Father delight in it? To be sure He did! Of course, all our thoughts are poverty itself; but He brings His love down to us in grace, and then takes us up to the glory. We learn the power of His obedience when nothing stopped Him. He brought it to us in grace here; washes our feet by the way, and then will serve us in glory up there. The Lord give us to have our loins girded and our lights burning, that we may be found watching: living in this town, or in any other, in our common every-day life; but that we may be there with our loins girded and our lights burning, and we like men that wait for their Lord, that when He comes and knocks we may open to Him immediately. "Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching." "He shall gird himself and make them sit down to meat, and come forth and serve them."

May the Lord’s love and approbation be the things that govern us; and not the things that fade away!

## Christ For My Sins; And Christ For My Cares

John 4

It is a wonderful thing to think of the reality of the intimacy with which the Lord carried on intercourse with people in this world—His ways and manners with them—and who He is. In truth it changes all our thoughts of God.

He has visited men before the day of judgment, and we find Him giving, and not judging—dealing with them in quite another way. He who is to be tie Judge had to come beforehand to be the Saviour; came in grace, seeking worshippers; came to visit the hearts of men where they were—naughty hearts; coming to such, not to judge at all, but to deal with our souls about the very sins for which He would have had to judge us. If I see Him there I find He has dealt with my sins already in a totally different way. It confirms the judgment, of course—puts the seal of God's testimony on it in the strongest way; but at the same time it gives me to know and understand, that the whole thing has been decided in a totally opposite manner. Instead of coming to claim the debt, He comes to pay it; both ways prove the debt was there, but the dealing is totally different.

He comes and deals with sinners then, in exactly the opposite way to claiming the debt, and deals effectually, and that is the Gospel. "We have seen, and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." It is a Saviour we have to tell of, and I could not stand here to speak thus if He were not a Saviour who

has wrought an effectual salvation. Then comes exercise of heart, and the discovery of what we are by His word, to bring us to repentance; but it tells us we are saved. “Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace.” It was at all cost to Himself that He could say it; but He did not recall it, or deceive her. Can we go in peace? We go out of this room with the consciousness that we go on the Lord’s own warrant in perfect peace, and with nothing to fear as to the consequences of sin, if He has said, “Go in peace.” Therefore He sends out the word to the children of Israel, “preaching peace by Jesus Christ.” And “that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”

Beloved friends, have you got peace? Have you got what He announced and sent out to be preached? It is no good telling me you cannot have peace. There it is. Was it to be preached and not believed? God would have us happy with Himself, and therefore sends the testimony of peace. It is no light thing, for He has made peace through the blood of His cross; and being justified by faith, we have peace with God. It is a real thing, an effectual thing, a divine thing, founded on what has been perfectly done. If I believe, I come into this to enjoy it. It is that God has visited us to bring us peace. “In the world ye shall have tribulation; in me ye shall have peace.” Hence God gives Himself, over and over again, the name— “God of peace.” It is the name of predilection which He gives Himself. He never calls Himself the God of joy; that may change, but peace is eternally settled.

We see how He dealt with this woman. It was thorough grace. “Salvation is of the Jews.” They had the law, the

temple, everything that belonged to God, like the elder brother. But the Jews cast Him out, and He must needs go through Samaria. This was the beginning of His ministry. The Pharisees were jealous of Him; so He goes out and leaves this place of salvation according to promise. It is the terrible condition of the world that the Son of God has been in it, and they cast Him out. He came there and has been rejected, hence the testimony is, that the whole world lieth in the wicked one. The world not only sinned, but rejected Him who came into it when man had sinned—the world that had grown up since God cast man out of Eden. If I call myself a Christian, I profess that the world has cast out and crucified the Son of God. Still the grace goes on. God took that as the means and occasion to bring it out. That is what is so glorious in the cross; that that which was the perfect expression of man's enmity, was the perfect expression of God's love. There was the meeting-place between man's hatred against God, and God's sovereign love to man. He was not at it yet, but was walking in the grace and spirit of it.

Here, rejected out of Judea, He must needs go through Samaria, and we get the blessed truth that God is above all sin; because Samaria was most hateful. He can exercise His love in the scene of the thing He abhors. "God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." He gave His blessed Son, one with Himself, down to death, and to drinking the cup of wrath for those who were nothing but sinners. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself."

Now, mark another thing we have here. We find Him thoroughly a man, coming down to this world— "Who

made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men." Oh! that some hearts could get hold of this! I speak now of the way that He came—of His death I will speak again—that though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor. It is brought out in the circumstances of this history. In the heat of the day, wearied with His journey, He comes to the well and sits down where He can find a seat. Do our hearts really believe that this was the Lord? Why was He in a condition to be weary? Why there? It was perfect love. He comes down to take this place. He passes through the world—the Holy One that could not be contaminated, and uses this to go through a world of sinners to bring them the love they wanted.

This was expressed in the most lovely way in the case of the leper in Luke 5, "who besought him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." The leper was sure of the power, but did not know the love that was there. He carries the love right up to the leper, "and touched him, saying, I will, be thou clean." If man touched a leper he was unclean, and put out of the camp. But He cannot be defiled. This is a picture of the way the Lord was here. Holiness, undefiled and undeniable, carries to sinners the love they need.

"Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well," and the disciples go away to find meat. Oh! to think of the Lord Himself, whom none of the princes of this world knew, but who was the Lord of glory, sitting weary on the well, thirsty, and dependent upon this world for a drink of water—the world that was made by Him, and knew Him not! "There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water; Jesus said unto her, Give me to drink"—dependent on this woman for a drink

of water. In this very fact she finds out that there was something remarkable in the Man. It was extraordinary that a Jew should speak to her, a woman of Samaria, and her mind is attracted by it.

Let me say a word as to this woman, so full of blessed interest for us, drawing out into exercise the heart of the Lord. She was a poor vile creature—alone there. We read of the time when women come to draw water—talking together of all that was passing; but she does not come when the rest came. Hers was an isolated heart; she had isolated herself by sin, and had got nothing; an energetic woman, who had been seeking happiness by the energy of nature, and found wretchedness and ruin. She was out all alone at that unusual time of day, with a heart full of cares. Alone, because of her shame, she finds One only more lonely than herself, and that One was the Lord! She could go to the men of the city, but He was totally alone, had not one to go to, though Himself the most affable and accessible of men.

There were no circumstances in which He was ever found where power, love, goodness, and truth were not readily in exercise. There was no weariness, if a poor desolate sinner came. When the disciples returned they say, “Hath any man brought him meat to eat? “No matter what company He was in, He was always accessible to their hearts; but there was no sympathy for Him. No love and goodness met Him in going through this world; His heart was utterly a stranger in it; yet all sympathy for others. If He had to answer for Himself before the chief priests, who were hunting Him to death, the moment the cock crew, His eye was upon Peter—never wearied. No circumstances He was in, could ever touch the spring of grace and goodness that was in Him.

But mark what comfort for us! Here was the Judge of quick and dead— not as judge, of course, but the Person who is to be judge, meeting with the poor sinner in grace, sitting with the very person that deserved to be judged. In that sense, in the communion of grace, He is sitting with us. It is just what is going on through the Gospel. “We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech by us.”

Well, He is sitting on the well asking drink. She says, “How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? “Mark the answer of the Lord. It has two distinct points in it. “If thou knewest the gift of God “; that is, what God is doing to you. It is the ground He takes with you: “The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ.” The next thing is, “And who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink.” That is, if you knew —not, who I am, but —who it is that has come down so low as to ask a drink of water; if your eye were opened to see God giving eternal life—come to require nothing (and who would not get it if He did)—you would be in perfect confidence before Him. He once came looking for fruit and found wild grapes. Under the law He sought for fruit and had His servants killed. He said, I have yet one Son—but when they saw the Son they said, “This is the heir, come let us kill him.” The effect was, no fruit, but hatred to Him and His Father. Now He does not come (I do not say producing fruit—He does—but) looking for it. He has come to sow (not looking for fruit), dealing with the sinner personally in the Gospel: and where there is grace, and the sense of need, there will be the fruit of the Spirit, and He will look for it. Human nature judges God, but God’s nature comes out entirely superior to that. He gives. Thus we get these two

blessed principles, that God is giving, and that the Lord has come down to such poverty as to be dependent upon a creature for a drink of water; come to put Himself down under the wants of those that had nothing but wants, so as to meet them. She is attracted; there is power in His word; and He begins speaking of spiritual things to her.

We see, then, the way in which the woman is absorbed with her cares. Verse 15 is a remarkable expression of confidence in His word— "The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw." But mark the state of her heart—entirely occupied with her water-pot and her wants. Do you know nobody like that? People who own the word of God to be the word of God; who own its authority, but are in heart completely occupied with the things of this life. As a natural person she received not the things of the Spirit of God. Her mind was awakened to respect for His word, so that she could believe what He said, but she could not grasp spiritual things; they had not the smallest entrance into her heart, so full was it of temporal things.

What was to be done? He had been pouring out words of grace; all had flowed over her head—passed over a heart absorbed with the things of the world. He takes the other side, not the gift of God, but the state of man—"Go, call thy husband, and come hither." The woman answered and said, "I have no husband." Quite true. She tells the truth to hide the truth—as often in this poor world. The conscience is reached now: and there is where the word enters always. It is quite right it should attract the heart, but the conscience must be reached. "Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no

husband: for thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly." It is all out now; her conscience is brought into the presence of God. Everything must be out in the light that has come into this world. It is wonderful how quick memory even becomes under this action of the light. Sins are recalled which have long been forgotten. Light has come in; she has understanding now; before she had not understood a word; she was completely buried in her cares. "The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet." The word of God had reached her conscience, and wherever it does it has authority, and it is the only way. When I find a book that tells me all things that ever I did, I know what it is. It does not require to be proved by man. No book in the world has authority till it reaches the conscience. Then it is its own witness to the folly of attacks made upon it, and proves the folly of unbelief. It is the word of God itself, its own witness. I do not take a candle to see if the sun shines! But do you not see that it shines? Then you are blind. The only thing that brings authority with it is the word of God coming into the conscience— "Come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did. Is not this the Christ?"

God is love; His blessed Son, a poor man speaking to the woman; but He is also light come in. These always go together. You never find when the Gospel is received, that it does not get in as light to the conscience. There is no fruit without it. Where it gets in, it will be light exposing all that is there; and if not, there is no root. The point where intelligence is brought into the heart of this poor woman, is where her conscience is reached. How would you like Him to tell you everything? Does He

not know every wicked thing I have done? It should come up in judgment; but my comfort is, that it was all out before Him, when He was dealing with me in grace. Now I can bear it that the eye of God searches everything through His word. In dealing with the soul, love has brought the light there. Love attracted Peter; Luke 5. Why does he not run away? Why go up to Him, and say, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord”? He was drawn by the love and grace, and convicted by the light that the love had brought in. Light, that manifests to myself what I am in the sight of God, brings me there, so that I am in the light as He is. There must be truth in the inward parts, but did that hinder the Lord saying, “If thou knewest the gift of God”? Now, instead of trying to make things straight with God, I have found Him, knowing everything I have done, in perfect grace. There is then no hiding sin. All is brought into the light by God.

Mark another thing. God is bringing in something new. Was He going to trust the heart of this poor woman? No. He was going to get her to trust His heart. People say, May not my heart deceive me? To be sure it may! Will His deceive me? The grace of God brings salvation to us —brings us everything we want. So He brought strength at the pool of Bethesda— “Take up thy bed and walk.” He is not requiring anything from us, but brings the thing we want—brings Himself: and there is nothing we want like Him. He brings us to repentance—to the conviction of what we are, as here. But He comes saying, “If thou knewest the gift of God.” God has something to give—eternal life through Jesus Christ. But I shrink from coming to God. Quite right, to a certain extent. But who is it that I am with, that is bringing in

this light? The very Man that asked for a drink of water. “If thou knewest who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink”—a poor man with nothing but words of grace j you would have trusted Him. “Thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.” Do you think I could trust God in the day of judgment? But can I trust the poor man sitting on the well-side? It is when my eyes are open upon the Person and work of the Lord, that I find I have been talking with the Lord Himself, and He had not a word against me, and yet knew all that ever I did. My heart has the blessed consciousness that it has met God.

There are the poor infidels beating out their brains to find out about God, but I have met Him. He had nothing but kind and gracious words, though He knew all my sins. His whole ways and words and works are perfect love to me, and the love of one come to seek me as a sinner. The Father seeketh worshippers. You have not to go to this mountain or that. He sent the Saviour seeking. How many does He find? Does He find hearts here that would pass by the Lord Jesus—that have read hundreds of passages in which His grace was manifested, and gone away untouched, unmoved, though God was spending His heart on you?

See how even the heart of the Lord rejoices over this one poor sinner (v. 32), “I have meat to eat that ye know not of.” Do you believe that of Christ? He had come to open her eyes, and that was the Lord’s meat. “My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.” It is lovely to see the Lord’s heart in this way. Just see how it opened out to all the rest. “Say ye not, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the

fields; for they are white already to harvest." He has actually been rejected out of Judea, but the case of this woman has so comforted Him now, it opens out His heart to say, "The fields are white to harvest."

Then we have to go on to see that, sins having been perfectly manifested, and love, the cross of the Lord Jesus comes in, because sins never could be allowed, nothing but the love, that comes for the sinner, and gave Himself. The heart was won, the conscience was reached. But what about these things that she had done? The very Lord who was speaking to her goes under them and puts them away. We do need something else than that which reaches the conscience; we need that which purges it. Though our sins were as scarlet they are made white as snow, and we are bound to believe it, for "his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." He has charged Himself with them. I am convicted, and then humbled about them. But before the day o f judgment comes, Christ came, and on the cross was bearing the sins He would have had to judge. The cross was God dealing with Him about them. When He comes in judgment I say, That is the Man who put away my sins. Before the time comes for judgment, the Person who is to be the judge has come Himself to bear the judgment. The question is not, then, whether I deserve condemnation— "There is none righteous, no, not one"; but what has God wrought? Can I dare to doubt it?

If I am out in the light before God, there is no place where I see sins so terrible as in the cross. But if they are not all perfectly put away for ever, they never can be, for Christ cannot die again; Heb. 10. He will rise up for judgment, but He is sitting down now, because all is completely done; if not (I mean as to the work, not as to

your feelings), it never can be. That being so, therefore, when the soul is exercised, I look at the cross and say, He has borne my sins. I hate them the more. That is all right; it is the work of the Spirit in us; but I speak of the work done for us. Do not speak of past, present, and future sins; it is a foolish confusion of the time my heart thinks of it, and of the work that put them away. As to future sins, I ought never to think of sinning again. As to past sins, how many were past when Christ died? The work was done when they were all future. It is confounding the work done, with the effect in me. He is raised in glory; is there then any question whether I am to be glorified? There is another thing as to the cross. It all passed between God and Christ perfectly alone—of which the outward darkness was the sign—according to the exigencies and righteousness of God; where it must be according to the absolute perfectness of those who wrought it. Men had nothing to do with it; all we had to do with it was our sins, and, we may add, the hatred that killed Christ. It was a divine work about my sins.

Now as to the effect of it. We saw the poor woman absolutely absorbed with her water-pot; but the moment her conscience was thoroughly reached, she goes off to testify to the others— If you only get Christ, He will tell you all things. She leaves her water-pot. The Holy Ghost has not recorded it for nothing. The thing that absorbed her is gone. The word and power of Jesus, that gave her conviction of sin, also substituted Christ for the things that had power over her heart: Christ for my righteousness instead of my sins; Christ as the object for my heart instead of my cares.

I add a word for the comfort of any soul that is convicted of sin, but has not peace. Supposing a person had

received the word of Christ, but cannot say he has got Him—but says, If only I could find Christ! I find so much sin in me: I would give anything to have Christ. What put that desire into the heart? You have got Him as a great Prophet; His word has reached the heart, you are convicted of sin, but do not know if you have Christ as Saviour. He has spoken to you about eternal life, and you have received a word that has made Christ precious to you, and your conscience bad. Then you have got Christ. His word has had the authority of the word of God in your conscience. If that be so, the Christ that has visited you, is the Christ that has borne your sins. The Christ who thus speaks to us to bring these thoughts to our hearts, is the One that through grace has borne our judgment before the day of judgment comes.

Now, how is it with you? Has your heart given up its water-pot for Christ? I do not mean that there will be no conflict. But has your heart so heard His word that it has penetrated into your conscience? Do you think that you are going with your sins into heaven? How many sins had Eve committed when God turned her out of Eden? One? You have committed more. Do you expect to get into heaven with your sins or without them? Are they all put away? How can you rest a moment until you know it? What madness and folly it would be!

The One who deals with our conscience is the One who came where we are, and is now beseeching us to be reconciled to God. It will be a terrible thing in the day of judgment, to have had the heart closed against the voice of the Charmer. Has not He charmed wisely? Were ever words like His— words of grace, unutterable grace, with which He has sought to win us? It is a blessed truth, that before the day of judgment comes, the Judge has come

Himself to deliver. Of course you will have to be judged then, if you do not accept the deliverance now.

## The Father Seeking Worshippers

John 4

In this chapter we have the blessed ways of God's grace in dealing with a sinner. Jesus is here in a world where sin is, and here to bring in grace which is above all the sin. But it is more: it is the soul brought to worship the Father in the blessed relationship in which the Son of God was here to reveal Him; and not only so, but to worship Him as God, who in His nature is revealed. "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." It is thus a soul brought to the personal knowledge of God, in the relationship of grace as the Father, revealed by the Son. It is, consequently, the same knowledge as we shall have in heaven. It is not one kind of knowledge here, and another in heaven. No doubt there is growth in intelligence, I admit all that; but as to what is revealed, and the One who is revealed, there is no difference between what is known now and what will be known in heaven, because it is the same God and Father we shall know for ever.

When we turn to the woman's thoughts of worship, all was confused. She speaks of the Samaritan's worship, and the Jew's worship, and she knew not what she worshipped. In fact, she only speaks of worship to turn the conversation when the Lord began to probe her heart. There must be salvation known before there can be any true worship. You cannot worship a God you do not know, and whose presence would cause you to fly from Him as Adam did in the garden. It is not questioning the fact that God is to be worshipped by His

creatures—of course He is. It is due to Him—your duty to Him. Quite right to own and feel the obligation; but the thing is, you are unable to do it because you are a sinner. The only worship that man can offer is Cain's worship, which originated in hardness of heart. He was so indifferent to his condition as one banished from Paradise, and the ground cursed for his sake, that he brings the very fruit of that curse as an offering to God.

Mark, it is quite right to worship, but you must be in a state to do so. But you find some men acting in ignorance of this. They own the duty to worship God, without any sense of their state as sinners before God. It is quite the same with the law. Of course it is a duty to obey the law of God. But if a man takes the ground of keeping it, he has denied his condition as a sinner. He owns the duty, but does not own what God's word declares: "There is none righteous, no, not one. There is none that seeketh after God." "In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." It is like a child whose place is to be in his father's arms; but he has been very naughty. Of course he ought to be in his father's arms, but what he ought not to do is to think that he can be there as if nothing had happened. It is hardness of heart if he does not see this.

Now, God took care that when man ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, he should get a conscience. Persons talk of the law written in the heart of man, and all that fine kind of thing, but man got his conscience by his fall. It may be terribly blunted, and nothing deadens it more than false religion, but still there it is in every one—a blessed thing that it is so, for God works on it to bring the soul to know what God is, when He deals with the sinner in grace. But it is a mistake to mix up

conscience and the law. If there had been no law, man would have known good and evil. Do you not think a son would have known he had done wrong to murder a father, though he had never heard of the commandments? If a boy pilfers from his comrade at school he knows he will get into a scrape if found out, but he knows, too, the thing is wrong in itself. Conscience in a man makes him know good and evil, and the law coming in only tacks on God's authority to conscience.

Before Adam fell he had not the knowledge of good and evil. There was nothing evil in eating the fruit unless God forbade him. There was no harm in the thing itself, but forbidding it was solely an expression of God's will, and he got the knowledge of good and evil by disobeying God and eating of the tree. It is a blessed thing that man has this conscience, for it is what God works upon in grace to bring in the revelation of Himself. Nothing perverts this knowledge of good and evil more than false religion; still, however depraved, conscience is there, and the effect of the revelation of God to the soul is, to bring into the conscience the remembrance of all that wherein we have sinned against Him. Therefore, to draw near as a worshipper, I must know that work whereby God has put away sin, and how I have entirely got freed from sin by the work of Christ. As we read in Hebrews, "That the worshippers once purged should have no more conscience of sins."

Now, dear friends, till your conscience is thus purged you cannot worship God. I do not say there may not be craving desires—a going out of the heart after Christ—all that I grant. But there can be no worship till you have salvation. How is it thus with you? Are there not some

here whose consciences are not purged? Well, you take up a kind of worship; you profess to draw near to God, but you would fly from Him if He were to come in where you are carrying on your worship. Mark, I do not say He would drive you out; you would run away from Him. Just as with Adam; the voice of God walking in the garden did not drive Adam out; he ran away and hid himself in the trees of the garden.

Now, just take the Lord's prayer as a simple illustration. You say it; it is what you have been taught from your childhood—the kind of habits we have all been brought up in. Mark, I do not accuse you of insincerity, but I ask you, when you call God your Father, do you know Him in this relationship? Oh no, you say, I could not take that ground. Then you are none of God's children! Again, with the words, "Thy kingdom come." What do you mean by the Father's kingdom? Why, you have not one distinct idea about it; all is vagueness. Well, if that kingdom comes it will be heavenly glory, but the day of judgment must precede it. Are you ready for that? No! you cannot say you are saved from "the wrath to come." I take the Lord's prayer as a common illustration of what your worshipping God really comes to. You own the duty, but you have got a conscience which would make you flee from the presence of God whom you profess to worship.

In this chapter the Lord had gone away from Judea into Samaria because He was rejected. God was in the world, come there in grace, and the world would not have Him. The chapter opens with His leaving Judea—the place of which He says in this chapter, "Salvation is of the Jews." We begin, then, with a rejected Christ. There is no gospel without a rejected Christ. If you call yourselves Christians you are owning this. For you own that Christ

has been crucified, and what does that mean but that the world has rejected and turned Him out. As the prophet says of the way the nation treated Him, “Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?” “He is despised and rejected of men, and when we shall see him there is no beauty that we should desire him.” Put ‘Christian’ for ‘Jew,’ and it is just the same story now. I do not say that there may not be the outward confession of His name, and respect, too, to the outward cross. But if you are honest you will say of your heart, ‘It does not desire him.’ You know this is as sure of you as it was of the Jews. You may have the outward form of Christianity, but you know you have no desires after Christ. When you are alone do you find your heart going out in love for Him? Even a Christian finds it hard to keep this desire for Christ fresh, for he has the flesh in him, and the flesh has no desire after Christ. The Lord says to His disciples when the Comforter comes, “He shall convince the world of sin, because they believe not on me.” It is not a class of sinners, but the whole world is under sin, proved guilty all alike of the rejection of Christ; and if an individual is taken up in grace like the woman here, the same thing comes out in detail. She is convinced of her sins in the presence of Christ.

Have you been brought to this, dear friends? Not only that you are sinners, but that you call yourselves Christians, and yet have no desires in your heart after Christ? This is a worse condition than the heathen. They never heard of Christ to despise Him; but here we find those who take the ground of being Christians. They say, we believe in Christ, that He is the Son of God, and that He came here to suffer and die. What then? The very

one that owns this religiously, goes away and amuses himself as if it were nothing at all. God is not only saying to you now, as He said to Adam, “Where art thou?” (which was man at his best, and yet man got away from God); but since the day of Pentecost the Holy Ghost is asking, What have you done with My Son?; as God said to Cain (where we have man at his worst), “Where is Abel, thy brother?” You have to answer, I have turned Him out of the world. If you say, My fathers did it, but if I had lived in their days I would not have done it, you are a Pharisee. You bear witness to what has been done, and pride yourself on being better than others. Well, the end will be, if you take that ground, you will come off worse than the publican. I grant there are differences. Everybody has his tastes; one follows pleasure, one ease, another money. But the thing is, God has been into the world in grace in the Person of His Son to win the hearts of sinners to Himself, and though you profess to know it all, it has not won yours.

The next point is that the grace that is in Christ, thus rejected, rises, blessed be God, completely above and over it all. We see Him in this chapter cast out of Judea, but nothing chills His love. He has come into our circumstances—taken the lowliest place—known by the proud world as “the carpenter’s son” for many years. We see him here rejected and despised, and in His circumstances, “wearied with his journey,” sitting at the well’s side in the heat of the noonday sun (which in that country is terrible heat). But there was no chilling of His heart for the lost—He sat there to save. He stoops to ask drink of a wretched woman, for He had nothing to draw with; and although He had created the water of the well He would not work a miracle for Himself. He never

worked miracles for Himself, but for others. He had taken the place of perfect lowly dependence, and He asks drink of a Samaritan—of one belonging to a people which were everything that is bad. They had a mixture of religion, adding the worship of Jehovah to their own idolatries. They were—what shall I call them?— what we should now say were half heretics, half apostates; and the Lord was sitting talking to one of these people whose personal character was all that was evil.

It is not that judgment against sin will not come—it must come. But before it is executed, we have in Christ love, that is above all the sin, come into the place where the sin is. It is God displaying Himself in grace, and not revealing righteousness in judgment. This was the error of Job's friends. They were looking for God bringing in righteousness in this way in punishing iniquity. That day has not come. Not that God does not restrain the evil passions of men. We can thank Him for the magistrate to keep down the evil, and prevent the world being an impossible place to live in through the violence of men. But God has not revealed Himself yet in judgment. God has been in the world in grace. As we read, "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." It is not judgment, but God come into the evil, and come there active in love. And so it is still; for though Christ has been cast out, the Holy Ghost has come down to carry on the testimony of God's love—love that goes after the lost. You may reject the love and be lost, but there the love is. You may be like the elder son, who will not go in to share the love bestowed on the prodigal, even when the father went out and entreated him.

Is there only a true want in your souls, dear friends, towards God? There is Christ to meet it. If man had no heart for Christ, Christ had a heart for man. He had come into a place where He could say, Salvation is not of Samaria; but that was not saying, Salvation is not for Samaria. There was nothing but sin in the woman, but He creates a want in her heart. She had lived a shameful life, it was the result of her character. Doubdess there was natural energy and self-will in her, and as it always is where this is the case, it brings more misery; and she was miserable. Her sin had isolated her; she came alone to draw water, not wishing to be with the other women, and hear their gossip. She was too miserable for that kind of thing, and she came alone. But God, too, was alone there! and she was to meet Him, and have her tale told out in His presence when He was come to meet her in perfect grace. And, beloved friends, it must be so with us. Our tale must be told out to God some day. If not now, in perfect grace, it will be by-and-by in judgment. How wonderful! How blessed! All the sin brought out in the presence of One who brings in the love and grace of God now, which is above all the sin.

Yet, alas! she does not understand a word about it. “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God.” The Lord tells her of the gift of God. God was there to give salvation. It was not a question of salvation being of the Jews. It was the grace of God bringing salvation to the lost, as the Lord said to Zacchseus, “This day is salvation come to this house.” So here, “If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.” Christ was there, and He was there to give eternal life. It is not God

come requiring that we should labour for it. He comes to give. If you are labouring you have not got what God gives.

But you may say, If God gives to a vile woman like this He makes nothing of morality. It offends your good opinion of yourself that He should talk thus to such a woman. Ah! you are a Pharisee, and the publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you; so yours, after all, is a poor case. You must toil and die, because you will not stoop to Christ's gift. He had come to reveal the Father in grace, and He gave that which springs up in joy to the Father. It is a well in us, which springs up to God in joy, who has brought us to know Him, as revealed in grace and love. Do you know God thus? Do you know what it is when no eye but His sees you, so to have that knowledge of Him in grace as the Father, in your heart, that joy and gladness springs up to Him?

The woman understood not one word about it. Christ had to go on with her in patience. She had not this new life, and so she had no intelligence about it. Now, dear friends, God deals with you in patience, but is there a want for Him in your soul? Or are you like this woman, who did not know what Christ and heaven could give, and had only known the misery of sin? I do not ask you about your lives; hers was a shameful one. I doubt not yours may be outwardly proper. But every one who does not know Christ, has either a disappointed heart, or a heart seeking what will disappoint it.

It was contrary to man's thoughts that God should stoop so low, as to sit thus talking to a vile Samaritan woman. The disciples marvelled that He talked thus with her. It

was not fit, they thought, for a Rabbi. Very likely! But it was fit for God in grace.

The woman's heart is closed to all He had said. She cannot get above her daily toil. "Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw." But the Lord goes on. And now we come to the next instruction. Her conscience must be reached. "Go, call thy husband." A little word will do when He speaks. The Lord was not dealing with her as a judge. He was there in perfect grace; but grace tells terribly when sin is on the conscience. Like the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden, and Adam hides himself. God had not spoken to drive him out; God was there, and he fled from Him. So here with the woman. "Go, call thy husband." Immediately sin is before her, and she tries to evade by answering, "I have no husband." The Lord's reply made her know that He knew all about her. Immediately she perceives that He is a prophet. I am Master of what I know. Here was a stranger who knew all about her, and God is known thus by the conscience. She was exposed in the presence of One who knew all that ever she did.

Has the word of God ever brought you to this, dear friends? Have you ever seen a man that has told you all that ever you did? Has your memory ever been active in the presence of God? You must be laid bare some day: either in judgment, when mercy is over; or now in perfect goodness in a day of grace. Have you been brought now to God, so that you have taken your place as condemned, and what must come out in the day of judgment has come out now? Has that goodness of God led you to repentance? Not merely outward sorrow for sin, saying, We are all sinners, in a general way. But

have you confessed your sins to God from a need you had of being reconciled? Have you ever had a visit from God? I do not mean by dreams or visions; but has God so spoken to your conscience as for you to have known Him and yourself together?

The woman now turns to worship. The Lord tells her that salvation was of the Jews; the Samaritans worshipped they knew not what; but the hour was coming, and now was, when the true worshippers should worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for it was no longer a question of what man ought to be for God, but of what God is for the sinner. “The Father seeketh such to worship him.” As for man’s worship, it was all worthless. You may get a machine to do ceremonies if you only are clever enough to make one. As we read in the prophet of the outward worship of Israel. God calls it, “bowing the head like a bulrush.” It is utterly worthless. You must have to do with God who knows you, and whom you must know if you would worship Him in spirit and in truth. It is not God requiring worship—all very true, as man’s duty—but the Lord is here in grace, and out of the abundance of His heart He says, “The Father seeketh” worshippers. He is not regarding forms of worship, but He is seeking vile, broken-down sinners to make them worshippers. He is not seeking the Pharisee: his worship proceeds out of himself; he thanks God for what he is.

Here it is God who is revealed as giving living water; going on with the poor dull heart to bring it to repentance, that there might be a want there for what He was giving. It is no longer seeking good in man. God had tried him without law, and He had to drown the world with a flood; He tried him under the law, and he

broke it; sent His own Son in grace, and they rejected Him. What was left for the world but judgment? All is over with it. But now when there is the judgment of the world—not executed, but pronounced— "now is the judgment of this world"—God brings in His grace for the world that is under judgment; and so it is when He works in the individual conscience. He brings out all the sins, but He is there to give eternal life. So with the poor woman. Where did He find you? I speak now to believers. He found you in your sins; but the one who has reached the conscience is the One who has come and given Himself for the sins. Directly the woman's sins are out in His presence, as the prophet, she wants to know Christ. "When he is come," she says, "he will tell us all things." He will say who are saved and who are lost. Ah, says the Lord, "I that speak unto thee am he." If He is known to her conscience as a prophet, He will reveal Himself to her as the Christ that she needs— the Christ who could save; whenever the word of God reaches the conscience, Christ has been there. What Christ? Why, the Christ who gave Himself for the sins which He brought to light. The cross puts all the sins away. He puts you into the truth about yourself, that He may put you into the grace which has taken the sins away.

There must be the ploughing up of the conscience, and there is God's patience in His dealings with us individually, until the soul is broken down and submits itself to His righteousness: but when once there, it is not a question about making peace— the peace has been made: "Having made peace through the blood of his cross." "Who, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." Why

is He sitting there? It is because, “By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” He will rise to judgment; but as to the question of our sins, the apostle says, “After he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God.”

Are you, beloved friends, thus reconciled to God? We cannot worship Him until we are saved. When I think of what Christ has done, I can say, All is settled. God has given Him in love for my sins, and has accepted Him in righteousness. Thus God is revealed, and the sinner is brought in truth into His presence to know Him there in grace. What a poor thing it is to live in a lie; to have a bad conscience in order to keep up a character. It is always so. Men are walking in a vain show, disquieting themselves in vain. Dear friends, is it always to be so—always to live in a lie? Or is it a good thing to be out in the presence of God, where I find that perfect grace has visited me, to present me in Christ in perfect righteousness to God? What a place to be in! To be thus, in Christ, all out before Him, and all put away by Himself in perfect love, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, “because as he is, so are we, in this world.”

Now, what was the effect on the woman? She left her water-pot; what she had once lived for, occupied her no more. She was now occupied with Christ, in contrast with her cares; and as she had had all out before God, she can go out boldly to the men and say, “Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?” She had got Christ, and had forgotten her water-pot. She had everything settled with God, so that she had nothing any longer to conceal. There is no fear of man where there is the fear of God; so she goes to tell

the men—before this she avoided the women. This is the practical effect of the revelation of Christ to the sinner.

Is Christ, beloved friends, thus in your hearts? Has He so entered that He has taken the place of the things which kept Him out? The Lord grant that it may be so.

## The Pool Of Bethesda

In these chapters something of the Jews is brought forward, just to shew out the blessing God was bringing in in Christ, in contrast with all that had gone before. Here it is the Pool of Bethesda—angelic ministry. Though the people were captive, and the ark still gone, God had preserved a remnant to present Christ to them; He kept them till they had rejected His Son; and there were the remains of blessing still with them. He was still the Lord that healed them, and angelic ministry was still there.

A man was here at the pool, but the character of his sickness was such that it had taken away his strength, so that the sickness from which he wanted healing had taken away the power to use the means of being healed. It was not a question of being willing—he was willing enough; but this disease had taken away the power of using the remedy. The great thing we have to learn is, that "when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." We are slow to learn this—that we have no strength. The first man you meet in the street will own that he is a sinner, but if you tell him there is no strength in the flesh, he will think you are going to condemn him to be a sinner all his life.

I do not know a more precious word in the spirit and character of it than this portion. The poor man had been ill thirty-eight years. The Lord asks, "Wilt thou be made whole?" He had the will, but explains he had no strength. Christ brings the strength with Him. This is what is so distinctly and definitely brought out in contrast with the law.

It was the Sabbath-day: the Jews draw attention to the fact, and the Lord takes up the blessed character He had as Son, and says: “My Father worketh hitherto and I work.” How can God rest where sin is? where misery is? He cannot have His rest in a world like this. Christ had come to work: but what makes it so blessed, beloved friends, is this truth, it was not man’s work and man’s strength; the Father and the Son are the workmen in our salvation. God might have cut off Adam and Eve, and there would have been an end of them in righteousness, but His nature would not let Him do that. He sets about to work; we see the Father and the Son working in grace; the Son had come to work. Instead of cutting off the sinners or leaving them to their wretchedness, God had made Himself a workman in His grace, and the whole thing was changed. The law required man to work, just as the Pool of Bethesda required a man to be quick enough to get himself into it. But in the gospel, it is God who works: “My Father worketh.” What an answer to their wretched malice, in accusing Him of breaking the Sabbath! The Father and the Son working in grace to save man, because God had no rest when he was in misery and sin. But though a vivid picture of the principle of grace in teaching, the Lord goes beyond this, and shows it is really life-giving.

They charge Him then with saying He was equal with God, which He did say, because He was one with Him, but He never puts Himself out of the place of servant, which He had taken. He unfolds to them His Father; the Son would do nothing by Himself; He was a divine Person, but He had taken the place of servant, and He had one object in everything.

In verses 21-23 he goes into the work of the Father and the Son in two distinct things. There are two great ways in which the glory of the Son is displayed. The Father quickens, and the Son quickens whom He will; and now mark: we are dead in sin and the Father comes and quickens, the Son too. But it is not so when it comes to judgment. The Father has not been incarnate here, spit upon and trampled on. The Father judges no man, and He has secured in this way that all should honour the Son even as they honour the Father, by committing all judgment to Him. They have blessed fellowship in quickening souls, but the Son having come down as Son of man, having been outraged and insulted by everything man could do when he got the chance, all judgment is committed to the Son. Every knee shall bow; things in heaven, on the earth, and under the earth: no matter how wicked or how infidel and rebellious, he will have to bow to Christ just the same as any saint, though in a very different way. Thus we get the Father and the Son both giving life—a divine work and power exercised in our favour; and then we get judgment—the way of securing honour for the Son; the Father judges no man, but puts it all into His hands.

And now comes this solemn question, beloved friends: In which way have J to do with the Son? In quickening or in judgment? as the blessed One who loved me and gave Himself for me, washing me in His blood, or as the One who is executing judgment because I would not own Him? To this God gives an answer in His own blessed way: “He that heareth my word and believeth him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but is passed from death unto life.” Those that believe do not come into judgment, do not come

into Christ's second way of dealing. The thing is done. Christ has wrought in His blessed quickening grace, and the judgment is over. We are not called in question, because the place, the life, the condition we have, are the effect of the work of the Father and the Son, and He will not call that in question.

Whenever a person has heard His word—believed Him that sent Him—that is eternal life, and he has got it. If the Shepherd's voice has been heard, I say, Yes, I know whose voice that is; it is the voice of the blessed Son of God. As He said to the poor woman at the well: "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." I know the Father sent Him that I might have life: not by my wishing, for it was when I was a sinner.

If I have heard His word, the voice of the blessed Son of God, I shall not come into the judgment. All stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, everything will come out there, and so much the better; but there is no question of judgment for the believer, because Christ has borne the sins for which he would have had to be judged. The Person who is to be the judge has first of all been the Saviour. When I come before the judgment-seat of Christ, I say, There is the Man who bore all my sins! But more, we are in glorified bodies when we get there: "It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory." We are glorified and brought there like Himself."

The one who believes has been quickened, does not come into judgment, and is passed from death unto life. Not only that when he was living in sins he learned to

hate them, and put them away, but he is brought into a new state altogether: “Alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

And then He goes on to the display of still further power: “All that are in the graves shall hear his voice.” There is the resurrection of life; the power that quickened the souls, now raising the bodies; He carries on and completes as to the body the work which He had begun in the soul. People talk of fitting themselves for heaven; you never find such a thing in Scripture. “He hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light,” and therefore the thief, when he died upon the cross confessing Christ to be the Lord (a most glorious confession of faith, for He was rejected and forsaken of all) goes straight into paradise, and I suppose he was quite fit to go there. I am not saying a word against growth; there are abundant scriptures for that, but you will not find one of them in connection with being fit for heaven.

“The resurrection of life “is the carrying out fully this blessed work of the Father and the Son. The bodies of the saints are raised, and all is complete; and then comes the resurrection of judgment. Of believers it is said: “He shall change our vile bodies, and fashion them like unto his glorious body.” But this is not the case with those who have been walking in evil: they are raised for judgment. I do not know anything that has done more mischief than the thought of a general resurrection, because it throws back the question of the justification of the Christian to a day of judgment that has not yet come. There is no such thought in Scripture. “Christ, the first-fruits; afterwards they that are Christ’s at his coming.” “The dead in Christ shall rise first.” The

resurrection of the saints, as explained in 1 Corinthians 15, is the fruit of the quickening power of the Lord Jesus, applied to the bodies of His saints. It is the resurrection of life; we are raised in glory. Scripture does not throw us back into uncertainty to be judged; and why? Because the Lord is my righteousness, God's righteousness is shown in glorifying me. Whoever is judged for his works is infallibly condemned. But if I have no righteousness for God, He has righteousness for me, and how can that be a thing to be called in question afterwards? But if I am in Christ and so accepted, He is in me, and here is our responsibility. And this I press, if we are alive to God, let us see this life come out. The only thing we have to do here is to live Christ. Responsibility flows from the place I am in. I am to glorify Christ in the place that I am in as alive to God in Christ.

And then He takes up their responsibility in rejecting Him as come in grace. He had shown the operation of sovereign grace in quickening, so He shows how they had neglected every testimony: His Father's, that of His own works, of John the Baptist, and their own scriptures. In the folly of their hearts they rejected Jesus, rejected or neglected Him, and they have to be judged.

We have got the quickening power of the Father and the Son, that exercised in giving divine life, and in consequence no mixing up of the resurrection of life and the resurrection of judgment. But there is another thing that is important for our peace, the knowing it now. "He that heareth my word and believeth him that sent me, hath everlasting life." The Spirit gives power to the quickening word. It is a blessed thing to find we can

know this now. If I have heard Christ's word, and believed the Father, who in unspeakable grace sent the Son to be the Saviour, I have everlasting life, and I recognise not only that I was guilty through my sins, but dead; and when dead, quickened, and have passed from that state, out of it, into life; and if Christ come soon enough I may not have to die at all.

How little, beloved friends, have we realised the completeness of the work Christ has done; we do not believe that He has so completely overcome the power of death that we need not die at all. We may be all changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.

We have to learn ourselves and God's faithful patience and grace, and God knows how long to leave us to learn this—but we have got life in the Son. An unconverted man has not got life at all: he is dead in his sins, though that is not the first thing that reaches his conscience, but his guilt. But when we come to learn our state, it is important we should know what we are. In the flesh the tree is bad; but I have got life in Christ, and that is another thing.

Do not confound things and think of a future judgment which is going to settle everything. It will settle nothing: it will manifest and execute, but it settles nothing. "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God"; and if he die in that state he dies in his sins.

Do you believe there is no good in you at all? It is a most bitter thing to say. No one denies there are amiable qualities, but you find them in animals too. Who would be morally in a better state before God: a person with a shocking bad temper, who was looking to God earnestly

every day to control it, or one with a good temper, who was pleased with himself? God tells us we are dead. It is hard to learn, for our experience contradicts it. We are to “mortify our members”; and I have got power and duty too, for Christ has died. There comes this everyday conflict, but I have both the title and duty, and power to say: I am not a debtor to the flesh. “God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.” It is all settled: Christ died. Then I am dead, and I have got Christ for my life; and having Him for my life, I have Him after He has put away all my sins.

Now, do you honestly say, I know that in me, that is, in my flesh—dwelleth no good thing?—Do you believe that of yourselves? You will never get full liberty till you do, and you will never know what it is to be settled and steady in your soul till you have learned it; for then you get not only forgiveness and justification, but deliverance. It is a very different thing to contend with the flesh when it has got the upper hand, and when you have.

Do you say: Yes, I am a poor nothing, but I have passed from death unto life; I shall not come unto judgment? I have heard His word, I know that the Father in unspeakable, unutterable love, has sent the Son, and I have heard Him, and got everlasting life.

And oh, see, beloved friends, the infinite blessedness of it, to be walking with God in the full sense of His unclouded favour resting upon us as it did upon Christ!

And we want to know more: First, of the place by faith, and then of the power where God has set us through this astonishing work of the Lord Jesus Christ: that, while He

has put away all the sins the flesh produces, He has given us eternal life, and that here we are called to manifest the life of Christ in everything, as dead to sin, crucified with Him, and always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus—not only to avoid open sins, but to be epistles of Christ, that men should read Christ in us as they did the law in the ten commandments on the tables of stone. We shall soon find what we are— poor feeble creatures—but that with Christ we can do all things. We need diligence in seeking His grace, but with Him there is positive strength to overcome.

The Lord give us simplicity of heart to see the fulness of His grace, and then to live to Christ here through all the circumstances of life; the only object before us, the only motive in the thousand things we have to do—Christ.

## The Feast Of Tabernacles

John 7:1-44

You see the utter darkness in which the Pharisees and all of them were; they said, “He deceiveth the people.” The effect of the presence of Christ is always to produce darkness where faith is not. The Lord had wrought miracles and so on, but the natural heart never can perceive the light, so there is nothing but confusion. There is always positive wilful rejection by the natural man, as there was by the Pharisees; but where Christ is known, there all is light. There is a great deal for us to learn of course, but it is God’s light that we have, and in that light we shall see light. We go on learning truth about God, truth about the world, truth about the vanity that deceives men’s hearts: but grace through the gospel and the testimony is there, speaking of Christ, and, thank God, all in perfect grace. There is the manifestation of what we were: “Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye the light in the Lord.” So that though there is much to learn, still I have got now what reveals God’s heart and discerns mine. The Son came to reveal the Father. It does not say grace and truth were revealed: “The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.”

As we see here, it is a rejected Christ. It is always, “Take up thy cross and follow me.” All the glory becomes a cross in this world. In His humiliation the glory was there: His disciples “beheld His glory,” but still it was rejected; there was always the enmity of man against it. So it is written, “Marvel not if the world hate you.” And He said, “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me

before it hated you." We take up our cross and follow Him. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." So, the Lord says, if you go with me, you must go that road. It was "If it die." He stopped alone till then; nobody touched Him. His proper work in this world was only at the cross. "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not." Born of God was another thing, and they received Him. But by the world He was rejected. Thus we see our place, the Christian's place, is this: He having been rejected, we have the counterpart of it.

But not only is He the rejected One; He is also the glorified Man in glory. There is one Man where I get life; one Man in whom righteousness is displayed; and that is Christ at the right hand of God. There our hearts must go up and find the only thing to which we belong; though of course our bodies belong to this world. Man took his place in the glory of God consequent on redemption being wrought, and the Holy Ghost was sent down and our bodies become the temples of God. That which characterises the Christian is that the Holy Ghost dwells in him. It is this which the Lord speaks of in the passage we have read—the outflowing of it.

There were three great feasts among the Jews, three very important ones to which all the males had to go up, all gathering round God. The passover, to which they all went, though it had not so much the character of rejoicing, and the feast of weeks, and the feast of ingathering. The passover had not so much the character of rejoicing; it was rather God in His character of Judge passing over them. So the unleavened bread that followed the passover was called

the “bread of affliction.” God is the God of holiness, so He must have holiness. So after the passover each person went to his own tent; there was no rejoicing, or anything of that sort.

But in the other two feasts they were to go with an offering in their hands, and to rejoice before the Lord with their sons and their daughters, their manservants and their maid-servants, the Levites, the strangers, the fatherless, and the widows. They were to rejoice in their feast and all others with them. And in this feast which we have in John, when the harvest was over, when the discriminating judgment of God had taken place, they were to dwell in tents, and with the fatherless and the widows they were to rejoice. They were in rest.

The first, the passover, was just escaping out of judgment; the next is the enjoyment of the first-fruits; and then the getting into the rest of God, the full thing; God had blessed them in everything. That is the one that we get here. The Pentecost does not connect itself with this, though of course everything is connected with the passover. Here they are not escaping from the condition they were in, but they are in the living enjoyment of the condition they are brought into, of that which God has brought them into.

This is what we have to look at in our worship: we should be enjoying more what God has brought us into. We have to watch that our worship should not be only the remembrance of what we have been brought out of, but the enjoyment of that into which we have been brought. Here it is all joy, and rest and blessedness. You will find in Leviticus that it is all connected with the people being brought out of the land of Egypt. It is all

one thing—the passover, of course, is the foundation of everything; but besides this, I see that man has got into this perfect place of blessing: of our bodies it is not true yet, of course; they belong to this old creation; but in the new man we are connected with Christ up there. And our place down here is that of having the Holy Ghost, who takes of the things of Christ and shews them to us. But it is all connected with the passover, with the feast of unleavened bread, and that was connected with the Sabbath; though it began the evening before the Sabbath, it went on after Satan's power and death and judgment were all over, passed and gone.

What characterises Christianity is the ministration of the Spirit. The Holy Ghost is here consequent on the exaltation of Christ. In this feast of weeks we get, in a certain sense, the coming of the Holy Ghost. Pentecost came in as a kind of annex to the feast of the firstfruits, only there was leaven. Then after the harvest and after the vintage came the feast of tabernacles, when they were to keep not only seven days but eight; which brings in heavenly things. When Christ comes the Jews will literally get their rest, and they will celebrate the grace which has given them all this blessing.

What the unbelieving brethren of Christ sought was that He should shew Himself. He says, I cannot do that; I can die, but I cannot shew myself to the world; my time is not yet come; I cannot keep the feast of tabernacles in any true sense. And so there is no such thing in the present time as keeping the feast of tabernacles; there is no antitype of it. "Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come, but your time is always ready; the world cannot hate you, but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil. Go ye up unto this feast:

I go not up unto this feast." That word "yet" should not be there. He just goes up privately afterwards to teach the people. Then on the eighth day He says (for there was an eighth day): "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." This brings in the Spirit. He gives us the Spirit now instead of the feast of tabernacles—a full, flowing stream. This is our portion till He comes.

But now mark, beloved brethren, it is "If any man thirst." It is not as the Holy Ghost came upon Balaam, and other cases. That might be without any thirsting at all. But it is "If any man thirst." We get the same thing in Revelation: "Let him that is athirst come."

Thus we have poor bodies, bodies of humiliation, but we have got the Holy Ghost, and therefore "our conversation is in heaven." And that word means all the associations, everything belonging to a man; as we say, "That man is a Dublin man"; which means that his family, his business, his belongings are in Dublin; so our place and belongings are in heaven, and we are just looking and waiting for Him to come and take us up there. For the Holy Ghost comes down, not only to associate me with Christ risen, but with Christ glorified. We are not yet in it, but, where the heart thirst, it already gets full satisfaction there; otherwise people are thirsting after other things, and there is a famine in the land. Wherever the flesh works there is thirst; there is no such thing as the new nature thirsting. When a man has once come to Christ and drunk, then "out of his belly flow rivers of living water."

You see the Holy Ghost is the source of life. We are "born of the Spirit" in chapter 3; in chapter 4 we get the full purpose of the Spirit in worship; and here it is flowing forth from the believer as "rivers of living water." We have the full power and life and liberty of the Holy Ghost in spite of all that is around us in this world. So we have it instead of the feast of tabernacles. The Jews will have the literal thing soon, but with us it is entirely heavenly.

People sometimes say they will not know till the day of judgment whether they are saved or not. But before the judgment day comes, as all here I trust know, Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, and thence comes the Holy Ghost to be rivers of living water in believers; so that I do not wait until Christ comes out to tell me whether I am saved or not, because He has sent the Holy Ghost already to tell me, and I know it. "Rivers of living water." All these blessed things flow out. He is the source of refreshment and blessing. I am told in Colossians 3 to "set my affections on things above." How can I set them if I do not know what they are? Now the Holy Ghost shews us our present relationships. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit." "We have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." We have received the Holy Ghost, and what does He do? He tells us about our sins, our failures, most certainly, but He has come to tell us, not of things of this world but of the things that are freely given to us by God; and we do know something of those things. When Moses and Elias

came to the Mount of Transfiguration did they not freely talk with the Lord? and does that tell me nothing of what the intimacy up there is? If I am going to walk in white with Him up there—if I am going to have a white stone with a new name in it, the pledge of His secret approval, just as in a family a child has a pet name that has no meaning to strangers—is that nothing? There will be walking on streets of gold—holiness. We get the blessedness up there more and more revealed, the Lord using figurative expressions to let us into it.

And then another thing. Supposing my heart is right with God, what will be my desire for the saints? That every one of them should be exactly what would be to Christ's glory; that there should not be a single thing in one of them that should not answer to Christ's desire for them.

These things are spiritually discerned of course. The Holy Ghost comes to take these things that are not seen to reveal them to us. We get these grapes of Eshcol brought into the wilderness for us, the grapes of Canaan, of the land.

Then, in view of all this, what is my responsibility? As to my acceptance, that is not my responsibility.

I was lost, entirely lost, but that has all been settled by God Himself, and now I am in Christ. My responsibility is now that I should represent Christ. He represents me before God, and my responsibility is to represent Him before the world; and that is where failure comes in. That is what I have to look at in every step that I take in this world. I have to ask myself, Shall I be an epistle of Christ or not, in doing this?

“Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water”—out of his inmost affections—out of what a man is in the bottom of his heart, as we say, shall flow streams of refreshment to others; the poor vessel is so full that it overflows. We cannot bring it out as it is in heaven, of course: but we can bring it out as the Holy Ghost brings it in to us here; and then we have the feast of tabernacles. When the Lord comes again the feast will be literally come: there will be the harvest and the vintage, and then the full blessing; but, until it comes, we have the Holy Ghost instead of it, and our place that of waiting for Christ; we are converted to wait for God’s Son from heaven.

Until then what characterises the Christian is that he has the Holy Ghost. God had sealed him by the Holy Ghost, made him know Christ by the Holy Ghost, brought him in spirit and heart into those things where Christ is, with whom God has associated him. If I am careless, of course it is not so, but if I am walking in the Spirit all these things will shine out in me. He has made us the habitation of the Spirit; our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost; so that all that God is, in its right time and place and measure, flows out from us as refreshing streams in a dry and thirsty land where no water is. That is what a Christian is; and may God give us to walk faithfully, and lowly, and humbly with Him in it to His glory. Amen.

## Christ Departing To The Father

John 13

This chapter begins the communications of the Lord as regards His going away. In the previous chapters we have had the account of His ordinary ministry, and statements of the glory of His Person, the power of the divine life come into the world, and light too. All that had been gone through, and then in chapters 8 and 9, you get the rejection of His word and works. Chapter 10 is a statement of what the real purpose of His coming was—to get out His sheep. “He calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.” In spite of all opposition, He could not be hindered from having His sheep. It is our heavenly portion in contrast with the fold. The “porter”—God in His prophets, opening the door. He did come in at the door, born at Bethlehem in the appointed way; and then He becomes the door to anybody else. He had come in in God’s way according to prophecy; but any who come in by Him “go in and out and find pasture,” perfect liberty, not shut up as in a prison, but the Shepherd’s care instead of the prison-fold. There they were, saved by Him, and God’s pastures to feed upon.

That closed what He was doing on earth, and what He was bringing them into—heavenly blessedness. Then the hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father. He was come there to be put to death, so that all through these chapters He is looked at as actually gone. Having shewn that the Jews would not receive this light of life, they remained in darkness, of course. He was putting before His sheep much better

things. Now that He comes to the point that He was actually going away, He takes up the heavenly things to which He had gathered these poor sheep, and unfolds them in chapter 13.

In the gospel of John the blood of Christ is not the subject, though we cannot think too much of it, and that is the reason it is said in the epistle, “This is he that came by water and blood”; not merely by water that purifies and cleanses, but by the blood too that expiates. The cross was the absolute wickedness of man, hating Christ who was come in love, God having displayed Himself in all Christ’s walk on earth; it revealed God, and they could not stand that. It is not only that man has been turned out of the garden of Eden on account of his sins, but man has turned God out of the world when He came in grace. In this chapter we find it is water spoken of, that is, the practical purifying of man’s heart. There is no repetition of the blood, but there is of the water. To have the work done that clears our sins, the blood must be shed. Nothing ever shewed what sin was as much as Christ’s death did; He was sweating as it were great drops of blood only at the thought of going through it.

The point here is, that He was going to His Father. The Father had put all things into His hands, and He came from God and went to God; and the question necessarily was with the disciples, How could He be with them or they with Him? It looked like giving them up, and so He presses on them His unalterable love; nothing stopped it, He went perfectly on till everything was done, and everything done that would bring us into the same place He was in. After His resurrection He sends Mary Magdalene to say what was never said before: “Go tell my brethren I ascend unto my Father and your Father, to

my God and your God." 'Looking at God in His holy righteousness, you are before Him just as I am; looking at Him in the Father's love, you are before Him just as I am.' And in John 17: "Hast loved them as thou hast loved me." A wonderful word, beloved friends; but that is where we are brought, and that is what Christ does, and it is well to have it thoroughly before our souls in thankfulness for this love. "Peace I leave with you," a peace made at the cross. When the world gives, it gives away; that is, it has not got it any more. But Christ never gives in that way; if He gives us His glory He does not lose any of it Himself. He puts us into the same place with Himself. What the Lord was telling them about was, that He was going up on high to God. He "came from God" in all His absolute purity, and "He went to God" in the same holiness in which He came from Him.

They were sitting at the evening meal. It is not that supper was now ended, but it was going on. They were sitting together, and He gets up from supper; that is, from association with His disciples in this world—He among them, and they with Him. He had been among them as one that served; they had been with Him day by day, and seen the gracious condescension of His ways, and it is well to see it, and eat the bread of God which came down from heaven. But if He is going to God, and the Father has given everything into His hand, there is an end of His service, they thought. * No,' He says; 'I am not going to give up this service,' so He gets up, and girds Himself, lays aside His garments; that is, sitting at ease in this world. 'I have done with that,' He says; 'but I have not done with service.'

I have spoken of the blood as the basis. If the Lord Jesus could not stay with them down here, they must be fit

practically (down here on the earth, I mean) to be with Him in God's presence. "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." He could not have a part with them any more. The world had rejected Him, and in that sense He had rejected the world, except to gather souls out of it. 'I cannot have a part with you, and now the thing is for you to have a part with Me.' Here it is having a man in a fit state for communion with God in His own holiness. And that is the question for the Christian every day. If I have not light, the sin is not on my conscience. God may see failure, but (speaking of our walk) He is looking at our walk according to the light we have. He chastens us that we may be "partakers of his holiness." There is no measure of holiness for our hearts but God Himself: to be in the presence of God without a jar between us and Him: we come short of it, I know—that puts an end to all perfection here. It will be perfect in glory; "holy and without blame before him in love." There is no other kind of holiness, and Christ in glory is the expression of that. "We all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." In contemplating, looking at, dwelling on Christ, you get every day more like Him. "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." The Christian's eye has been opened on the blessedness of Christ; he knows he is to be perfectly like Him by-and-by, and he wants to be as much like Him now as he can. "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth." That is the means God employs—the scriptures. "And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." He has set Himself apart—the model Man—that the Holy Ghost may take of the

things of Christ, and make us like Him. That is where the Christian is who is in earnest; and now his heart wants the holiness. I press that. As regards acceptance, you are in as much acceptance as Christ is, because you are “accepted in the Beloved.” We are in this new place before God (not our bodies yet, of course). Real, true holiness is based on the fact, that the question of guilt is settled. But here we soon find out from day to day if things are going on rightly. We come then, besides that, to go through the practical realisation of it day by day, to be as like Christ as we can.

He was going up into heaven; how would He do the service up there? ‘If I do not do it,’ He says,’ you will never be able to be up there with Me.’ He takes the form of a servant, then Peter says to Him, “Thou shalt never wash my feet.” Jesus answered him, “If I wash thee not thou hast no part with me.” We get the truth from it as we often do from Peter’s haste (right feeling of respect for the Lord too). But this is the great point of the chapter. If He did not wash them clean enough as to water merely—not blood here—they could not have a part with Him; He must make them fit for the place He was going to be in. If the guilt is not put away, and we not purified, we are undone. Then Peter says, “Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head”; and the Lord says, “He that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet”—the whole body in contrast with the feet. Here I get the difference between this actual, absolute cleansing that has never lost its value; but in walking through this world they would pick up dirt on their feet, and so I get the feet-washing. “Born of water “never has to be repeated, and it never loses its efficacy any more than the blood. When the guilt is cleared away, when I

am born of God, I see all my sinfulness according to that; so when I see thus my place with Christ in heaven, and like Christ in heaven, I see that I am all the opposite; but I have a holy nature, and Christ is my life. The life of Christ is a holy thing. It is not mending the flesh (I cannot deny amiable flesh), but I get there to judge sin as God judges it. I do not say, 'That will not suit an honest man,' but, 'That will not suit God.' It is a new life, and it shews itself in cleansed habits and ways. The word is applied with divine and heavenly purity, and light which comes down from God— "the Word made flesh"—and yet perfectly suited to man. I am going to be with Him, and before Him, and things here do not suit me, and the more so because the blood has given me a title to be in God's presence. I am cleansed by the blood to be able to walk in the light as God is in the light. The character of this holiness is, that we can be with Christ when He is gone to God. A thousand things we know of in this world; well, I say, that does not suit Christ, and so I want my feet washed. It is not any uncertainty as to my relationship; for I have started with, "I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father." I know I am a child, I say, "Abba, Father." If I sin the Spirit becomes a rebuking Spirit in me, because Christ has been the Advocate. I do not call in question that I am a child, but I say I am a naughty child; I have picked up dirt on my feet; I have got that which does not suit me in going into God's house and God's presence; there is something in my walk which is inconsistent with the blessed relationship we are brought into. With a holy nature I am to count the rest dead, and therefore when it stirs in any way I feel it, because I am in that place that does not suit it. Even an evil thought grieves the Spirit.

The place that Christ takes is, that He has not given up being a servant. 'I shall have to be washing your feet; ye are washed, ye are clean, and I am not going to repeat your conversion. The word of the God has been livingly applied to your hearts and consciences; you are brought into the light as God is in the light, without any imputation of guilt: now walk according to it.' We are in the true knowledge of God as He has revealed Himself now, which gives us the certainty of salvation. But supposing I have boldness to enter into the holiest and find dirt on my feet (no imputation of guilt), well then communion is interrupted, and I need the Advocate. When we walk in heaven it will be on streets transparent as glass, righteousness and true holiness. We are "after God created in righteousness and true holiness," and there we are, washed (in that sense) before God, not in our wretched selves, but Christ. If Christ is in us, the body is dead because of sin. Supposing one of you say, I know through grace that I am in Christ, then mark this, if you are in Christ, Christ is in you; do you shew it? Now do not let people see anything else. There is where the responsibility of the Christian comes in. We are apt to pick up dirt on our feet, but we are to walk as Christ walked. It does not say we are to be as He was, because He had no sin in Him, and "if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves." But "These things write I unto you, that ye sin not." Supposing we fail, "We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." My righteousness is up there before God for me, and we are in Him. In virtue of this, if communion is interrupted (as it must be if I let only an idle thought in), it is not then a question of imputation, but a question of communion, and Christ lives as the Advocate to do this very work. By His Spirit and word the effects of this

advocacy are carried on. The state that I am in is such that communion is totally interrupted, and the Spirit becomes a rebuker because Christ is my advocate. “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father.” He says “the Father,” because it is a question of fellowship and communion. It is not “God,” because my guilt is put away.

If I have grieved the Spirit, and have dirty feet, I do not suit fellowship with God. Does grace give me up? No; the Spirit of God takes the word, and applies it to my heart and conscience, and humbles me. I first see the horribleness of sin, as sinning not only against the holiness of God, but against the love that saved me. I have found my pleasure in the things that caused Christ’s agony on the cross. I ought to feel the sin as He felt it. I have been doing a thing for which Christ had to be burned, so to say. (See Numbers 19.) There is no imputation, of course, but it makes sin much more terrible to my heart and conscience. I do not go to the Advocate to ask Him to do it, but He goes to the Father for me. He goes as an Advocate with the Father, and the Spirit brings the word home to my conscience, and I hate myself for the sin, and confess it. You first feel this hatred at having sinned against Him, and then comes the blessed thought that His love is above all my sins; but the measure of all this to our souls is boldness to be with Christ in the holiest. Whatever does not suit my being with Him (which is the key to this chapter) must go. There is progress, of course, the Spirit taking of the things of Christ, and shewing them to us; but the divine nature we have is perfectly pure, and cannot sin. The flesh is not dead, though it ought to be kept as dead; but we never find any allowance in Scripture for letting it

act. We are obliged to have a thorn in the flesh sometimes, lest we should be puffed up. When He could not stay with us here, then He takes us to be there, perfectly by-and-by, and in spirit now. He has died that we might be there; He has given us a nature that is capable of enjoying God, “created after God in righteousness and true holiness.” He has gone in as Man —set Himself apart. It is not only that the holiness is wrought practically in us, but all our affections are delighting in looking at Him. Of course there is progress in the development of that nature, in realising where Christ is, “that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.” It brings us into that blessed communion with His love, and then whatever there is inconsistent in us, there He is to wash our feet.

And now, beloved friends, where are our hearts? Have we so seen Christ that all our desire is to be with Him, and like Him? “So shall we ever be with the Lord.” Still now He manifests Himself to our hearts, so that we know it. It is Somebody that has loved us, and goes on as a Servant to do such work for us as to wash our feet. Is all our desire to say, “This one thing I do”? “My soul followeth hard after Thee—thy right hand upholdeth me”: there is the strength to uphold me. We all fail, I know; but there is no necessity for failing. I desire with all my heart, beloved friends, that every one here may realise the value of that blood-shedding that leaves us without spot before God. Where the soul has tasted the love of Christ, knowing that He has loved it and given Himself for it, it loves Him because He first loved it. And we have this immensely blessed privilege to be like Him by-and-by.

The word of God brings down the perfections in Him to our hearts to suit us where we are. Think of our having the words that came out of the mouth of God, and the living One that practised them down here in this world where we are! He has loved us, and given Himself for us, and He does look that our hearts should own the value of His blood. He has brought us to be with Himself now, though of course actually hereafter in glory. I desire our hearts should rest in His perfect love. Being brought to God, He is looking for our walking with Him, and it is a poor thing to give Him the work of washing our feet. He does do it, so as to restore our souls, and I only beseech you that you will never distrust His power to do it. “My grace is sufficient for thee.” Not only has He cleared us from our sins, but He has revealed to us the place of the new man in Christ. We may realise it in the Spirit— never perfect though down here. Only may He be precious in the blessed consciousness that if He has gone up there, He has not forgotten us; He washes our feet when we fail.

The Lord give us the sense of the abidingness of Christ’s love. And only see the pains He took to persuade His disciples of the constancy of that love; and it is the same now. There we are called up to have a part with Him in the heavenly things. “Christ is all, and in all.” He is “all “as an object, and “in all “as the power of life, and ever lives there to wash our feet. May the Lord make Him constantly and alone precious to us. It is a blessed thing that the Father has given Him, who is the object of His love, to be the object of ours too.

## The Father’s House

John 14

In this part of the gospel of John the Lord is leading His disciples away from earth to associate their minds with Himself up in heaven. That begins from chapter 13. In chapters 8 and 9 we have His rejection. Then, chapter 10, He states He will have His sheep in spite of everything. Chapter 11, that which He was on earth as Son of God borne witness to. Chapter 12, the Son of David riding on an ass, and Son of man when the Greeks come to Him; but He says, “I must die.” He cannot have to say to the disciples on the earth, though loving them to the end. Then He washes their feet, and says, “If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.” The possibility of His having a part with man down here was over— the world had rejected Him; and now instead of blessing the disciples here, He was taking their hearts up there. The thread that runs through the rest of the gospel, up to the last chapter, is—not here, but there, and you must take up your cross here.

In chapter 14 the Lord gives us our portion on the ground of taking us up there. They would not have Him with them; but He says, “Let not your heart be troubled” at My going away. You do not get the comfort of God by seeing Him in bodily presence, and so with Me. “Ye believe in God, believe also in me.” He is going to prepare a place, that is the whole thing. ‘I am going to My Father. I have brought you redeemed ones into the same relationship as I am in; He is your Father as much as Mine, and your God as much as Mine. I am not to be alone there. In My Father’s house are many mansions. I

go to prepare a place for you.' The place He was going to prepare (and that He was putting before their hearts) had this specific character, that the children were at home there. He had brought them into this place of children before God and the Father; and therefore, when the time was come, they should go to the Father's house. The thought and purpose of God was to have us with Christ and like Him, His own blessed Son, in His house. "I will come again, and receive you unto myself"—in the Father's house—"that where I am, there you may be also." Where the Son is, in the joy and blessedness and rest and glory of the Father's house, there we are to be with Himself. That is His purpose—what He is bringing us to. Then He adds this blessed truth, that He is coming back Himself to fetch them. He is interested in them, and it is a fixed abiding interest. He would not be satisfied to send, but would come Himself. What wonderful blessing! It would be an honour to be sent for as redeemed ones who are everything to Him. I may send to meet a person I make something of; but if I make a great deal of him, I go myself.

He goes on to tell us how we know it all now, so that our souls live in it while He is away. The blessed Lord's death— redemption—giving us a title to be in no less a place than the Father's house, like and with Himself. But while His death accomplished that for us, it was a total breach with the world. "The world seeth me no more." He is going to the Father's house, and the world and the Father are in direct opposition. "The friendship of the world is enmity with God." They saw no beauty in Him that they should desire Him. And when He was rejected by the world, He went up to sit at the Father's right hand. The accepted One of the Father was the rejected

One of the world. Man may have hopes that he is going to do a great deal with man. God has done all as to responsibility. And at last He says, 'I have one Son, they will reverence him.' But they said, "Come, let us kill him." The Lord says, "Now is the judgment of this world." The obedient, accepted One of the Father sits on His right hand, on His total rejection by the world, and He takes His redeemed ones with Him there. We get the place of sons; we are to have the glory; to be conformed to the image of His Son, the First-born among many brethren. While His work on the cross put away our sins, it gives us a place with Him and like Him in the glory.

After the statement of this in the first three verses we get how to realise it now in our souls. There are two parts—First, the object that is before us; and second, the power that is in us. First He tells us the place He is going to take us to—it is the Father's house. And what makes the Father's house of importance to the child—if he has right affections? It is, that the Father is there. The blessedness of being there is that the Father is there. Christ is there too. However feebly we may enjoy it now, when we talk of 'going to heaven,' it is going to the Father. The Lord says, 'No man cometh to the Father, but by me." He was going to the Father, and bringing us in spirit there now, hereafter actually in glory. Therefore they say, "Shew us the Father." No one has seen God at any time; but there is that blessed relationship of the Father to the Son, and to us as putting us in His place. He brings us to the Father. So He says, "Where I go ye know, and the way ye know." Thomas thought of a place. "We know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way? "The Lord says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." And then we get the

point— “No man cometh to the Father, but by me.” If I know the Father, I know where He has gone and where I am going. When Philip says, “Shew us the Father,” He answers, ‘You have the Father this long time with you revealed in the Son. He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.’ There we have this blessed truth, that when the Lord tells us He is going to bring us to the Father’s house, we know what the blessedness of that house is, we know the centre of it. We know the Father because He is perfectly revealed in the Son. In coming to Christ I have found the way. I may see “through a glass darkly”; but as to the object, I have got the Father Himself revealed in Christ, so that in believing on the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ I know the blessedness I am called to—the place of Christ as Son, He who is the source and centre of eternal blessedness, loving-kindness, and favour. It is not the mere abstract theory of God and of a holy place that it is; but I stand in a perfect relationship, and the Spirit of adoption crying Abba in my heart, there is a consciousness of the love that has put me in this place of favour. If I say, How can I know I have seen the Father, a poor worm such as I? Have you seen Christ (not with the outward eye, but seen Him by faith)? “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.”

The spring of all our blessedness is in Christ, actually when He comes, and the soul lives in it now as far as he is in heavenly-mindedness, and in spirit enjoys it all, looking forward in the brightness and blessedness of hope to being there. I must for this understand the work as well as the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is my tide. I know in His death my sins are perfectly put away, and what He has done is so perfect in glorifying God, that He has taken His place at the right hand of God as

man, and that gives me a place. He can say, “Glorify thy Son.” There we get the relationship, and then, “I have finished the work that thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me,” etc. That is the tide by the work, and He has done the work for me. He has gone to the Father, and in Him is the way to go. He makes us feel that blessing is for us as a present thing. I quite admit we see through a glass darkly; but the things I shall get in heaven are not things I have not had revealed on earth. I have not seen the glory, but if I speak of the Father’s love as my portion there, it is that which has given me Christ now. If of my title, it is no new thing, but the work and blood-shedding of Christ; if of eternal life, I have it now in His Son (shall have it fully then). Whether the thing enjoyed or the title to enjoy, we have it now, though we do not apprehend it fully. What a thought to be able to say, according to Christ’s own thoughts of the blessedness of heaven, I have it now. He was revealing the Father’s name. “I have declared thy name unto them, and will declare it.” What He tells them is: ‘Now you have seen the Father, the very one my delight is in, and my joy (eternally infinite, of course), the One that I walk on earth with, that I am one with. I have brought you into this relationship with Him, and revealed Him to you.’ How far can we say, I have got on earth what I am to have in heaven—the revelation of the Father in the Son? What settled quietness of spirit it gives, to have found yourself with the Father, through the knowledge of the Son, in confidence of heart! Have your hearts got that? Are they really occupied with the Father? (worshipping, of course; but the clearer the knowledge of the relationship is, the more worship there will be). He is the way. Can you say, I have been that way, and He has brought me to the Father? That is, in

this world; it will be no new thing up there. “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.” Can our hearts say, I have found the Father in Christ? That is what the Lord was insisting on; and there was far more ignorance then than now, for the Holy Ghost had not come.

The second part of this chapter—the power that is in us — begins at verse 15. The Lord says, I cannot stay, but I will send you One who will abide with you. The Holy Ghost is only known by being in us. Christ was before them, they could see Him. Everything that came out from Christ to the world was the manifestation of God, His words and His works, and the world was called on to believe that He was there, the blessed testimony of the goodness of God in the midst of their needs and their wretchedness, and they would not have Him. That is not the way with the Comforter—they cannot see Him. Fruits ought to be shewn; but no person is manifested. When the Holy Ghost came down, there was power that struck them, and fruits of grace where the Spirit works, which are a deeper testimony—for a wicked man can do a miracle, or a dumb ass speak, if God choose. Therefore He is only known where He dwells. The effect of the Spirit is, “I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.” The Holy Ghost brings Christ to our hearts, and He dwells in our hearts. “The world seeth me no more; but ye see me”; and mark what it is connected with, “Because I live, ye shall live also.” The power of divine life was triumphant over death, and where a person believed on Him, Christ is brought, through the presence and power of the Spirit, to that man’s heart much closer and nearer than if He were on earth. Not that the eye sees Him; but He says, ‘I am going to be with you and in you, in a far better way, that the world

cannot see or know.' The Holy Ghost testified to the world of all this; but He is not here to be received by the world, but is given to those who believe, and the moment He is given He brings Christ down to the heart. Our immediate intercourse with Christ is established. He comes to us by the power and presence of the Holy Ghost. The One who "loved me, and gave himself for me," that He might redeem me by blood, and who has washed me in His blood, and done everything for me—I have got Him. A poor vessel I am for Him to dwell in, but when we are cleansed by the blood, fit for God, He comes and dwells in me. How far do all our souls know that? He has not left me comfortless, He has come; I know what it is to have Christ, to hear His voice. In the world I have tribulation, but I know what it is to have peace in Him. "Ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also." He is in us, the power of eternal life, and He must die before I die. The life I have got is, "Not I, but Christ lives in me." What a thing to be able to say! He has overcome death, broken all its bands. He lives as man; and if He lives as triumphant over it all, I shall live also. How blessed to have it from His own lips, anxious to have us happy! He says, 'Do not be uneasy, I am going to prepare a place for you, and meantime I will come to you and reveal Myself to you. I will not leave you comfortless.'

"At that day ye shall know," etc. (v. 20). The believer knows the Lord Jesus Christ. The lowly Man down here has gone up there, and he sees himself in Christ, and Christ in himself. We get the consciousness of His standing before God and before the world. I have a place —what a place!—in Christ, where the Father's delight is; delight in His obedience, His perfection, His glorifying

God; a place in Christ Himself, with the affections that flow from it: “My Father and your Father, my God and your God.” We get at the same time, beloved friends, what we are before the world. If I am in Christ, He is in me, and what I have to do is to manifest the life of Christ, that others may see Christ in my walk and ways and spirit. What a blessing to be able to say, I know I am in Christ and He is in me, as to present relationship! It is God’s delight to make us sons with Christ; and His work is so perfect in cleansing us, that the Holy Ghost can come and give us the consciousness of it: it makes us heavenly in our ways. We have seen that we know the place we are going to, we know the way, we know the Father and the Son; and now we get that, in order to have the present consciousness of it, we have the Holy Ghost.

Now He takes up the practical realisation of it: obedience is the path. Not only He dwells in me and comforts me, but there is manifestation in the path of obedience. The characteristic of those that love Him will be obedience (v. 21). When we get to this close relationship, the sign of love is knowing the wishes of the person you love. Where Christ is precious, there is attentiveness. It is not, “Can I do this?” but, “Is it pleasing to Him?” Many Christians have not His commandments. Why? Because they have something else. If we had an open ear—wakened morning by morning—we should have His commandments, we should know His mind, and what He wishes. I can find out the wishes of my father if I am thoughtful and attentive. He that has them, and keeps them not, is worse, of course. He that loves Him gets the “secret of the Lord.” There are Christians who do not get the

manifestation of the delight and favour of Christ; but there it is for them. We are very feeble; but the Lord's heart is true if our hearts are not; and if we loved Him, we should want to have things according to His wish and mind, and that only; if I could please Him I should be satisfied, and should have the present enjoyment of Christ because my heart was walking in obedience. There is the anticipation of what is heavenly when walking in this path. The Father and the Son come and make their abode with us (v. 23). How little we have this manifestation! The Lord's heart is on them, they cannot be happy here; but they are to look for the blessedness of being with the Father, and 'we will come and abide in you, till you can come and abide with us'; but it must be in this path.

Mark what He says in verse 27. He has not only made peace, but "my peace I give unto you," as He always does; He has brought us into the same place with Himself. What was the peace of Christ? He was here in uninterrupted intercourse with the Father, carrying His joy with Him. He had "meat to eat ye know not of," joy where all were rejecting Him—the peace of perfect communion. Christ puts us into His place, and we have fellowship with the Father; and when we walk in that, we have this peace of Christ, like Matthew 11:29. Where the will is broken, we have the peace of the man who has no will but the will of Christ, keeping His commandments, nothing disturbing communion. The saint passing through this world in obedience and communion, where there is no self-will, walks in peacefulness, the peace that Christ had! His love will give us all He had; the same place as sons by grace, the same place in heaven, in the glory. His heart is bent on

blessing us. He may chasten us if necessary; but He gives the consciousness of being in Him and He in us. The world gives liberally; but it gives away. Christ never does j He brings us into the enjoyment of what He enjoys. Because His love is perfect, He brings us where He is Himself, and His delight is that we are enjoying it.

One more thought, which perhaps is the most wonderful of all: the way Christ shews how completely His heart has associated itself with us, and us with it. We worship Him as the One who is worthy of all worship, but inasmuch as He has exercised love to us, He associates us with Himself, and expects us to rejoice in His happiness (v. 28). What a place to give us! To be able to say,' I am happy because He is glorified '; our hearts satisfied that Christ, who has loved us and made us happy, is contented! We see Him in the glory due to Him, and we are satisfied. He says, 'If you think of yourselves, you are sorry; but if you were thinking of Me, you would be delighted.' He expects us to be glad in His happiness! Are our hearts there—so resting in the fulness of His work, having His peace and joy in this world, that we can be interested in His glory? Do you accept that place as to the state of your hearts? He has purchased a "peculiar people, to be zealous of good works." He has brought you to Himself, to have your whole heart wrapped up in His interests, your thoughts, actions, everything for Him. I am sure we shall find our weakness; but are we living enough out of the world (not merely out of its pleasures, but its cares), and enough with Christ, for Him to have a large place in the daily thoughts of our hearts? The more my eye is open on His unspeakable blessedness, the weaker I am; but have we the consciousness from the time we get up in the

morning till we go to bed at night, that our hearts are with Christ, as redeemed ones in the place we are going to—a consciousness that He is in us, and we identified with Him? The Holy Ghost is given that we may know what a place it is. The Lord give us diligence of heart to feed on Him, and get our hearts associated with Him, that we may find not only contrast with this evil world, but also know the place into which He has brought us before His Father.

## Our Responsibility

John 15

It is to be remarked that in this part of the gospel of John you get, not the sovereignty of grace towards us which saves, but our individual responsibility and blessing consequent upon our known relationship with the Father as we walk in this place. Christ is looking for their walk as disciples consequent upon their position as clean through His word. “He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and will manifest myself unto him.” This is the order here.

It is not “We loved him because he first loved us”; but “He that loveth me shall be loved.” He first puts us in a place of favour, and then there is the consequent responsibility. There is not, of course, any question of uncertainty as to salvation; but He has put us into a certain position as saved, in which, through grace, we are to glorify Him. The path in which He enjoyed His Father’s love was a path of unclouded joy, and it was a path of undivided obedience. He here shews His disciples if they are to walk in the light and favour of His countenance, they must walk in the same path as He did Himself. We should so walk, that we should have Christ’s joy fulfilled in us.

There are one or two details connected with this, to which I wish to refer. When I speak of an unclouded joy belonging to my place in heaven, it is another thing. We are simply perfect if looked at in Christ in heavenly places. Here He is looking at Himself as on earth, and

we are also seen on earth, and it is as here below that He would have His joy remain in us and our joy full.

Christ here takes the place of the true vine in which Israel had totally failed. His disciples were the branches, and He looks at them to bear fruit down here. You find all through this chapter He puts our responsibility first. He says, “He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit.” He calls upon them to abide in Him in order that He may be able to abide in them. If we look at chapter 17 the order is reversed. There it is “I in them” first. It is not here a question of safety or of God’s keeping them on to the end, but entirely one of fruit-bearing. We are called in the active reverence of our hearts to stay continually with Christ; to abide in Him; to draw strength continually from Him in active diligence of heart. The words “I in you,” in this passage, are the consequence of our first abiding in Him. “Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me.” “He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit.” That we may bear fruit is what He is thinking of here, and so be truly His disciples. “Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit.”

“If ye abide in me and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you.” By abiding in Christ I get guidance of heart; for then the words of Christ direct all my thoughts. Here I also get the power of abiding. Complete dependence on Christ, and His words abiding in me, I can ask what I will, for it will be what He wills—and it shall be done. There is in this such dependence on, and living with Christ, that my mind, and will, and thoughts, are all formed by Christ’s

words; and I have full power to ask what I will. He was constantly looking to, and living by, His Father; with Jesus, it was always perfect fruit-bearing; and we are His disciples if we follow Him in that path.

“As the Father hath loved me so have I loved you.” It is not here simply the eternal love of the Father to the Son, but divine love to one walking in this world, whose word was, “I do always those things that please him.” This was a love which took up the disciples as walking down here. He could put them in the same relation to Himself that He was in to His Father. “As the Father hath loved me (the Son) so have I loved you; continue ye in my love.” They were walking here on earth in that blessed relationship which He Himself had known. He wants us not only to abide in Him and get strength, so as to bear fruit to His and the Father’s glory, but that we may abide in the continual, uninterrupted sense and enjoyment of His love. He gives Himself as our example: “As I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love.” I need not say how He abode in it! “If ye keep my commandments ye shall abide in my love”: still our responsibility— obedience to Christ’s words. It is not here a question of the Father loving the Son, as from eternity the beloved One. It was as He is seen walking in this world in a path of perfect obedience, and abiding in Him. If there is in us a spirit of simple obedience to Him, we abide in His love. If we do a thing because He said it, we abide in His love.

“These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you” (that is, “abide in you”; it is the same word all through). He had no joy from the world. He had perfect joy in the Father. His joy was in bringing forth fruit to the Father’s glory. He is thus shewing to us how

in fruit-bearing we can have joy and blessedness down here. “That your joy might be full.” That is what He wants us to have—fulness of joy: and it is not from the world, but the kind of joy He had. It is His desire that we should have His own joy. “That my joy should remain in you, and that your joy should be full.” So it is to the heart that is walking with and abiding in Him. If we have joy, it is His joy. If it is reproach, it is His reproach. It is His, whatever it is, to the heart that walks in the blessed consciousness of being in the same path that He trod here; and nothing else will do for the devoted heart. We ought not to be content without it, without the sense that we are abiding in His love, keeping His commandments, and walking like Him, in the fullest enjoyment of the Father’s love, taking His words as our guide, keeping His commandments, and abiding thus in Him, He puts this confidence in us, but all connected with responsibility.

“This is my commandment that ye love one another, as I have loved you.” If I look at the love of Christ for them, what I see in it is, that it was above all the wretchedness of the poor disciples—above all their failure. When I am not above a thing it acts upon myself, but when I am entirely above it I can think for it all, as well as with it. The Lord being above all the failure and wretchedness could, if a right feeling, feel with His disciples; if an infirmity, He could feel for them. He can enter into it all in a divine way, because of a divine mind; and with divine goodness, because He is above it all! His word to us is, “Love one another, as I have loved you.” By clinging close to Christ, and learning from Him, we can love in the same kind of way in which He loved; and in this way we can recognise anything good, and of Him in

our brethren, and learn to esteem others better than ourselves; that is what He expects—looks for in us. It is impossible unless we keep with Christ. What a path was His here! There never was such an isolated man as Christ, and yet there never was one who felt for others as He did.

“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends; ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you.” He does not say He is the friend of sinners here; He speaks of their being His friends if they did what He commanded. Still our responsibility. He is treating them with perfect confidence. The true disciple He treats with the confidence of being His friend, otherwise He was betraying the confidence of His Father in telling His secrets. If I go to a person on a matter of business, I merely tell him my business, and have done with him; but if I go to a friend, I can tell hini all that is on my own mind, even about what does not concern him at all, having full confidence in his love and his interest in what concerns me. “Henceforth I call you not servants but friends, for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.” Whatever I have had in my heart I have told you. What a place He sets us in! How we ought to hate ourselves for the constant way in which self hinders us from this blessed place of enjoyment. But what a comfort to the restored soul it is to find, that when we have learnt totally to distrust ourselves, Christ strengthens us and trusts us. He did so to Peter by those three questions— “Lovest thou me?” When Peter replies, You know, Lord, that I love you, He puts confidence in him, and says, “Feed my sheep; feed my lambs.” But until all that is in us is perfectly

humbled, He cannot put trust or confidence in us. How could He do it, when we cannot trust ourselves?

“If the world hate you, you know that it hated me before it hated you.” “If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.” Here we get the source of the world’s hatred. Not only is it our walk that the world does not like us for, but for the place Christ has chosen us for, “out of the world”—a peculiar place, that we may be a peculiar people. It is because they are Christ’s that the world cannot like them. We should let our fight shine forth, and our confession of Christ be so distinct, that the world might know who they are to reckon the good works to—that we belong to Christ. We must take that place as thus confessing Christ here. He takes us to be His people, and we walk upon that ground. Of course there must be consistency on it. He looks for it; so does the world! Whatever would not suit Christ would not suit the Christian. We should not take that name to dishonour it. He has called us out to go with Him. How far are our hearts prepared to take our place before all the world and say, I am Christ’s; I belong alone to Him? If, in reply, they ask you what right you have to take that place, and say, “We, too, belong to Christ,” you can ask them to come and take their place with Him, else how could you own them as His?

What we look for is to abide in Christ, and to bear fruit to His and the Father’s glory. It is a lowly place—a blessed place; one of entire dependence upon Him, for without Him we can do nothing. May we know its exceeding blessedness for His name’s sake. Amen.

## Christ’s Desires For The Christian

John 17

This chapter has a very peculiar character, in that it is not the address of the Lord Jesus to His disciples even, much less to the world. It is their admission to hear Him address His Father about them. And we can easily understand that, where such a privilege is given them, we should be let into the fullest possible apprehension of the place in which He has set us. When He spoke to the world, Christ suited Himself to their capacity; and we, in our measure, ought to seek to do the same. But when He was addressing His Father, we can naturally understand that He would speak freely of what He had on His heart about His disciples. But still, as it concerned them (now, through grace, we have received the Spirit, who communicates these things to our souls), He spoke it in the audience of the disciples, so that they should hear and know what His heart felt about them. Let me ask you this: If we find that Christ has an interest in us, and that He is speaking to His Father, and speaking of us, of what He has on His heart for our blessing; do our hearts turn with interest to listen, and to know what He feels about us? We have wretched, cold hearts, it is true; nothing is worse than their deadness and indifference to God. An openly bad, vile man of the world is bad enough; but if I saw a son do what was wrong, and if his father went out and intreated him with all the tender affection of a father, and he did not trouble his heart about what he said, I should say, There is no hope now.

Therefore, when I find this first truth, that Christ has us on His heart, and can speak to His Father, about us—

that we are become the object of their common interest, surely our hearts should turn to it. “These things,” He said, “I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves” (v. 13). The character of Christ’s love, being perfect, was to bring us into the same blessing with Himself. It is very true, but it is not all the truth, that we are blessed through Christ: we are blessed with Him, and that was the perfection of His love. He loves us enough to have us near Him, and have us all in the perfectness of His own heart; and having opened our understandings to see what He is, He gives us the consciousness of His own perfect love. “We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.” If I always saw perfect blessedness before me, with the consciousness at the same time that I never should have it, that would not give comfort to my heart; but if I have a perfect object before me, with a certainty that I shall possess it, I shall be occupied with that object. Whilst here below we have the consciousness in looking at our blessing in Christ, that we are not perfectly like what He is; we desire it, we long to be conformed to the image of Christ. But still, if we have in any measure tasted the loveliness of Christ, what distresses the heart is that we are not like Him. But here Christ engages the affections, and brings the heart to this point—the consciousness that this is our place in Him before God, and that all the blessedness that He has is ours. Does it become us to say no? Is it humbleness to be short of that, to say we are unworthy? Is God right? But it is no humbleness to refuse grace. And then, when it is seen to be such grace —unmingled grace—it is no humbleness to speak of not being fit to have such things. If I talk about not being quite worthy, there is the thought that if I were worthier I should be fit to have these blessings. Here is just

where the want of humbleness is. You ought to be on the right ground with the Lord. That which enables us to have this thought and desire of being brought into the presence and blessing of God, and to be like Christ, is, that all is grace; we are nothing. If we look at the glory that is before us, it at once puts out the thought of all worthiness in ourselves.

Here, then, the Lord is just setting us in His own place upon earth. Poor feeble creatures we are for it; but He is setting us in His place on earth. “Father,” He says, “I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me.” This chapter is often spoken of as being a prayer. The half is a prayer; but all the other part is a plain and full exposition of the ground on which He places us, beginning with His going up to heaven, and then going on to the glory which He will give us. There is the prayer too—a prayer for us while we are passing through the trials and difficulties of this world. Christ gives us this place with Himself above; but He speaks while still in the world, that we might have it from His own lips in the world. It is not as taking us out of the world; but He begins it all from that starting-point, that we shall be in the glory. When He was here He did not want any witness; He was Himself the heavenly witness; but now He is gone He sets His saints as His living active epistle in a world that they do not belong to, any more than He did.

First, then, look at the way in which He introduces us into this place. You will see in the first few verses that it is a question of Himself being glorified: “These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father,… glorify thy Son:… as thou hast given him power

over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him… I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." Now there are two thoughts which the Lord brings out here. He says, "Glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee"—that is the title which His Person gives Him to this glory. And the other is, "I have glorified thee on the earth," etc.; "And now, O Father, glorify thou me," etc.; that is, the Lord presents these two grounds on which He is asking for His glory as man. He is glorified in virtue of His Person, and then glorified in virtue of His work.

It is in connection with both these titles that we have to see our place on earth. He takes His place with the Father in virtue of His own personal title, and in virtue of His accomplished work. There is the basis which He lays for our admission into this place of blessing; and at the close He says, "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." The love wherewith the Father had loved Christ should be in the disciples. They should enjoy it; they should have His joy fulfilled in themselves. It is this that we are called to: the enjoyment in this world of the love that Christ knew here below—of His Father's love. He was there the Son of God, as man in this world; and what was His delight? Was it from the world? Surely not. Was He of the world? He was not. He was walking in the world; but His character and place while there was as the Son of the Father. There was His joy; not from the world, any more than He was of it, but from the Father. There was His

constant blessedness. The wellspring of His delight in a world that hated Him was the constant inflowing of the Father's love to Him. He was His beloved Son, in whom He was well pleased. Now the first point is, how such as we are can get into such a place. The Lord always retained the perfect consciousness of His Father's love. How can a sinner get there? Though He had declared His Father's name to the disciples (take, for an example, the sermon on the mount), did they understand it? »No; they had not the Spirit of adoption. He revealed the name and character of the Father, but their hearts did not enter into this relationship. Christ, as man walking down here, was the Son of man which is in heaven. His Person gives Him this title. He walks through this world in suffering and trial. He suffers from man for righteousness' sake, and for love's sake. But whatever the suffering through which He was passing, He always addressed God as His Father during all the time of His life in this world; every expression of His heart was of His conscious relationship to God as Father. But when He comes to the cross, it is, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Upon the cross, all that God was in His holy hatred of sin fell on Christ for our sakes; and hence it was not then a question of love and fellowship; but all else that God was, His holiness, truth, majesty, righteousness, all was against Him, because in the cross He was as the One made sin for us. The one other thing in God's nature was His love, and that Christ necessarily could not then taste; therefore, on the cross, He does not say Father, but it is, "My God, my God!" Afterwards, when just expiring, He does say, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Never was He more perfect, never more acceptable to God, than on the cross. God was a debtor in that sense to Christ; for His character

was brought out as it never had been before. If God had merely swept away all men in anger, there would have been no love; if He had spared all in mercy, there would have been no righteousness. But Christ giving Himself up to death, and to the bearing of God's wrath on the cross, there is perfect righteousness against sin, and perfect love to the sinner. God was there fully glorified in all that He was. And now, the whole question of sin being settled, and all Christ was being proved in the resurrection—He says, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren." The Lord Jesus then comes, having been heard and answered in resurrection; and now He says, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God"; that is, He brings out both these names now: the relationship in which He had been as a Son with the Father all His life long, and the full effect of all that God was as such, which He had borne as wrath against sin, He now brings out as entirely for us. If it is a question of God's righteousness, we are made the righteousness of God in Christ. If it is His love, we are loved with the same love with which Christ was loved. Grace is reigning through righteousness by Jesus Christ. Everything that the Father can be towards sons that He delights in—as He was to Christ, so He reveals Himself to us. Sin is put entirely away, and by the very word of Christ Himself the disciples are even brought, by the efficacy of His work of redemption, into a place along with Himself. He declares His name unto His brethren, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father"; and He puts them in this place after death and judgment have been gone through, and He is risen out of them. While Christ was upon earth He remained entirely alone, because the atonement was

not made. “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone.” But He has died, and now He can bring them into the place belonging to Himself; and that is what He is doing now. Did sin hinder it? Yes; but it is put away. Did righteousness? Yes; but it is for them and for us.

If we speak of the sufferings of Christ, there were two kinds of suffering, quite distinct one from the other. In one sense He went through every possible kind of suffering. He suffered from man for righteousness’ sake, and He suffered from God for sin’s sake. The suffering from God for sin He took for us entirely alone; He suffered it that we might not suffer it. He took it fully—drank the cup to the very dregs, and it is done with. In His sufferings for righteousness’ sake, He gives us the privilege of suffering with Him. “Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.” If we suffer from man for righteousness’ sake, there we are with Him; but with suffering for sin we have nothing to do. He has taken it entirely alone: not one drop is left; no particle or trace of it remains for us. He took it that we might never have it. And now, having done that, He takes another place, in which man, as man, must necessarily remain a stranger to Him. But the fact, that Christ is gone up on high, is the reason why I can be with Him. When He was upon earth, I could not be in any full sense with Him. Why? Because He was holy, and I was not. But when sin has been put away, and He is gone into heaven, and has taken a place there in the presence of God, He has done that by which J can draw near. He has gone into the presence of God, and gives me a title to be there (Heb. 10:19, 20). Thus, the glory in which Christ is, which He

has entered as having accomplished redemption, enables me to be with Him, instead of being a hindrance. I never could be with Him, if He had not been in this glory. He might visit us in mercy, but it is as risen from the dead arid gone up on high that He gives us the place of union with Himself before God.

What He is doing now, is to reveal this name of the Father to us. When He spoke to Abraham He said, “I am the Almighty God; walk before me.” God revealed Himself in a character on which Abraham’s faith was to act: it is the revelation of Himself as the One who was all-powerful, whatever might be the difficulties of the path; and Abraham was to live by faith in that name. He says to Moses, “I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name Jehovah was I not known to them.” Now He takes this name with Israel: He puts Himself in relation with Israel by the name of Jehovah. He was the unchanging One, who would be faithful to His word and oath, however many the changes that Israel might have to pass through. He was thus a perfect Protector; He was the Almighty One; He was Jehovah; but that is not what I want, blessed as it is in its place. I want eternal life. But He comes now with another name. The Son reveals the Father’s name. If I have found this, that the Father has sent the Son to be a Saviour, and that this work is accomplished, I say this is not now merely a Faithful and Almighty Protector, or the one true God that governs the world righteously: He is interested in my salvation. He takes this place of a Father to me, if I receive His Son. I get in Christ the revelation of my place with God, and that, consequent upon the blessed truth that He has taken away the sin that shut me out from the presence

of God, and has gone up before the Father, that I may have the very same place that belongs to Him as the Son of die Father. Can I possibly have more than that? Yet there is even more than that. In virtue of it, there is the Comforter sent down. “If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.” The Holy Ghost comes down because of Christ’s being exalted at the right hand of God. He becomes the Spirit of adoption. “Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.” So that the place in which we find Christ thus glorified, we find the believer set in, as this righteousness presented to God. The Holy Ghost is given as that which seals me, and gives me the power and blessing of the place into which Christ has brought me. “This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.” There is the relationship. Then there is the work, “I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.” He asks then that the Father should glorify Him, and adds, “I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world… Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee.” It was not merely what Messiah received from God, but what the Son had from the Father, that was made known to them. And He adds, “I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them,” etc.

Two things you will find connected with the position in which the disciples are thus set; first, that which ministers to their joy, and then the place which they have as witnesses for Him in the world. He has

communicated to them all the means of this joy: “I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me.” “Henceforth,” as He said before, “I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth; but I have called you friends: for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.” Now He puts us in the place of sons, and as sons the words that the Father gives Him He makes known unto us. What Christ does is to bring us into the enjoyment of His own relationship and place with God. The first thing He does is to secure our being in it by this work of atonement. Then, having wrought this, the next thing is to give us the name by which we are called to know God as the Father; and accordingly He gives us the words of the Father, that we- may have the joy of this place in which He has set us. “I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine…. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.” He puts them under the shelter of the name “holy Father.” He looked for them to be kept with all the Father’s tenderness; that is, they are in this world under this name of holy Father. And then He presents these two motives to His Father for keeping them: first, “for they are thine”; and the other is, “I am glorified in them.”

Do you believe that the Lord was speaking the truth? When He says He tells us these things that we might have His joy fulfilled in ourselves, did He really mean so? I believe it. I believe that the Lord meant us to have His joy fulfilled in ourselves. If you tell me that we are poor feeble vessels to have it, that is most true; but He did not speak thus. The possession of life is not power. Power is in Christ, and in Christ alone; for the character

of the new man is dependent and obedient. If you say, I have life from God, and therefore I have got power, it is not true; but if you say, I have not got power, it is not true; but if you say, I have got life from God, but I have got the temptations of Satan and the world, and all that can seduce me away from the range and exercise of this life, and you say, “Father, keep me, I want to be kept,” then there will be power. When Paul gets into the third heaven, what is the effect? When there the flesh is not puffed up; for he is there to hear things which he cannot even utter down here. But when he comes down, the flesh would use it to say that no one had ever been in the third heaven but himself. He must get that broken down; therefore the thorn is sent which brings consciousness of weakness where boasting had been before. We are never in danger when in the presence of God; but when we are thinking of having been there, danger is there: the thorn gives conscious weakness to the man himself. In Paul’s case we know, it was something that made his preaching contemptible. The Lord has to put us down in every way. The danger of the Christian is, that he is not consciously weak, that the flesh is not put in its place, that he thinks he can do something; but when the flesh is put down, where it had pretended to be something, then the believer can say, “When I am weak, then am I strong,” and Christ is exalted. For when Paul, with all this incompetency, was the means of such blessing to others, it is quite clear that it was Christ, and not Paul, that was the strength. This is the truth that is brought out before us in 2 Corinthians 12: perfect righteousness and glory, which are ours, or the man in Christ; and then the man made nothing of, and Christ in him everything. There is where we get the Christian complete. In both cases it is Paul;

but in the one it is the man in Christ, and in the other it is Christ in the man, and the man thus made nothing of. That which the believer has on earth is not only this place in Christ in heaven, but the power of Christ in this world. While we certainly shall have the experience of what we are, at the same time the scriptures shew us always, as such, no necessity in this world for being anything else but Christ. “To me to live is Christ.” The fact that the flesh is in me is no reason that I am to walk after it. The power is not in the fact that we have the life, but in exercised dependence upon the life that we have got in Christ.

We have seen the full blessedness of this place, that we may have His joy fulfilled in ourselves, and now He goes on to their testimony before the world. “I have given them thy word, and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” Here I find the Christian’s place in the world: he is no more of it than Christ. He does not say, They ought not to be; but “They are not of the world even as I am not of the world.” As Christians deriving your life from Christ, and having your place with Christ, you are not of the world. The life, the place you have in Christ, all flows from the fact that He has given you a relationship with the Father, in virtue of which you are no more of the world than He Himself was. There is the manifesting of Christ to the world; but these duties and affections flow from a relationship that is established already. It is not as the way of getting into the relationship; but when Christ has become my life, then I must walk as He walked. To the world this becomes a testimony. Of what? What became of Christ Himself? The world would not have Him. “O righteous Father, the world hath not

known thee." It was as good as saying, "There is a complete breach between the world and me." Christ comes into the world in grace, revealing the Father, and the world hated Him; and therefore He goes out of the world, and brings us into His place as gone on high. Will the world bear us any more love than it bore Him? It will not. He is there because the world would not have Him; and it is only as having entered that place by blood and death that He can say, "My Father and your Father, my God and your God." Now, He says, I will make you a witness of that. You are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world," etc.

How are we to get the character and spirit proper to us as such? It is not that we can always be in the third heaven, but that if living the life of Christ, in the power of the Spirit, we shall be manifesting it before the world as it was with Christ Himself. He could say even as to His path down here, "The Son of man which is in heaven." Was there ever anything in Christ inconsistent with the third heaven? Therefore my life being there, and my care and affections, I shall walk according to that place. Where is the pathway for such a life through this world? "I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them," etc. "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." That is not quite all. Christ is the truth: the word of God is truth about everything. Do I want to know what my heart is? The word tells me. Do I want to know what God is? The word tells me. What Christ as a Saviour is? What Satan and his wiles are? The word will tell me. And therefore I have the word to make all plain, when I want to go through the world,

which is a labyrinth for any one else; for a labyrinth it naturally must be to all, and to the infidel specially. God is love, and yet here I see such misery of every kind around me: the child of three days old agonising perhaps through the fault of its parents; suffering and sorrow everywhere. Nobody, I say, can understand this: it is unaccountable, except as the word of God, which is truth, explains it all. Take Christ Himself; He can appeal to them and say, “Which of you convinceth me of sin?” Yet how does it end? He is obliged to confess before men that God has forsaken Him. Their hard hearts take advantage of this, and say, If God delight in Him, let Him deliver Him. All is inexplicable; and those who would make this world, as it is, a proof of the righteous government of God, are just doing what the friends of Job did. They were saying that this world could be explained as the present expression of God’s moral government. But no; there is Job, and he is in the depth of suffering. He was very naughty, but he spoke more rightly than they. He says I have seen the righteous man suffering. He wants to find God. He says, Oh, if I could see Him! but [ cannot find Him. All this, I again say, is in itself inexplicable. But the moment I search into the word of God, I have got the key to it all. Take the infidel upon his own ground, and he has not a word to say: he is the least capable of any of explaining the facts that are going on every day; for they are inexplicable, except as sin has come in.

“Sanctify them through thy truth.” It is the word of God applied to judge every thought and feeling that is in me. He does not say, “Sanctify them by the law,” but by the word. Persons take the law as a rule, but you want power; you want an object that seizes your affections.

What object does the law give you? Where is the thing, the One, you are to love? Where is He? Who is He? The law cannot and does not tell me, save of a Judge: I have no object before my soul to give me blessed and holy affections; but the Father's word does give me this. That is what He goes on to immediately. "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." Now I get something more than the word; it is Christ Himself who is the substance of all that the word speaks about. And therefore Christ says, as regards His place, "For their sakes I sanctify myself." He has gone up to glory, and there sets Himself apart as the object for our hearts. The Holy Ghost reveals Him to me, and the word is the revelation of all that is in Christ; it brings to me all that Christ is: "Sanctify them through thy truth." How? "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified through the truth." I have now got an object: it is the truth, which will judge everything that is in my heart. This it is that sanctifies me, by shewing me the one whom I love, and who has said that I am going to be like Him. Christ has got hold of my heart, has given me a place with Himself and has fitted me for it by the revelation of Himself to my heart. And that is what I find here. And besides this place, I get the Comforter sent down, taking of the things of Christ, and shewing them to me; revealing to me that He has given what He has, that I may have it with Him, that I may be like Him, when I see Him as He is. And now the sanctifying power is, that the Spirit takes of these things and shews them unto me. More than all, Christ Himself is mine. He is the perfect and blessed Man set apart in the presence of God; and that, transported into my heart in the living

power that it has in me through the Spirit, sets me apart to God. It is the truth that sanctifies me; but if I look at what the truth is perfectly, it is Christ. We, “beholding the glory of the Lord, with unveiled face, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” “For their sakes,” as our Lord says here, “I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.”

“Neither pray I for these alone” (He brings in other Christians here), “but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.” He imparts to us all that He has taken as man in blessing and glory. He will have us enter into His joy while upon earth; and then I find, “And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one even as we are one.” When the Lord comes, and when the saints are displayed in the glory of Christ, and with Him, that will be the revelation to the world that we have been loved as Christ has been loved. “I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one: and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.”

But even this is not the best thing He has to give us. He goes on to say, “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.” While He has given us the glory of the inheritance, He puts us before the world as those who have been brought into the same glory with Himself. “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in

glory." And then the world will say, These poor people, that we have despised, are loved with the same love Christ was loved with. But while all that is true and most blessed, we shall, besides, have the enjoyment of Himself. We ought to have it now. "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." We get the present knowledge that we are loved as Jesus is loved; for He has declared the Father's name to us, and will declare it, that the love wherewith He is loved may be in us, and He in us. There is the place in which He puts the Christian now. Christ will bring us into the glory; but even that, in a sense, is an inferior thing, compared to the enjoyment of Christ Himself. I do not wait till then to know that I am loved as Christ is loved; I know it now; the world will know it then. All being founded upon this work that He has done, and upon His being thus in the presence of God, who puts us in this Himself, we can say, I know that I am loved as the Father loves Jesus, if Christ says it; "that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." Is it in you? Have you believed Jesus' word, that the Father has loved you as He loved His own Son? It was not enough for Him to give His Son for you, but He puts you, in the same place, and loves you with the same love. If we grieve the Spirit we may not enjoy the power of it; but there is the place in which Christ has set us to stand with His Father and our Father, His God and our God, and to enjoy Him who is the truth, and who gives us the consciousness of being loved as He Himself is loved. It will be manifested before the world when He comes, but it is ours now; the Lord only give us to believe it. If we are seeking the world, that is not the Father's love, but enmity to it. "All that is in the world,

the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away," etc. You will find these three always opposed the one to the other—the flesh and the Spirit, the devil and the Son, the world and the Father, "All that is in the world," if our hearts seek after it, damps the enjoyment of the Father's love; for we are not of the world, even as Christ was not.

The Lord give you to know it, as it is testified of Jesus Himself, and then, as walking in His steps, and sanctified by the revelation of Himself in your heart, to enjoy the real consciousness of the blessedness of the love wherewith the Father loves you.

## The Responsible Man, And The Man Of Purpose

John 17

I notice first in this chapter that there is responsibility, but of an entirely new order; a responsibility which is connected with Christ, and which He has discharged; “I have glorified thee on the earth,” “I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world”: a responsibility which in righteousness towards God, and in grace to us, has put us into the same place as Himself. The Word has come down to us; and words have been brought, and we have believed them, and have known surely, as Jesus said, “that I came out from God.”

If we think of what was previously given by Moses, the law; it was but the measure of man, come down to the earth, and which claimed from man what he ought to be: a perfect rule for man. It was connected necessarily with responsibility, but the responsibility of the creature, and in which he failed; God was hidden behind it—He not coming to man, nor man to Him. But under it man fails. Then because of this breakdown, “Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ,” but came in when this need was thus made plain. Man failed in paradise, and failed out of paradise. He failed upon the question of righteousness by law; and rejected Christ come in grace. If we look at Jew or Gentile, we see Christ taking up this responsibility too before God, and putting away sin for us, by the sacrifice of Himself. He dies and closes up the whole scene in which that responsibility was. All is

summed up in the words of Jesus, “I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.”

Another thing is stated in this chapter, “I have glorified thee on the earth.” He came into the world not only as a man, but as the heir of promises; and they rejected Him in whom these promises were, as the promised seed. But He has secured the promises by the cross; and also laid the foundation for the eternal purposes of God in His death and resurrection. He who came with all the promises of God in His hand was rejected and killed. Salvation on God’s part is the answer to this wickedness on man’s. It was not merely that man was a sinner, but all that God would do for a sinner was refused— “Last of all he sent unto them his Son.” My soul and conscience are cleared by the very blood which was the proof of my sin and guilt. The purpose which was before the world can now be brought out, for righteousness has come in, and Christ as man has got a place in the glory of God, because He deserves it! This is the righteous foundation of the purposes of God; and He is there too in a work done for us.

In this ascended Lord we see the power of a life which has triumphed over death, and all the testimony that now comes to us, comes from thence. The Son is there, and there as a man in righteousness, according to God’s own nature. But God is not merely glorified in righteousness; but the Father, in love— “I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self.” The Father’s name is the spring of eternal life to us in the Son; and the Son as man has brought it in, and we have received it. It is not what Jehovah had given to the Messiah, but what the Father

has given to the Son. “These things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.” He has given the words to us that the Father gave to Him. These are the privileges that belong to us as believers.

The first three gospels present Christ to be received by man; but in John’s His people are called out by grace: it begins with His rejection; and they are separated from the world, and brought into this place of possession also. “All mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them”; this is the full grace of Christ. The Father’s words communicated to Christ are to bring us into every place which belongs to Christ. This is the revelation of God’s heavenly thoughts through His Son, where there can be nothing of responsibility as to man, as when under law; though man is treated by the gospel as a sinner, and needing grace. Christ is the revelation of what a perfect man is, and what everything in the world is to God. We are not of it.

When we look at Christ’s Person, what do we see? The Father in His Son! For it was the revelation of the Father in Christ. Philip said, “Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus said unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.” The expression of the Father was the living Christ. It was a revelation in the way suited to man as He was down here; for it was seen in the Man, who tabernacled with us, that He might associate our hearts with the Father as His was. “The glory thou gavest me I have given them”; again, “that the love wherewith thou lovest me may be in them.” Everything which He is and has Himself He brings us into; except, of course, what is essential to His eternal Sonship: the Father’s words, the life, the glory, the love,

with all the blessedness He has, and, what is not so pleasant to us, His separation from the world. But it is a portion with Himself now and hereafter. Moreover, He puts us in His own place of testimony to the world. “As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.” He was of God in the midst of the world, always Himself the revelation of God. And this is what a Christian is likewise.

“Sanctify them through thy truth.” The Word of God comes down (not like the law) and brings to my heart the measure and character of what Christ is. The truth, His word, which tells what God is, tells me what I ought to be as a child of the Father. Till God is revealed, how can I tell what I ought to be? But grace and truth tell me what the Father is, and what the world is: this is Cain’s city. What are the inventions of it, the telegraph and the like, to a man when he is going out of the world by death? But there is something more— “for their sakes I sanctify myself”: not simply a word come down, but a man gone up! Now I get where righteousness takes us, entirely separated from sinners, and gone into the place where my affections are fixed on Him. He is the model Man in glory, and I must purify myself by the hope of being with Him, as He is pure. The work is perfectly accomplished which makes me meet for the same place. The Holy Ghost takes these things and shews them to us. God hath revealed them to us by the Spirit, according to the purpose of God up there. The truth comes down through the rent veil to us, but I get the glory of the Man gone up, and who for our sakes has sanctified Himself that we also may be sanctified through the truth.

Another thing is, we should think of His glory and happiness. He expects us to be interested in Him; “If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I go unto the Father.” So entirely are we one with Him, and He one with us, He brings the love of God, wherewith He is loved, into the heart. The Christian is made up from this Christ. The eye that is upon Him sees God’s path even through this world. The responsible man has failed, but the Man of purpose was in love and grace below, and is now in righteousness and glory above.

The difficulty is to get a path, through the world where all is wrong, and I have got it, got it in Christ. He has met and cleared away the sins that were ours, and we have put off the old man, and got into the place of the second Man, in perfect acceptance with God. Our responsibility now is to manifest Him in our mortal body. “Holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners,” was His character, and this is ours. We shall find out our shortcomings, no doubt; but perfect grace has given us a place with Christ everywhere, and this must be held in spite of all failure. In truth, it is the recovering power of grace. The Lord gives us to believe in His love; that He has sanctified Himself for our sakes: and He expects our hearts to meet and answer to His own. Blessed place and portion! He sees in us morally, even now, the fruit of the travail of His soul.

## A Word On Cleaving To The Lord; Addressed To Young Converts

Acts 11

It is worthy of remark, that in this chapter we have the first account of Gentile converts: of the receiving, in sovereign goodness and grace, poor sinners who had not even the promises to boast of which God had given to the Jews. To such it is, too, that Barnabas comes with the earnest exhortation contained in verse 23: “That with purpose of heart they should cleave unto the Lord.” What Peter was taught here as to the Gentiles we all have to learn as to ourselves. When the blessed news of grace and pardon first reaches a sinner’s ears and heart, he rejoices in the thought of pardon and forgiveness. He does right. Jesus, the blessed Son of God, has met him in mercy with His precious blood. But with this the light enters into his soul. When there have been deep discoveries of sin before the soul has become happy, the peace of the soul is more settled. The sin to which grace is applied is in a measure already known. But when, through the proclamation of divine pardon, without previous convictions, the soul has suddenly received joy, though there is always the discovery that we are sinners, the knowledge of the depth of sin in the heart, and what has to be forgiven and cleansed, is very small. The consequence is, that, after God has called us, and the divine light has broken into our souls, we feel disturbed and uncertain, and even begin sometimes to doubt the fact of our being cleansed. This is wrong. The deeper discovery of sin and the knowledge of our own heart is useful. If we walk humbly and near to God, this

knowledge will be made, comparatively speaking, peacefully; if not, in humiliation and failure. But you may not call unclean, what God has cleansed. God has brought cleansing and pardon to us down here. We have not to wait for it until we go up there. God has cleansed you. You are clean now. But I desire to lead you to some further exercise of heart upon it, and clearer apprehension of God's ways: a fuller exercise of conscience, that your peace may be as solid as your joy was genuine when you first heard of grace and forgiveness.

In Luke 15 the great principle set for this, that it is God's happiness when we are brought back to Him. Of course the joy of the restored one comes in, but is not the primary thing. The object of all three parables is not to shew our joy, but the joy of God in our restoration. The three parables all teach the same grace, but we get, I believe, the joy of the Son, of the Spirit, and of the Father. But remark, that in the two first we find a grace which finds and brings back what was lost, without any further question of the state of the soul. In the third we have man's departure even into the lowest degradation of sin, and what passes in his soul on his return, till he is clothed in divine righteousness, with Christ in His Father's house. God has foreseen and provided for the whole case of the sinner. The younger son was as really a sinner when he left his Father's house as when he was eating husks with the swine. He had abandoned God to do his own will. But the Lord pursues the case to the full degradation of sin, for sin degrades man. The young man comes to himself, turns back towards God, is converted; but he has not yet met God, nor has he the best robe on him. He did not know in his conscience

divine righteousness. When he really meets his father, not only is he in tender love—only the more shewn because he has been lost—received when in his rags into his father's arms, but he is made righteously fit for the house, clothed with Christ. His father was on his neck when he was in his rags, but he was not received into the house in that state; he could not have been. But God has provided for the sinner what Adam in his innocence had not. He has provided Christ. Grace reigns through righteousness. The best robe, no part of the son's portion before he left, is now put on him, and he is fit for the house to which that robe belonged. All the extent of the soul's departure from God has been weighed. The soul may be exercised about it, and will till self is wholly given up as a ground on which we can stand with God: no going in legally as a hired servant. Before God it is rags and exclusion, or the best robe and joyful admission. All true experiences lead to that emptying of self, and Christ all, and we in Him before God. Then, as I have said, our peace is as solid as the joy of the thought of forgiveness was blessed, and the joy itself deeper, if not more genuine.

Another truth is connected with this. God having perfectly cleansed us by the blood of Christ, the Spirit dwells in the cleansed heart. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." The Spirit gives us the consciousness of our relationship as dear children. "Because ye are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." What manner of persons ought we to be, who are the temples of the Holy Ghost, we may well continually ask ourselves. But do not let failures make us doubt that we have it. Low and wretched as was the state the Galatians

had fallen into, they never doubted they had the Spirit of God; but they were getting wrong as to the ground of their standing, as to how they received it; so that the apostle had to ask them, “Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?” (Gal. 3:2). We are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance. We have life as truly as Christ is alive; but we are not yet in heaven. The thief, indeed, was privileged to be taken directly home, believing only to-day, but to-day the first companion Christ had in paradise. We do not look for such immediate departure, but our ground is the same; we are as truly saved, but not so soon to be in heaven. Rather have we to go through this evil world: to go through it as crucified with Christ, dead indeed, but risen—to go through it with His Spirit dwelling in us. Be careful lest you grieve that Spirit. You have to go through the world, bearing the name of Christ upon you. See that you bring no reproach upon that blessed name by being inconsistent. The world will be sharp to exclaim, There are your Christians! You will have to go through the world with God dwelling in you; to carry this treasure in an earthen vessel: entrusted with this treasure, an habitation of God through the Spirit. Of course it is only through His grace that you can carry such a treasure through an evil world; but there is power in Christ, there is sufficiency in Christ for all He would have you to do or be.

He exhorted them that they should cleave to the Lord. Depend on Him. Some are allowed to have a long season of joy on first believing, but God knows our hearts, and how soon we should be depending on our joy, and not on Christ. He is our object: joy is not our object. Do not let

your joy lead you to forget the source of it, and then it need never wane. This joy is right and beautiful in its place; I am not saying a word against it—God forbid. But I warn you against resting in it. Do not lean on it for strength. There is danger of joy, however genuine, making you forget how dependent you are every moment. Depend upon Him: cleave to Him with purpose of heart. Do not be content with being happy (may you continue so!), but with Paul, forgetting the things which are behind press on, etc. (Phil. 3). I have seen many Christians so full of joy that they thought there was no such thing as sin left. It is true sin no longer remains on you; but the flesh is in you to the end. The old stock is there, and you will find that, if you are not watchful, if divine life is not cherished and cultivated in your hearts by looking at Christ and feeding on Him, it will be putting forth its buds; if it does, they must be nipped off as they appear. No good fruit comes off the old stock. It is the new that bears fruit unto God. But though the flesh is in you, do not be thinking of this, but think of Christ—cleave to Him; and may your souls be maintained in this truth, that Christ is your life—aye, that Christ is so your life that Christ must die (the thought of which is blasphemy) before you can perish. And as He is your life, so is He the object of that life. "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me," Gal. 2:20. As you grow in this knowledge of Him, a joy grows deeper than that of first conversion. I have known Christ, more or less, between thirty and forty years., and I can say that I have ten thousand times more joy now than I had at first. It is a deeper, calmer joy. The water rushing down from a hill is beautiful to look at, and makes most noise; but you will find the

water that runs in the plain is deeper, calmer, more fructifying.

Observe, they are exhorted with purpose of heart to cleave to the Lord. A distracted heart is the bane of a Christian. When my heart is filled with Christ, I have no heart or eye for the trash of the world. If Christ is dwelling in your heart by faith, it will not be the question, What harm is there in this, or that? rather, Am I doing this for Christ? Can Christ go along with me in this? If you are in communion with Him, you will readily detect what is not of Him. Do not let the world come in, and distract your thoughts. I speak especially to you young ones; we, who are older, have had more experience of what the world is, we know more what it is worth, but it all lies shining before you, endeavouring to attract you. What else does it fill its shop windows for? Its smiles are all deceitful, still it is smiling upon you. It makes many promises it cannot fulfil: still it promises. The fact is, your hearts are too big for the world, it cannot fill them; they are too little for Christ, for He fills heaven j yet will He fill you to overflowing.

Observe again, it is to the Lord they were to cleave: not to duty, or law, or ordinances (though these are good in then-places), but to the Lord. He knew how treacherous the heart was, and how soon it would put anything in His place. You will have to learn what is in your heart. Abide with God, and you will learn your heart with Him, and under His grace; else you will have to learn it with the devil through His successful temptations. But God is faithful, and if you have been getting away from Him, and other things has been coming in and forming a crust round your heart, and you want to get back again, God says, What is this crust? I must have you deal with it,

and get rid of it. Remember, Christ bought you with His own blood, that you should be His, and not the world's. The denial of this fact is an artifice of the devil. Do not let the devil come in between you and God's grace. However careless you may have been, however far you may have got away from Him, return to Him: doubt not His joy in having you back; count upon His love; look at the sin which led you away with horror, but do not wrong Him by distrusting His love, any more than you would an affectionate husband or wife, by throwing a doubt on their love if you have been for a moment ungracious. Hate yourself, but remember how He has loved you, and will love you until the end. Mistrust not His work: mistrust not His love. God had also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life (v. 18). All is of God.

I would have you carry away in your minds three things which by grace are given you. First, cleaving to the Lord; second, perfect forgiveness; third, a purged conscience. To illustrate this last, take the case of Peter. He denied His Lord—denied Him to a servant-maid; but the Lord had turned and looked on him, and he had gone out and wept bitterly. A few weeks after this (Acts 3), he could say that they were a lost and ruined people, because "they denied the Holy One and the Just"; the very thing he had done himself, in a worse way, too, for he had been with Him as His friend for three years. But his conscience was purged; he knew he was forgiven; and now he could turn round, and fearlessly charge others with the very thing he had done himself.

One word more. Talk with Him. Never be content without being able to walk and talk with Christ as with a fear friend. Be not satisfied with anything short of near

intercourse with Him who has loved you with such manner of love!

## Thoughts On Galatians 3

The apostle has been speaking to the Galatians in chapter 2 as having had a sense of what they had gained in Christ, and now in chapter 3 he has to address them thus: “Who hath bewitched you”—to make you go back to law when you have been justified not by the works of the law, but in Christ? It is impossible for a man to be justified by the law. I cannot live to God till my accounts are settled with God. I have no fortune to spend until my debts are paid. The effect of the law being given is to kill man, but the apostle can triumph in the killing power of the law, because it has killed Christ instead of him, “I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless, I live,” etc.

All the promises were made to Christ, or rather confirmed to Christ. They were first made to Abraham (Gen. 12) and then there are gospel promises in view of the Gentiles. It is “thee,” not “thee and thy seed,” as in Genesis 17, where the nation is spoken of, and which was to be as numerous as the sand on the sea shore. This is a Jewish promise, but in Genesis 22 it is to Abraham’s “seed,” not to him and his seed, but to his seed Christ; for Isaac, received back from the dead in a figure, is a type of Christ, and it was to Isaac that the promise was confirmed or ratified, though given to Abraham. The promises are taken up in Christ, as risen; and this is of the last importance to us, because before they are made over to us, there is a righteousness wrought out for us. The law comes in meanwhile to raise the question of righteousness, and in such a way as to

condemn men. God was righteous and the question has to be raised on that subject, not as to goodness. Man could not meet the demands of the law, because it required a perfect righteousness; but Christ could and did, and has put us into the place in which we can receive the promise. The law has dominion over a man as long as he liveth, but when he is dead, he is freed from that law. Well then, the law has no more power over me. If a man who is in prison dies, there can be nothing more done to him. The apostle not only says "dead to the law," but "crucified with Christ." I have died to the law through Christ having died to it. It killed Christ, and now I live by Christ. The death of Christ closed the whole scene morally. It was the end of law, the end of man, the end of the world; and a wholly new scene commenced from that point.

There are two ways of looking at righteousness. If I had kept the law, I should have been a righteous man. But to keep it I must love God with all my heart, soul, and spirit, and my neighbour as myself. This is human righteousness, which is never found in any man save in Christ. The law is founded on the knowledge of good and evil which he got by sinning; then there is a righteousness needed to meet its requirements. There is another thing needed, which we read of in scripture, and that is, God's righteousness. All that God is was displayed in Christ; human righteousness was perfect in Him; but there was another thing needed, and this need He met on the cross. He was not keeping the law on the cross. If God were to shew perfect righteousness towards sinners, they must die. Then there would be no love displayed. But if love were shewn to the sinner irrespective of the question about his sins, there would

be no righteousness. Christ glorified God on the cross in the display of His righteousness and His love. Then, having thus glorified God, He had a title to be glorified by God, and therefore God raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand in glory. There is the righteousness of God. All in which Christ glorified God on the cross, I am accepted in; therefore there is more than the cleansing from my sins, through the blood of Christ. All the devotedness of Christ to His Father's will as far as death, is accepted of God, and by virtue of God's acceptance of Him, He is at the right hand of God, and in that I stand. I am as Christ, as Luther has expressed it.

Christ was born of a woman; born under the law. As a man He was obedient to it; but God could not be obedient to the law. He emptied Himself and humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. "If a law had been given which could have given life, verily righteousness had been by the law." Law was not given till long after promise. The law was not given in paradise. There was a law, but the question of right and wrong was not raised, but simply obedience then. There was no knowledge of good and evil in paradise, and therefore no law required to measure the evil. The delusion people fall into about trying to be justified by law, is owing to man taking up that, which God gave to prove what a sinner he is, to work out a righteousness for himself. The law was not given to bestow life, but to make sin appear sin.

As a man, Christ did what He was bound to do, in fulfilling the law; and therefore there would have been none in that righteousness to impute to us. If He had failed (which, of course, He could not), if He had had a

blemish or a spot, He could not have been a fit sacrifice for our sins. He had to make good to God, He had to make good before Satan, a perfect human righteousness. Therefore this was a part of the thing, because it proved the fitness of the sacrifice. Promise preceded law, and it was abstract and unconditional. It was revealed that it was part of God's counsels that they were to be blessed, but the question of righteousness was untouched by promise. The law comes in and raises that afterwards.

If God had made the accomplishment of promise dependent on the fulfilment of the law, it would not have been pure promise. If you make a promise to your child, and he disobeys you afterwards, you do not make him forfeit the promise, to do which would be to break your word; but you cannot pass over the offence without taking any notice of it. Your promise stands, but you must deal with him about his conduct, and not let him take what you have promised him, as if he deserved it. God made a promise, and man would come in and take the promise on the ground of his desert. Then God must bring in a law to prove his unrighteousness. The gospel is not promise but good news, after all is broken, to put us into possession of divine righteousness. Israel in their folly took up the law, as being able to keep it, instead of throwing themselves back upon God's promise to Abraham; and in their pride and presumption, they thus took on themselves that which God alone could fulfil as the accomplishment of promise. Now the promise was really given to Christ. How? Was He to enjoy it alone? No! This was not God's thought. But how then can He bring in all these sinners, these law-breakers? He works out a righteousness for them before He claims the

promise, that we poor sinners might share the promise: and this is the gospel. Much as man boasts of conscience, he gained a conscience by sinning. There are two characters of conscience—the conscience of responsibility to God and the knowledge of good and evil, and this man got by sinning.

The promise is made to Christ (not the Jewish but the original promise of blessing). God does not make a promise to man as a sinner—He could not do that; but the serpent is told what He will do to Christ; and Abraham becomes the root through which the promise is to come. “He saith not unto seeds as of many, but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ.” After that the law comes in to shew the utter sinfulness of man: in his lusts, he is corrupt; and in his will, perverse. Thus man, as to corruption and rebellion, was proved to be bad by the law. So in 1 Corinthians 15 it is said “the strength of sin is the law.” It brought out the sin which was there already, because it immediately created the desire to do the thing forbidden.

Man shewed his inability to take the promise, because Christ was the embodiment of the promise, and they rejected Him. Man is left by the cross, convicted not only of a bad conscience and a broken law, but of a rejected promise.

Verse 13, 14. The blessing is put upon all who are along with Abraham, through Jesus Christ, and the curse on all under the law. The promise takes its unhindered course through the blessing of Abraham which comes by faith. God could not disannul, by another act, a previous one. The mind of man having a good opinion of himself, the law brings out all the rebellion of the will. The law was

not against the promises, but put man under obligations. The law does not promise life, and gives no power to do it, because it does not give life.

Verse 20. This is on the ground of the contrast between promise and law. When the law was given, there was a mediator needed, because there are two parties, God and the people to whom the law is given. The stability of promise depends on the faithfulness of One: there is no need of two. Under law, God does not reveal Himself. He reveals what He requires of man, but there is no love and no grace in love. The mediator Moses reported the words of God to the people. The thought in this verse, “A mediator is not of one, but God is one,” is not about Christ, the Mediator, as in 1 Timothy 2, but rather the abstract notion, that if you have a mediator you must have two parties; whilst, by contrast, a promise is given from one. God giving promise and Christ receiving it are one—God is one. The church, as such, was never the subject of promise. It was hidden from ages and generations, and revealed now. That which makes obscurity in the passage is that the conclusion is not drawn, though the premises are laid down.

Covenant in scripture is different from covenant as understood by us in common language. It is the form of dealing God takes with man, not an agreement between God and man, or man and God. The church gets all the spiritual blessings of the new covenant, because in Christ. Thus we have all the moral blessing of the new covenant, in the Spirit, though not in the letter. “The blood of the everlasting covenant” in Hebrews 13 is that which is finished and done with, and will go all the way through, and is available for all. The blood will never lose its value. It is the groundwork of all God’s dealings

with man in all ages. The full display of the value of Christ's death was made in the resurrection of Christ from the dead. The power of it was proved in the salvation of the thief on the cross. Psalm 40 may be a sort of embodiment of the book, or counsel between God and the Son from all eternity; and the divine power of the Son was shewn in His being able to accomplish what was written in the volume of the book. For there was as much the power of God needed to be able to say, "Lo I come to do thy will," as to will it. If Christ undertook to do God's will, He must be able to create a world if God wills it. The Father gives them to the Son, and He takes them back with Him into glory. The "sheep" in Hebrews 13:20 are not looked at in the unity of body, but as individuals (as they are throughout the epistle), and in that way I want the power of the blood.

"The law is a schoolmaster unto Christ." God does not reveal Himself in law. The schoolmaster is not the Father, but one under whom the child is put to be taken care of, until he is fit to come into direct communication with the Father's mind. Under law, it was like saying to a child under age, Do this, and do that, without giving reasons. But "ye (those who are brought to be Abraham's seed by being put in Christ) are all the children (sons) of God, through faith in Christ Jesus."

## Romans Compared With Other Epistles

Generally speaking Romans gives us entirely the responsibility of man: we get there no counsels of God before the world began. God did not begin with bringing out His counsels; He created the first man in responsibility, and He went on with that until the cross. Then we have the supplementary testimony of Stephen rejected, and then, the foundation having been laid in righteousness, the counsels of God that were before the world was came out. It is quite a distinct thing, these counsels of God and what He gives, from our responsibility: the history of the first man is the history of our responsibility as such. There is no reason why I should have the same glory as the Son of God; this has nothing to do with my responsibility. We get both through the cross— our responsibility met, and the foundation for the counsels of God laid (2 Tim. 1:95 Titus 1:2). A man's debts may be all paid, and yet he may have nothing. This is not the way in which God has dealt with us; our debts are paid, and God gives us "to be conformed to the image of his Son "too.

"The scripture of the prophets," in Romans 16:26, does not mean the Old Testament prophetic scriptures, but those of the New Testament. In Colossians we get the two parts of Paul's service: he was the minister of the gospel to every creature, and also the minister of the church, to fulfil or complete the word of God; that is, the whole truth could come out then. When we speak of the mystery, it is not merely that individuals are predestinated to be saved. You always find that we are

predestinated to something, “predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son,” to be “holy and without blame before him in love.”

In Ephesians Jews and Gentiles are looked at as one, the middle wall of partition having been broken down. In Colossians Paul preaches entirely to the Gentiles. That side of the “mystery “is not our place with Christ, but Christ being in us. In Colossians there is a hope laid up for us in heaven.

The cross met our responsibility; there the first man, whether Gentile or Jew, came to the last pitch of wickedness. This closed all the history of responsibility. Now, when my mind is open through grace to look at my responsibility, it is not a question whether I can stand in the day of judgment; the gospel starts with the declaration that I am lost. I have lots of debts, and not a penny to pay: it is all over with me on that ground; but Christ “came to seek and to save that which was lost.” “Lost” was never said till man had rejected Christ, though it was true before. When the glorified Christ was preached by the apostles, the history of responsibility was closed. In that work on the cross Christ met our responsibility, and laid the foundation for all the counsels of God. This is summed up in Acts 7. “Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.” They had broken the law, killed the prophets, crucified Christ, and resisted the Holy Ghost. The Lord said on the cross, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Then came the testimony of a glorified Christ; it was rejected, and that closed altogether—not responsibility, but the history of it. Then in the cross Christ has perfectly glorified God Himself in

the place of sin, where He was “made sin.” He goes into God’s glory, which was the foundation for the counsels of God. Then the whole mystery of the church could come out.

The Epistle to the Romans never takes man out of the earth; you do not get him risen with Christ. In Romans here am I, a man walking in this world, justified, and having the life of Christ.

In Ephesians we are actually sitting in heavenly places. You do not get man’s responsibility at all there, because he is “created in Christ Jesus.” The way in which he is looked at is, not as alive in sins, but as dead in them. In Romans man is alive in sins. First the sins are dealt on, then the evil nature, when death comes in, and the believer is to reckon himself dead. In Ephesians man is dead towards God (alive enough in sins surely), and he is a new creation altogether: God does not want to justify what He has created. The same power that set Christ at God’s right hand took us up, and set us in Him. In Romans we see a man in Christ down here in this world. In Colossians he is risen. When I come to Ephesians, I have done with all that question of responsibility: man is looked at as dead in his sins, and he is “created in Christ Jesus.” Therefore the exhortations differ. In Romans we are to present our bodies as living sacrifices; in Ephesians we come out from God, and shew Christ’s life in this world. In Colossians you do not get a word about the Holy Ghost (except that the apostle speak of their “love in the Spirit”), but you get life. In Ephesians we have the power of the Holy Ghost, and the contrast of our place now with what we were, the thorough contrast of the old condition and the new.

In Philippians we get experimental life down here, but no doctrine: the latter is not in that category of epistles. It shews the practical power of the Christian; no sin or flesh is spoken of.

In Colossians we are risen with Christ. It is very precious to get the different parts—to know that I am alive. Christ is my life, and I have the Holy Ghost too, so there is power. “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” Those who believe are alive, but alive with the power of the Holy Ghost. “God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.” The old man is a condemned thing; where it was condemned, it died—not that Christ had it, but He was “made sin “for us, and I am to reckon myself dead.

Romans does not go beyond our responsibility, and it does not bring in the counsels of God, except in the one sentence, “For whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren” (chap. 8:29); and this is a link with the other epistles.

There is an analogy between Ephesians and Colossians. In Ephesians we read, “And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness”; and in Colossians, “And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.” My mind is alive in Christ. “The truth as it is in Jesus” is the having put off the old man, and having put on the new. In Colossians it is not an abstract idea as in Ephesians, but a matter of fact. Ephesians 4:22 is

past, and verse 24 also; verse 23 is the present tense. There are two senses in which we use the word ‘new’ in English: we speak of a ‘new fashion,’ and of a ‘new coat.’ “Renewed in knowledge” in Colossians 3:10 is a perfectly new thing, like a new fashion: “renewed in the spirit of your mind,” in Ephesians 4:23, is like a new coat, constantly renewed by the grace and Spirit of God.

Men are judged according to their works: in the beginning of Romans that is fully gone through: in the second part of Romans he takes up the nature; therefore I am to reckon myself dead. We all know, if we know anything, the difference between past sins (or present) and the evil nature, the fruit and the tree. If it is asked, Is a man condemned for both? I should say that he is “lost” rather than condemned for one. You never get forgiveness of a nature; but where it was condemned, it died: so condemnation is past, and the flesh is gone under it for faith. “The life I live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God.” There I get another point— the object. “I through the law am dead to the law”: if only the law, it would be condemnation as well as death, but “I am crucified with Christ.” Life in us must have an object. The life of Christ in me looks out at Christ for me.

You see three steps: the truth in Colossians 3, “Ye are dead”; next I get faith taking it up in Romans, “Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin”: then, when I come to 2 Corinthians 4, we have 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 mortal flesh.” Realising you may take as owning the truth in your own soul, or you may take it as carrying it out in practice. I have been

crucified with Christ, but I have to bear “about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus.” It is a great thing to say honestly that we are dead: a dead man cares for nothing. I must begin by faith that I am dead. “Ye are dead,” “Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth,” Col. 3:5. It is never said in scripture that we have to die to sin. “Mortify, therefore”—there is power. Suppose that I hold my flesh always as dead, just as if hanging on the cross, then God comes and puts it to the test: “We which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake.” The Lord put Paul through these circumstances, delivered him to death.

Paul, in Ephesians, does not own any apostles except through the power of the Holy Ghost come down. He did not know Christ in connection with this world or the Jews; he started from glory. Peter was the first person that ever confessed Jesus to be the Son of God, but he never preached Him as Son of God: Paul at once preached Him as Son of God. Ephesians 3 speaks of his ministration of the mystery: chapter 1 speaks of God’s counsels.

In Romans we get the two parts of our liberty. When I know my sins are all forgiven, then comes the question of being free from the law of sin and death.

I do not believe you ever get out of Romans 7 till you get into it; Perfectionists say you can jump over it. The fact is, you cannot get into justification till you find there is no hope for you. There is no forgiveness for an evil nature: God condemned “sin in the flesh” on the cross. If I have got to the real conviction that “in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing”—just as a man in my house may be a rogue, and perhaps I do not distrust

him, but once I know he is a thorough rogue, I lock everything up; so once I have got to know what my flesh is, the trusting it is over: I may be careless, but I am not under the power of it.

Conformity to Christ, as down here, is a simple and absolute impossibility, for He had no sin; and conformity to Christ is always conformity to Christ in glory. There is no conformity to Christ at all for the Christian except in glory: he is called on to walk like Him. The only Christ a Christian is called on to be conformed to is Christ in glory. It sounds very nice to speak of conformity to Christ as He was, but it is frightful in many cases the way the standard is lowered by taking this up.

## The Character Of Christian Life

2 Corinthians 3

There are two characters to be noted in Christian life down here: one is running a race towards glory, as in Philippians 3:14, “I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus”: another aspect of Christian life is the manifestation of the life of Christ in the world. The apostle shews how it is that the Christian thus becomes the manifestation of the life of Jesus. He is reconciled to God as the starting-point of his course. Both these characters are real. We are the epistle of Christ; men are to read Christ in our lives, we are to be the “imitators of God as dear children”: there, in Ephesians, we are looked at as seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. On the other hand, in Philippians 3, Paul says, “That I may win Christ… if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus”: He has laid hold of us for glory. We are running the race through the wilderness, but sitting in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

Men had been calling in question Paul’s ministry, and he had been forced to commend himself. “Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we as some others of epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you? Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men.” If I want to prove my apostolic service, you Corinthians are my epistle. They were the epistle of commendation of Paul, because they were the epistle of commendation of Christ; “Manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the

Spirit of the living God; not on tables of stone [like the law], but in fleshy tables of the heart." He puts Christians in contrast with the law. The Christian is a person in whose heart Christ is engraved. Just as they could read the ten commandments in the tables of stone, so they are to read Christ in you.

Such is the thesis of the chapter that takes up the special side I refer to. That is what Christians are, the epistle of Christ before the world, Christ being engraved by the Holy Ghost on their hearts; therefore, in going through the chapter, he puts before us the contrast between the ministration of the law and the ministration of the gospel. We cannot understand what it is to be an epistle of Christ unless we have Him written on us by the Spirit. What is the world to read in us? Christ; but what kind of Christ? How far do you know Him?

The apostle puts the law as the ministration of death and condemnation, not from any fault in the law (the law is holy, just, and good), but from fault in us. The law wrote nothing on men's hearts; it was the testimony of what men ought to do, the perfect rule of what the children of Adam ought to be. It takes up the general principles of relationship to God and to our neighbour, which were obligatory all through before the law was given, so that "sin by the commandment" became "exceeding sinful." The law said, Do this, and live; and if you fail to do it, you will be cursed (Gal. 3:21). The law is the perfect maintenance, with the authority of God, of the relationship in which men stand; the righteous measure of what they ought to be: it forbids sins, it forbids lust even. Paul, as touching the righteousness of the law, was blameless; but when the law said, "Thou shalt not covet," then, as he said in Romans 7, "sin revived, and I

died.” The moment he got hold of the fact, that the law went to the inner man as well as to the outward, it brought death and condemnation. The law does not tell us what we are; it tells us what we ought to be, and, if it really comes home to my conscience, I know I am not that.

It is not only that the things we have done are bad things, but they are open violations of God’s commandments. The law pronounces God’s sentence of judgment on the person who has not kept it; and none of us have kept it. It is all well when we keep to outward commandments, like the young man who had kept them from Jus youth up, but who went away sorrowful because he had great possessions. There we get what the law does as a perfect rule for the children of Adam down here. That connects itself with judgment: Christ bore the curse of the law. But the gospel is just as opposite to the law, as coming to pay £10,000 for one who was in debt would be from coming to demand it. The law comes and demands; Christ comes and pays—more than that, He gives eternal life. When the gospel comes, it does not say merely what we ought to be, but what we are. It says all are guilty, Jew and Gentile, “that every mouth may be stopped”; none are righteous. That is where the testimony of the gospel comes and deals with man; it comes and tells us what we are, and tells us of propitiation through the blood of Christ. It is a ministration of righteousness, and a ministration of the Spirit; thousands of blessings, moreover, are connected with it. The moment we get the least reflection of the glory of God with the law, we cannot stand it: Moses had to put a veil over his face when he came down from the mount. In John 8 the light of God comes in, where the

Lord says, “He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone at her”; and they went right out, beginning at the eldest even unto the last: they got out of the way, out of the way of mercy too. Bring the testimony of what God is really in the light, and man cannot stand it.

Well, you see Christ comes to detected sinners. God is light and love; He cannot be the one without being the other. He comes as light to shew us what we really are. ‘There you are, sinners before God’; then He comes, and says, ‘Now that is the reason I have come to save you.’ Before the day of judgment the Lord comes to be a Saviour; He has not waited for the day of judgment; the person who is to be the Judge has come to be the Saviour. The question now is, What has He done? Whether through the natural conscience or the law, or by Christ, I am a convicted sinner. Has He come to judge me? When I am a convicted sinner in His presence, the question is, What has He done?

Then I get the ministration of righteousness. I find Christ at the right hand of God, not now on the cross. I see a Man (much more than man, the blessed and eternal Son of God, but still a man) on the throne of God: how came He there? He came by the road of the cross; He came there as the propitiation for our sins. Man is not now in a state of probation; he is lost, and God has visited him. What part had I in the cross? Well, my sins, and the enmity that slew Christ. When we look at the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, the only part we had in it (morally I mean—we were not there in fact) was the sins and enmity of heart that put Him to death. There I find God using this wickedness of man to bring about His own work. Full enmity was brought out, but

where my sins and enmity were brought out (at the cross, I mean) before God, God was doing a work that put them all away. Looking at the cross on God's side, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son." All my sins, and my sinfulness too, came out, but all has been put away. God is there meeting me in my sins, making me feel them as He is light, but He is there as love too, putting them all away. I get the blessed Lord Jesus becoming a man to suffer death, and put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself; and I see Him now at the right hand of God. Suppose I am brought to feel that my sin has been the occasion of His death (He is not there on the cross now), I find that He is sitting at the right hand of God: is He there with my sins? No; that will not do, I find them gone—God raised Him from the dead: all is settled, blessedly settled. It is the Person who is to be the Judge who has put all my sins away; it is impossible that the Person who put away all my sins could impute sin to me.

Mark, beloved friends, how this righteousness comes in: "When he had by himself purged our sins," He "sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high," Heb. 1:3. That is where I know Him now; that is where I get righteousness— God's righteousness; I own I have none. Taking men as men, "there is none righteous, no, not one," Rom. 3:10. Where is righteousness then? It is in God: then God must condemn me, as I am a sinner. People seem to think that, because God is merciful, a man with fifteen sins may be let off, while a man with twenty sins must be condemned. You let loose thus all the iniquity of man: all sin is condemned of God—is, and must be so. People say God is merciful; and that means with them that He is perfectly indifferent to good and

evil. Where am I to find the testimony and witness of this righteousness of God? In Christ at the right hand of God. “When he is come, he will convince the world … of righteousness, because I go unto my Father, and ye see me no more,” John 16:8-10. The world sees Him no more in that character. I get righteousness manifested—how? By putting Christ, who bore my sins, at the right hand of God. Christ so perfectly glorified God on the cross, that God in righteousness set that Man at His right hand.

Supposing this righteousness of God places Christ at His right hand, where would the Redeemer be without His redeemed? This places us there—not at the right hand of God, that belongs to the Son of God, but in the glory of God. The gospel is thus the ministration of righteousness. In it the righteousness of God is revealed, and the sin of man is revealed too. Wrath being revealed from heaven (Rom. 1:18), in comes God in love to sinners, bringing righteousness, because we had none. In Christ He brings in eternal life, but divine righteousness too. The law came, and required human righteousness, but did not get it; sovereign grace in the gospel ministers righteousness to us.

There is a second thing in Christianity—it is “the ministration of the Spirit.” The moment Christ sat down at the right hand of God (it was ten days after, in fact, but morally speaking it was the same thing), the Holy Ghost came down on the day of Pentecost, and sealed all who believed the gospel. “Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father,” Gal. 4:6. In virtue of this work of Christ, I, through grace, believing in it, am sealed by the Holy Ghost to the day of glory. “In whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of

promise, which is the earnest of the inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory," Eph. 1:13, 14. Mark the effect of the presence of the Holy Ghost here. I see Christ sitting at the right hand of God; I am between the work of Christ and His coming again, and I have the Holy Ghost, the blessed seal of the efficacy of all He did at His first coming. I own in myself that I deserve utter condemnation; not only am I guilty, but lost. It is not a question now of what I -can be for God. The gospel has come, and told me what God did when I was lost. The love of God is now shed abroad in my heart; I see the infinite love of God. Who put it into His heart? He has given the very best thing in heaven out of His own heart to save us, and now He has given His Spirit that we may believe in this love. That is not all: I find in John 14:20, "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." People say that I cannot know; Christ tells me I shall.

Further, He is the Spirit of adoption: I know I am in Christ before God, and I know I am a son; I cry "Abba, Father." Mark the practical power of this. Suppose a child with his father; if there is a question as to whether it is his father or not, he cannot have the affections of a child. A child has a nature capable of those affections, but he cannot have the feelings proper to a child till he knows his father. We are in the consciousness of relationship: the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. I know I am in Christ, and Christ is in me, and I cry, "Abba, Father." In the gospel of Christ I get the ministration of righteousness from God to me, and I get the ministration of the Spirit; I get the Holy Ghost sealing me for the day of redemption. There is no

question as to love now, for God has given His Son; none as to righteousness, for Christ is at the right hand of God; nor as to relationship, for the Spirit teaches us to cry, “Abba, Father.”

Mark where we have got now. We have got righteousness; we have got life; we are in Christ; we are loved as Christ is loved. When we appear in the same glory as Christ, the world will know it, but He gives it to us now. The love of Christ is perfect. I may love a little, then I shall give a little; I may love much, then I shall give much; but if I love perfectly, I shall keep nothing back. This is the way Christ gives; this is the meaning of the sentence, which is very sweet to me, “Not as the world giveth give I unto you,” John 14:27. The way Christ gives is to introduce us into all He has Himself. I do not speak of His eternal divine glory, but into all He has as man. “My peace I give unto you,” John 14:27. “For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me,” John 17:8. “And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them,” John 17:22. All that He has as man He has introduced us into; He has given Himself for us: when He comes He brings us with Himself.

I am looking for this, “That I may win Christ” (Phil. 3:9); I say ‘That is mine—it is my portion; I must get that.’ I have got it in title, but not in fact yet. We are in Christ before God; but then another thing is true, Christ is in us. The Christian is running the race towards glory, and he has to manifest the life that is in him. Duties always flow from the place we are in. You never could make yourselves my children, or even my servants; but if you were my children, then the duties would follow. When I am a Christian, then I have Christian duties: I had duties as a man, but I was lost on that ground. Redemption

puts me on higher ground. Christ is in me; I am to shew Him out. I cannot shew out Christ if I have not got Him. The great principle for us is Christ in glory. I am redeemed: glory is mine. Christ is our forerunner: I am in Him before God (every Christian, I mean). Now I have one single object ("a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways"). I want to win Christ in glory: I want to win Christ, and to be with Himself. You cannot have two objects and run after them. The only thing I am looking for is to "be conformed to the image of his Son" (Rom. 8:29); that is the reason that there is no such thing as perfection here. If I have got Christ here, I cannot be satisfied till I get Christ there. "We all beholding the glory of the Lord, with unveiled face, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord," 2 Cor. 3:18. This is where progress comes in. Suppose I am in a straight passage with a lamp at the end of it, every step I take I shall have more of the light of the lamp, more of the lamp too, though I do not get the lamp till the end. There is a great deal in 1 John 2 about "children" and "young men"; but what is all the apostle has to say about "fathers"? That they "have known him that is from the beginning." Real knowledge of Christ is the thing. The thing that characterises the Christian as such is that he has been made "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light." What made the thief meet? We have blessed testimony of conversion in his case (we do not get, perhaps, so striking an instance as this in the word of God); but there was no time for progress: yet he was fit to be Christ's companion in paradise. The Christian who has the Spirit of Christ is running after Christ in glory. We are in Christ, and Christ is in us. "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be

made manifest in our body," 2 Cor. 4:10. Men are to read Christ in me. There is progress there.

Still the principle from the beginning is that Christians are the epistle of Christ: Scripture does not say ought to be, but are. You are my son; do not dishonour the family. The Christian is to manifest Christ in everything. There I find (not the running after Christ in glory, as in Phil. 3 but) in a world of temptation, a world that does not know God, that I should be a constant witness of what Christ is. The way of that is seeing the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. I have got settled in my place before God; I have got Christ in me—Christ is my life. We have the two things in Galatians 2:20: "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." You are the epistle of Christ: the world is to read Christ in you. We "beholding the glory of the Lord are changed." The Spirit of God works, making me see these things; there is progress here—there ought to be, of course.

Such is the Christian, Christ's epistle in this world, in which men are to read Christ; the living expression of Christ because he is in Christ, "accepted in the Beloved." There is no perfection till we get to glory. There is nothing before me as an object of attainment but to be like Christ in glory. "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure," 1 John 3:3. Every step he takes he sees more of what Christ is.

Are you thus before God in the sense of the infinite love that gave Christ, and that, Christ being our

righteousness, we are before God in the value of what Christ has done, brought thus into divine favour? If your souls are before God on this ground (conflicts you will have, and ploughing too, the deeper the better), then are your hearts content to say, 'I want nothing but Christ; I do not care what it costs me?' While we have Christ as our life, the flesh is there still, but I am not in the flesh, I have got into a new place before God. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," Rom. 8:1. Not only is the blood on the door-posts, but we are out of Egypt, "delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of his dear Son." It is not only that life is in me, but that I ought to be "always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus." I must apply the cross constantly to the old man. God has "condemned sin in the flesh," Rom. 8:3. It does not now disturb my peace, but I am to reckon myself dead. Faith puts me where God has put me: the flesh is not changed, but I put the cross on it. Paul could say, "We which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake"—we must often say for our own sake—there we get the apostle practically carrying it out. Let me ask the question, Are you content to be this? Are you content to be the epistle of Christ, or would you like a little of your own way? It is most important to remember, that there is positive strength in Christ to deliver us from every temptation.

I would like to leave on your hearts the sense of the perfect-ness of God's love, and that His love has done all that is needed for us. God's love was not exhausted—it was proved at the cross.

The Lord give us to know what it is to have fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

## The Law, And The Gospel Of The Glory Of Christ

We learn here what a Christian is, and how a man comes to be one. First, we notice what introduces the subject; and next, the circumstance to which the apostle alludes as bringing out the true character of Christianity.

The apostle had been forced, by the attacks of those false Judaizing teachers, who said he was no apostle, to speak of himself, though he is grieved to have to do so. He began, in the end of the previous chapter to say a few words which lead to this: “We are not as many who corrupt the word of God,” etc. Then he asks, “Do we need letters of commendation to you, or from you? “He means just such letters of commendation as are given now. But he tells them, “Ye are our letter of commendation.” He had them so much on his heart, that, if people asked him for proof of his apostleship, he just said, Look at the Corinthians. At this time they were going on well; they had received the first epistle, and the apostle had seen Titus, and learnt that it had produced its effect. They were-brought back again to a right walk; his heart was enlarged towards them (chap. 7:11), and he could say, “Ye are our epistle.” He could hardly have said so in the first epistle, though he was the means of their conversion.

Next, he shews how or why they were his letter of commendation. “Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ,” etc. (v. 3). They recommended Paul, because they recommended Christ. He then passes to a comparison of this with the law, which introduces the general subject of the chapter.

“Written … not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.” The law of the ten commandments, as we all know, was written on tables of stone; the Corinthian Christians, in contrast with that, had Christ graven on their hearts. This is what a Christian is: an epistle of recommendation of Christ to the world, by having Christ engraven on his heart by the power of the Spirit of God. It is spoken of the Corinthians collectively, though it is true also individually. He does not say, Ye ought to be the epistles of Christ, but “Ye are.” This was the position they were in. If I call myself a Christian, even without being one, I am in the position of an epistle of Christ. My profession, though it be merely profession, is a profession of Christ. The apostle could hardly have had the heart to say that of the Corinthians, when they were walking badly. Still they were in that position. They were before the world to shew out Christ, as it is expressed doctrinally in chapter 4, “that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.” At the end of this chapter he speaks of it as growth into the image of Christ. It is the same thing under a different figure. There, too, we see how it is brought about.

To return to how this is introduced. These Corinthians were a testimony to Paul’s ministry—a letter of commendation of him—because they were a letter of commendation of Christ before the world, shewing what the power of Christ’s life was in a man; his motives entirely changed, and above all that is in the world; a walk of holiness; unselfishness; self-restraint; the power of money gone; a conversation in heaven. He had alluded to the tables of stone on which the law was written, and he follows out that line of thought in the chapter. He refers to the fact that, when Moses came

down from the mount the second time, his face shone, so that the people could not look at him, and asked him to put a veil upon his face. That veil is done away in Christ; nevertheless it is still upon the heart of the people when the Scriptures are read, but when they shall turn to the Lord it shall be taken away, just as Moses put off the veil when he turned to the Lord. They will look upon Him whom they have pierced, and mourn. When Moses came down from the mount the first time, it is not said that his face shone, because then he brought pure law; but the second time a certain measure of grace was added: God had been revealed as "the Lord, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." The way in which He spared Israel then was by His goodness, which He had caused to pass before Moses (he could not see His glory). The people could not look on the glory of God—not even at the reflection of it in Moses' face.

It is a most touching history, shewing out again and again the grace, and forgiveness, and patience of God. First, Moses went up and got the law, graven by the finger of God on two tables of stone; but before ever he had brought it to the people, they had broken it. They had made a golden calf to worship, and thus broke the very first link with God: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Moses, seeing this, cast the tables of the law out of his hands, and broke them. Thus pure law never came into the camp at all. Law came in afterwards, when mercy was shewn too, but unmixed law never. How could Moses carry the tables of the law into the midst of a people who were serving other gods? How could he put the ten commandments beside the golden calf? When he comes within hearing of the voices of them that were singing and dancing, his indignation is

kindled, and he casts down the tables and smashes them. That was where pure law ended.

Moses went up again, taking new tables, according to the word of God, who wrote the law upon them afresh. He had told the people, “Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the Lord; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin “; and it is lovely to see how he pleads for them, and how God answers in goodness and grace. He reveals His mercy in government, as “forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin.” This is sometimes called the gospel, which it is not at all. God did indeed bear with Israel in patience, but still he adds, “In the day when I visit, I will visit their sins upon them.” It was not forgiveness as we know it now. He forgave them in not cutting them off, and putting Moses and his seed in their place, as He had threatened. Moses had said, in beautiful disinterestedness and love for the people with whom God’s name was bound up, “If thou wilt not forgive them, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book.” The Lord shews present mercy and forgiveness, but at the same time puts every one of the people on his own responsibility. “Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book.”

This is the first part. Even this (law qualified with mercy), so far from being the gospel, is what the apostle calls the ministration of death and condemnation. Then, in contrast with this, he speaks of the gospel—of Christ’s work—as the ministration of the Spirit, and of righteousness. A person not in the presence of God may not find the law a ministration of death and condemnation, because his conscience is not awakened. He is like Paul, “touching the righteousness which is in

the law blameless"; "alive without the law once." But that is never found in the presence of God; there it is, "There is none righteous, no, not one." The young man who came to the Lord asking, "What good thing shall I do?" and saying, "All these things have I kept from my youth up," had not got a bad conscience, in a natural sense. He thought he was going on very well, and he came to know what was the best thing he could do; he did not ask to be saved. The Lord dealt with him as He dealt with Saul. He brings down the law upon the very motives of his heart. Saul might be satisfied that he was blameless touching the righteousness which is in the law, but when the law said, "Thou shalt not lust," all was over; he was discovered and condemned. "I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." Why? Not because the law is wrong, but because it is right, and I am not right. The Lord did not say to the young man that he had not kept the law. He told him to go and sell all he had, and give it to the poor. This immediately brought out the lust of money: "And he went away grieved, for he had great possessions."

See, again, how the Lord uses the law in the case of the woman taken in adultery (John 8). The scribes and Pharisees bring her before Him in a most wicked way, hoping to entrap Him. If He said, Stone her, He was no more a Saviour than the law; if He said, Do not stone her, He was breaking the law. The Lord does not weaken the authority of the law, but He applies light to them all, telling them, "He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone at her." They found they were in the presence of God, and they went out, one by one, owning practically that they had all sinned, and were under the

condemnation of the law. They felt the detecting power of God—the veil was taken away, and they could not bear it.

Our consciences may be quite at ease while we are far from God and unawakened; but the moment we have to face what we are in the presence of God, we see that our case is desperate. We all know, more or less, what self-righteousness is, and we can go on with it well enough till we get God's eye upon us. There is not a man in this town who is not washed in the blood of Christ, that, if called apart to answer for himself to God, would not try to get away as fast as he could. He may have an excellent character, and deserve it too, but he has not a perfect conscience. We may go on for a long time as decent natural men without anything to shock the conscience; but the moment God's presence is recognised, the veil is off, God is seen, and His word searches the thoughts and intents of the heart: then we can understand the words of poor Job (and there was none like him in all the earth), "He cannot answer him one of a thousand." "If I say I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse. If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean, yet Shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me." That is, though clean in the eyes of men, he would be in God's sight like a man brought out of a ditch. Then he goes on to say, "Neither is there any daysman betwixt us that might lay his hand upon us both. Let him take his rod away from me, and let not his fear terrify me." That is what we have got in Christ; God has taken away our fear.

The law is most useful in this way to convict the soul, where known in its spirituality. It demands from us what

we ought to be for God, as God's law must do, and then tells us, if we do not answer to it, we are cursed. The apostle goes even a step farther in Romans 7. A man may be quickened, born of God, so as to say, I hate these evil things, that I do. The law says, So do I, and that is the reason I curse you. It is because the law is right, "holy, just, and good," that it kills us morally because we are sinners. It is useful in this way, but it always ends in condemnation. The time will come when God will write it in the hearts of His people, and then the case will be different. The law will not curse, but bless. When the law comes to the conscience, saying, "Thou shalt not lust," no man can stand it; the lust of the flesh is detected, and it is shewn to be not subject to the law of God. "So then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God." This is the sum of it. Sometimes the flesh may run to excess of riot, and sometimes it may be very respectable; but this is true of all, in their natural standing as children of Adam. Man is a bad tree, and cannot bring forth good fruit.

The law deals with our consciences. It is not an arbitrary thing. It takes up the relationships and duties which already existed among men before the law was given, and were owned of God, as father, husband, wife, child, etc. It comes with God's sanction and authority to these relationships, and gives His rule for them, and says, If you do not maintain them according to it, you will be cursed. Conscience owns the propriety of it, and says it ought to be so. The law does another thing. It not merely says, "Thou shalt honour thy father and mother," etc., but it says, "Thou shalt not steal," "covet," etc. It is an instrument and weapon in God's hand to restrain and punish the evil propensities of men. But a man might not be a thief, or an adulterer, or in any other outward way

offend against the positive prohibitions of the law, and yet it will take hold of him. Here comes in the great principle upon which all hangs: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength.” Is it what you do? People can delude themselves sadly about it, and say they do love God thus, not knowing themselves. But then comes the second great part of the law: do you love your neighbour as yourself? Are you as sorry when your neighbour loses his fortune as if you lost your own? Oh! you say, you are expecting something supernatural. Just so—I am. You do not love your neighbour as yourself; you do lust. And if you do not love your neighbour whom you have seen, how can you love God whom you have not seen? If you are on the ground of the law, God comes, and demands (though you may be free from theft, murder, and the like), Do you love your neighbour as yourself, or do you lust in your heart? When the conscience is really touched by this, it cries out, “O wretched man that I am!” The use of the law is to bring us to this, and not merely to convict us of open sins, which it does. It adds this detection of lust to all its rules for human relationships, and all its prohibitions; for otherwise a man might be a hypocrite, and live outwardly very fairly, and so be righteous according to the law, which could not be. The law does not give life, and it does not give strength. Man’s great need is power to do right. I may know what is right well enough, and even have the desire to do right, and yet something else have power over my heart, so that I do wrong. Neither does the law give a motive to love. It tells me to love God with all my heart (and conscience owns I ought to do so), but why? Because I shall be cursed if I do not. But that will not produce love. Thus law gives neither righteousness, life,

nor strength; for, though it puts an object before us, it gives no revelation of God to draw love out. In Christ we get all these. He sets His seal upon the law, as a perfect standard of what man ought to be. He charges Himself with our sins. He does give life, and strength, and God as an object. Conscience consents to the law that it is good, but feels that for this very reason it must condemn me because of what I am. There is no mercy, or salvation, or redemption in the law; it is a ministration of death and condemnation. Have you kept the law for a whole week? Have you loved God with all your heart? Has there been no love of anything else? Has nothing else possessed your heart at any time? Have you been thinking for your neighbour as for yourself? Have you not, perhaps, been thinking of getting on in the world? Well, that does not do for God—it could not; if there were such a state of things in heaven, it would not be heaven at all. What, then, can the law do but announce condemnation; for it cannot sanction sin? In the very nature of things it must be so. Men would like to be in heaven, because they think it is a happy place (and so it is); but if a man were taken as he is, and put there, he would get away if he could. Do you think he would find pleasure and delight in Christ being glorified, and in having nothing but Christ and the Father's love to occupy his mind and heart? He could not bear it—it would be to him a most monotonous and tiresome thing. It is only deceiving ourselves to think that heaven is a place where a man in his natural state could be happy. I have dwelt upon this to shew where we are on the ground of law, but I turn now to the ministration of the Spirit. Let us see how God deals with us in Christ.

Men had been sinners, lawless sinners and law-breaking sinners, before Christ came. His coming brought an additional element of sin. God came into this world in goodness. What did it do to Him? Speaking of the ministration of the Spirit, a part of His mission was to convict the world of sin, because they believed not on Christ (John 16). His message to the world from God is, Where is My Son? He has been among you in grace and love: what have you done to Him? Just as He said to Cain, Where is Abel, thy brother? The unconverted heart is still the same; it would get rid of Christ, though it cannot kill Him now, of course. What did He do here? He healed the sick, cleansed the lepers, raised the dead. But God was too close to men, and they took Him and crucified Him. I cannot even call myself a Christian, without saying, in effect, I am in a world in which the Son of God has been rejected and cast out. His murder was, of course, a deed of law-breaking, but it was a great deal more—it was rejection of God come in love and grace. It was the display of this, that the carnal mind is enmity against God. I insist upon this last point. When it is really seen and brought home to the conscience and heart, a soul is in a condition to receive blessing from God. He sees himself to be a lawless sinner, a law-breaking sinner, and one that preferred the world, and its vanity and dross, to Christ. When we see this, all our sins are out before God; we are law-breakers and God-haters. This we learn in the cross, though the law shewed it too. “For my love, hatred,” Christ would say.

But when I come to that in which my hatred for God is thus manifested, the cross, then I learn that Christ died for it. This is the fulness of the triumph of God’s love

over my sinfulness. After God had tried man in every possible way, without law, and under law mixed with mercy and long-suffering, He sent Christ, saying, Surely they will reverence My Son; and we know what they did to Him. God came into the world to save us, that where sin abounded, grace might much more abound; and it was in that very act in which man shewed that he hated God, that the work was done which saves us, shewing that God's love is superior to man's wickedness.

What I see first in the blessed Lord, even in His life, is God coming down to men, and walking in grace and holiness through the world, in order to bring God's love to every one in it. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." He brought divine love to those who owned what they really were. He tore off the mask of pretended righteousness from the Pharisee, but where he found a poor wretched soul—like the woman of the city, who dared not shew her face among decent people, much less to God—He said I will have you. To the proud and insensible Pharisee He said, "You gave me no water for my feet"—he did not even offer the common courtesies of life; "but this woman hath washed my feet with tears." Thus the self-righteous man is exposed by the light, but the poor woman— a sinner confessed—finds divine love, and, more, forgiveness. All this is a great deal more than promise. There are blessed promises to believers, but God's dealing with the soul of a sinner is not on the ground of promise. The Syro-Phoenician woman, for instance, being a Canaanite, had no promise, except to be exterminated. When she cried to the Lord as Son of David, He did not answer her; He did not know her in that way at all. She drops that, and the Lord

graciously waits upon her till she gets down to her true place. “I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” He tells her “It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and cast it to dogs”: how can I give the things promised to Israel to Canaanites? What does she say? “Truth, Lord”—I am a dog— “but the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.” Her heart apprehends that God is good enough to feed people who are not children; He is good enough to receive a wretched sinner who has no righteousness, and not even a promise. God revealed in Christ shewed her there was love in God, even for a person who was entitled to nothing. Christ could not, would not, deny this.

Thus God brings down souls into their real condition before Him, where they have not a word to say, and not till then do they get the blessing. This is what I get in Christ as to salvation. It is not a promise only: He was the Messiah who had been promised; but He was there as God present with the sinner; and now we have got even more, for He died for us. Think of this, that God Himself came down to meet me, a poor sinner, when I could not lift up my head! And what did He bring? Perfect love; God so loved the world, that He gave His Son. He could not allow sin, but would put it away. I get a step further when I see that He was the Bread of life that came down from heaven. Then there must be eating His flesh and drinking His blood.

I turn now to the cross. It was the manifestation of goodness, in the midst of the wickedness of the world, in a way never to be found anywhere else. During Christ’s lifetime the heavens would open upon Him, and testify to His perfection and the Father’s delight in Him; and

thus I learn the terrible evil of the heart that could resist such goodness. When I come to the cross—supposing I am thus convicted of sin—what a wretched creature I see myself to be; I have hated this blessed One, and, more than that, my sins brought Him there. But He is not there now I I come to the cross, and there is no Christ on it. Where is He? He is sitting at the right hand of God. But my sins brought Him to the cross; they were on Him there. Has He gone to God's right hand in glory with them upon Him? No. What has become of them? I find in the cross that God has dealt with my sins, when they were upon Christ. It was when He had by Himself purged our sins that He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high (Heb. i:3). This is the contrast in Hebrews 10. The Jewish priests were standing daily, offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, but this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down. He will rise up for judgment when the time comes; He is now waiting, not on His own throne, but on the Father's, till His enemies be made His footstool. We get there this special work of the Lord Jesus Christ. He died for our sins, according to the Scriptures. He was made sin for us there; He bare our sins in His own body on the tree, and in consequence had to drink the dreadful cup of God's wrath. But it is all over, and now that I see Him seated at God's right hand, I am bound to believe in the efficacy of that work once for all. The word used there is a very strong one; there is no interruption, nor discontinuance of its efficacy. Therefore the worshipper once purged has no more conscience of sins. He cannot come to God without finding that Christ, who bore his sins, is there, and entering into the blessedness of the man whose

transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered, and to whom the Lord imputes not iniquity.

There is a great deal of looseness and unbelief at the present time (thank God, not so much in these countries) as to the immense value and import of the death of Christ. In that death God has been perfectly glorified in all that He is, and, at the same time, man's need has been met. If God had merely manifested His hatred of sin in the destruction of the sinner, it would have been righteous surely, but where then His love? If on the other hand, sin was passed over, men allowed to keep sins, and no more about it, there would be no righteousness.

When I come to the cross, I find what could be found nowhere else—righteous judgment against sin, but perfect love to the sinner at the same time. The more we look into it, the more we see the value of the cross, the more precious will Christ be to us. I get in the cross man in absolute wickedness, hating what is good, hating God, who had come down in mercy to him, who had shewn love and compassion to him in all his sufferings and yet had for His love hatred. Satan had complete power over man— "this is your hour, and the power of darkness." Not one remained with the Lord in that hour, even the disciples ran away. I further get there, absolute perfection in Man—that is, in Christ—taking even the cup of wrath in perfect obedience, "that the world may know that I love the Father."

I get there also God in perfect love towards the sinner, and in perfect righteousness against sin. Every question of good and evil, in their deepest and highest character, is settled there (I do not say for them that slight it). The

first man stood upon his responsibility in the old, or first, creation, and he failed, and ruined all. The second Man glorified God in the midst of the ruin; the results are not all seen yet, but they are all secured—even the new heavens and the new earth depend upon His work on the cross. All that man is in evil, and all that God is in righteousness and love, are exhibited there. Thus it was the ministration of righteousness. The thing that manifested God's righteousness was this, that, Christ having glorified God in the place of sin and ruin, God glorified Him at His own right hand. That is where I know Christ now; the cross is over once for all, though its value abides perpetually, and the man who was on it is at God's right hand—the place which He had before the world was, in His own divine Person, but which He now occupies also in virtue of His work. He is there because He put all my sins away, and glorified God in doing it. On this the Holy Ghost comes down, and makes known that Christ is there; He makes known a great deal more, too, as dwelling in me. That is how it is the ministration of the Spirit.

Thus the gospel ministers righteousness for my soul—righteousness for those who had none for God. When man had nothing but sin, Christ was made sin, that we might become God's righteousness in Him. All that is over, and righteousness has been testified in setting this blessed Man— not an ordinary man, of course, or he could not have done it— at God's right hand. Such is my position now, as to my acceptance with God. This ministration of the Spirit was not merely the Spirit speaking in prophecy of a work to be accomplished, but the Holy Ghost come down because it had been done. There were promises before; the life, and death, and

resurrection of Christ all clearly testified of; but the thing was not actually done. Saints then rested on promise, and God owned their faith; but I do not rest on promise now, but upon this, that Christ has finished the work which His Father gave Him to do, and that, having borne my sins, He is now at God's right hand in righteousness. Therefore when I come to the cross, I find He is not there; He has been there, but He is gone up on high, and the Holy Ghost has come down to make known to those who believe that His work is finished, and their sins all put away. And, not only so, but that work has put a Man into the glory of God: He is entered as our Forerunner, and He will come again to receive us to Himself, that where He is, there we may be also.

We are not there yet; we have the treasure in earthen vessels, but the gospel we have received opens up heavenly scenes: it is the revelation of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. We see the effect of this, for example, in Stephen individually. I am not now speaking of the work of the Holy Ghost to convict of sin, and to point us to the cross of Christ, but of His sealing of believers (Eph. 1:13). God gives the Holy Ghost to dwell in a man after he believes. A Christian is a person whose body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, and therefore John is not afraid to say, "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." The Holy Ghost thus dwelling in a man gives him to know that Christ has completed the work which saves and delivers him, and gives him also to look forward to the glory. What was the effect of looking at the glory in the face of Moses? They were afraid, because it convicted them of their sins. But when I look at the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, far more glorious than

in Moses, does it alarm me? No, on the contrary it is the proof that I am brought to God; it is the testimony that I am saved, because I see it in the One who bore my sins on the cross. I see the love that He shewed in dying for us, and I see the efficacy of His work in His being there, because He is there and glorified as the Man who died for me and bore my sins. Instead of being terrified, “we all with unveiled face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit.” This glory is presented in three ways: the glory of God; the glory of the Lord; and the glory of Christ. I see it in the One who has put away my sins, in the One who did not spare Himself, but drank the dreadful cup for me; and I can delight to look at it. I have got an object that makes my conscience perfect before God (Heb. 9).

The effect of thus thinking of the Holy One who gave Himself for my sins is, that I am changed into the same image; it has this sanctifying power. I can look into the very glory of God with joy and delight, and know, moreover, that I shall be like the One who is there (1 John 3:2). As we have borne the image of the earthly, so shall we also bear the image of the heavenly. The heart is thus filled with Christ, and the effects are soon seen. Of course there is progress in this, and watchfulness in our ways is needed to preserve and manifest it; but how we get it is by contemplating the Lord Jesus Christ in glory. There is also the fulfilment of the Lord’s promise of what would take place when the Comforter was come: “At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.” People tell us you cannot know that you are in Christ; but my answer is simply, I do not believe you, for Scripture says ye shall know it. What did

Zacharias say of even John the Baptist? “To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins.”

Then I am called to walk in this, and the more closely I walk, the more my heart is purified, and I see more clearly. The word of God, and all the helps that He has given us, come into operation, that we may grow up unto Him in all things. I am not trying to find out how I can get accepted; I am accepted. All that is settled, in order that I may be free to think of holiness. You cannot think of holiness really till you have peace about acceptance. You ought to think of being accepted first. It is the most solemn question possible, Can God have me? We are judicially before God according to the righteous requirements of His nature. But this is not holiness. Holiness is that I delight in good because it is according to God, and hate evil because it is contrary to God. Naturally I cannot turn to that until my soul is settled as to whether I am accepted or not. Then I can go on to follow holiness, not to get acceptance, but as that in which God delights, and I delight too, and bear more of Christ’s image every day.

A little further on, in this very epistle, the law is brought in as requiring righteousness from man, and man cannot give it, and therefore there must be death and condemnation. But when all that man is—lawlessness, law-breaking, Christ-hating —is manifested; when sin has come to its highest pitch in the cross, God’s wonderful grace comes in, and makes that cross the very means of salvation to sinners. When the soul is awakened to what it has done, and then finds that God has already dealt with its sins on Christ, once for all, that He has by Himself purged our sins, then the

conscience is purged from dead works to serve the living God. I have a new nature in the light, as God is in the fight, and I look to have my heart answer to this in practical holiness, because the question of acceptance is settled. I am separated to God personally. I look at the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, the testimony that I am a saved man, and I seek to walk in the Spirit, as I live in the Spirit. We must not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption. We are to be followers of God, as dear children, walking in love, as Christ also has loved us, and given Himself for us. We are to walk in the consciousness that we are God's children, and to behave ourselves as God's children. Thus we are the epistle of Christ. The soul has received this full and blessed truth, that, if I am in Christ, I am in perfect acceptance before God, and Christ is in me. Then let me take care that nothing else comes out of me.

I only add one word, which clears up many a difficulty. Very often, in divine things, we cannot see a ray of light, when the same principle in human things is as plain as ABC. Our duties always flow from the position we are in. It would be foolish to expect persons who are not my servants, or my children, to behave as my servants or my children; when they are, then they must behave as such. You must be a Christian, a child of God, before you can behave as one. You do not become a child by trying to act like a child; but when you are a child, you are bound to behave as such. But your being a child does not depend on your behaviour. Think of any one saying, You are my child, and you must try and continue to be my child still.

I just put this to each of our souls: are we the epistles of Christ, known and read of all men? Are we practically in the place which belongs to us? Take a heathen who has heard of Christianity, and what it is, and who expects that all Christian people are living for Christ. He comes here, and he sees people running after money, and pleasure, and honour, and what will he say? Why, that Christians are no better than the heathen; that people here are running after just the same things as in China. They are not epistles of Christ. Let our consciences consider this: how far we really are a letter of commendation of Christ before the world. It is an immense privilege. It should be like what the Lord said to the poor man who had been brought to his right mind: “Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee.” What a blessing and honour it is that He who loved us, and gave Himself for us, can use us poor worms as a practical, manifest, testimony for Himself before the world!

## The Gospel Of The Glory

2 Corinthians 3

The apostle's statement is this, that there is now no veil over the glory of God. If there be any veil now, it is on our hearts. This is a solemn truth. All the glory, all that God is, shines in the face of Jesus; and there is no veil over it. The veil is all on us. This we find in the next chapter: "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ" (for so it really is, not "glorious gospel"), "who is the image of God, should shine unto them." This veil is on your hearts if the glory of Christ be hidden; for the apostle says, "We all, with open" (or unveiled) "face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord." This is the glory of God displayed in Christ.

Now we will see what the Christian is, what his place is in this world, and how he gets there. The apostle shews us all this in contrast with the law. The Corinthians had called the apostleship of Paul in question; they had said he was not one of the chosen twelve. He had spoken a little about himself in the previous chapter; they had forced him to do so. Now the Corinthians had been going on badly, but afterwards they were going on better; and Paul could say that his mouth was open to them, and his heart enlarged towards them. He gave them many signs of his apostleship; but after all it was not needed. He needed not letters of commendation to or from them as others did, and as we do now; for they themselves were his epistle, known and read of all men.

They were the witnesses of the truth of his ministry; and that, because they were manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by him—written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart. Such then is the Christian—a person in whom the world can read Christ, because Christ has been engraved upon his heart by the Holy Ghost. Let us remember that it does not say this ought to be, but that it is so, whether he walks so as to manifest it or not. A child is a child, whether he act up to the relationship or not. The Christian is the epistle of Christ, to be read of all men; it is his place just as truly as the law was written upon tables of stone. He has to realise it. And more, beholding with unveiled face the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image; he grows in it also. It is from glory to glory, and by the Spirit; and this is the Christian in contrast with the law. Law shews what a child of Adam ought to be. The Christian is the living epistle of Christ. The Holy Ghost engraves Christ upon our hearts, and then it comes out in our lives.

There is the greatest possible contrast between law and gospel. Paul calls the one the ministration of death and of condemnation, and the other the ministration of the Spirit and of righteousness. This is what I propose we should now look into. When Moses received the tables of stone the first time and came down from the mount, we hear nothing about the glory of his face. He never brought those first tables into the camp at all. He hears how the people are behaving, pleads with God for the sake of His great name, when God offers to destroy them, and make of him a great nation; but when he came down, and saw the calf and the dancing, he cast

down the tables and brake them beneath the mount. How could he bring God's law into the midst of the people who were breaking the very first command contained in it? When Moses entreats the Lord, as to His present government, the Lord forgave the people's sin. Moses could not make atonement, and they were put back under law—the soul that sinneth it should die. Then he took with him two other tables like the first, and emboldened by God's graciousness to him, he asks that he may see His glory. But this may not be; but He makes His goodness pass before him, and proclaims before him His gracious name in government, and then He put them under law again. Moses had proposed to make atonement for them, but could not; and God proclaimed Himself as the One who would by no means clear the guilty. After this, when Moses came down, all this intercourse with God caused his face to shine, and the people could not bear to see even the reflection of the glory of the Lord, so he puts a veil over his face. Here we learn that God deals in mercy with His people, but we do not get a perfect atonement made. The promise of a deliverer came in from the beginning, even in the garden of Eden; but there was only One who could make this atonement. In all the revelation of goodness one fundamental point was wanting, and that was the clearing the guilty. Then guilty Israel asked that a veil might be over his face, and to this day the veil is over their hearts; but when they shall turn to the Lord the veil shall be taken away. The law could but point in many sacrifices to the one perfect Lamb, and Israel could not see through the figures to the thing figured; but the veil is done away in Christ. There is no longer any veil over God's thoughts towards us, although the god of this world may still keep it on men's hearts. It is because this

veil is done away with that it is called the gospel of the glory.

We find God acting according to two great principles—law and grace. Law is God requiring from man what man ought to be. It takes up all the relationships formed of God towards God and man. The duties were all there before the law was given, but it gave the rule of them, and attached God's express sanction to them. The law came and claimed from man obedience. Our Lord sums up the whole law in two sentences: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," etc.; and, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." The law came and claimed from man what he ought to be. It gave no life, no power, deliverance, or object to be a motive; it could not clear the guilty, nor was it any help or strength, although God does help His people at all times. But the law itself could do nothing but demand obedience; and as man was a sinner, and incapable of obedience to a holy law, it was a ministration of death and condemnation. There is no grace in law (the two are opposed to each other), but God's grace dealt with individuals. The law was a ministration of death and condemnation because it gave from God what man ought to be, and what man is not. If a man's heart is not exercised towards God, the law does not trouble him much. He thinks he has not done anything very bad; he is no worse than his neighbours; he has not committed any very gross sins. Besides, he says, God is merciful; for he is sure to bring in the thought of a little mercy to meet his need; for deep down in the heart of every man is the sense that he has sinned. He is pretty comfortable, and it is all very well as long as it is a question of natural conscience; not of God's eye reaching the heart and

thoughts. When the law says, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,” we are at once convinced of sin; we know that we do not. Who is as troubled at a loss to his neighbour as he would be at a loss to himself? But if we get a revelation of God ever so small along with the law, we are utterly condemned at once; for no flesh can stand His eye. Now one of two things will happen. You will either seek to hide from God, as Adam did in the garden of Eden, or you will seek to hide God from you, as Israel did when they entreated that Moses should put a veil upon his face: for if a man once gets but a sight of God, he can say with Job, “If I wash myself with snow-water, and make my hands never so clean; yet wilt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me.” Whatever I may have thought of myself before, I see that in God’s eyes I am only like a man that is just dragged out of a ditch—utterly unclean. Under the law the soul may feel all right when it is not exercised towards God; but in His presence no man can stand it. Lust is there in the heart.

The principle of the law is, that what God is for me depends upon what I am for Him. But God has brought out that I am a sinner, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. It is a manifestation of death and condemnation, and nothing else. Law will never give peace. It is not grace; it is looking not at what the Lord does for me, but at what I find in myself for Him; and I may be under law in looking at the cross itself. I see a display of perfect love towards me on the cross, and I look into my heart and see there such a feeble response to His love that I begin to doubt whether I really love Him at all. It is quite right that I should desire to love Him; but it is not the gospel, and you can never get peace in this way. It is putting a

question as to your relationship, founded on your conduct; and what confusion would it cause in a family if the children began to question whether they were their father's children or not. I may ask, Am I walking according to my relationship? but I must not question whether I am a child or not. This is all law, though in a more subtle form. I am still looking to get peace in what I am for God, and not in what He is for me. This is the state of a Christian who has not found peace. Like the prodigal, who, far off from his father, asks to be made as one of his hired servants. When he comes into his father's presence, no such word: he knew his relationship. Before he was only thinking of what he was to his father, and not of what his father was to him. In the first two parables in Luke 15 we get the grace that goes out to seek what was lost, and then reception on the return; and the Lord shews how the work goes on in the heart, how the soul is often still upon the principle of law, saying they are not what they would like to be. This is looking inside to see if they love God, and when they see no signs of love in their own hearts they then begin to doubt whether He loves them. This is a more subtle form of law; but it is still the same principle—looking at what I am for God, and not at what He is for me.

Now I turn to the gospel of the glory. Into the midst of a law-breaking world God came in grace. Before Jesus came God had not come out to man, and man could not go in to God. He gave man law and promises, but He did not Himself come to man. But the great fact that we have now before us is, that God has come. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us "; and man is gone right in—into the presence of God. When I say man, I mean Christ Himself; but who as the Forerunner has

entered in for us within the veil. I find that God came in perfect goodness, and not in manifestation of His glory. He came when we were sinners and law-breakers, when we were far off. “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.” We get the manifestation of the purest love in our Lord’s life down here; His miracles were not only power, but power in love to meet every want in every man. He removed every effect of sin; He was the manifestation of God in perfect goodness; and the result was that man spit in His face and rejected Him. May the Lord give us all always to remember, that we are in a world that has rejected God when He was in it in grace! The world now is as bad as it was then; it is no more in relationship with God; souls are not nearer God by nature than they were. In fact, as we look around, we can see things are in a worse condition than they were. Sin has reached its climax. And it is not only that God has turned man out of the garden of Eden, but that when God came into this world man turned Him out. As Jesus Himself says, “If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.” He passed through this world in goodness, healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him. The Son of God has been in the world, and been rejected by the world. God revealed Himself to us in the Person of His Son while we were sinners. He shews His perfect holiness in His life; this is brought out in a striking and touching manner when the poor leper comes to Him. He was with sinners unsullied by them; but there in perfect love. Here was one who came acknowledging His power, but doubting His love. And what is His answer? does He reproach him? No; His answer is, “I will: be thou clean”; and He put forth His

hand and touched him. One who touched a leper was unclean like the leper; but Christ acquires no defilement by His contact with men, but cleanses them in grace. It was divine power touching and driving sin away: it was a most beautiful expression of what His grace is. But such as He was, they rejected Him; and in this act sin was completely manifested, for it was the rejection of God in goodness. But God uses this crowning act of man's sin for his salvation; Christ was the Lamb of God, who puts away the sin of the world: and here we come to the cross. The work was done which was the expression and accomplishment of the height of wickedness on the part of man; but it did but manifest the supremacy of grace on God's side. I get God's righteousness against sin manifested, but more than that, God perfectly glorified. All Satan's power is put forth, and it but serves to bring out God's perfect love to the poor sinner. There where sin abounded, grace did much more abound; as it says, "If one died for all, then were all dead." If you will not come to Christ, you are still preferring other things to Him; but there is a very solemn thought for you, and a solemn question for you to answer. Where are you going to spend your eternity? The question must be settled now in this life. Men shrink from the thought of eternity; and where there are infidel thoughts about God, they deny it altogether, or at least hope there will be none.

If I come to the cross, knowing that my sins brought Christ there, shall I find Him? No; when I get to the cross I find He is not there, and where does my faith know that He is? I know that my sins brought Him there, but my faith sees Him at the right hand of God, and that is why it is called the gospel of the glory; for He is entered into it for me. He is there now sitting at the

right hand of God; but He has not got my sins upon Him now. No, He is sitting there because all my sins are clean gone for ever. By one sacrifice for sins He has perfected for ever them that are sanctified. When I come to give account of myself, whom do I find as judge? The very One who by Himself has put away my sins. For a soul perfectly established in grace there is no thought more happy than that of the judgment seat of Christ; for when I am manifested before it, it will be in my glorified body made like the Lord Himself. He said the work was finished, and the person who judges me is the One who bore all my sins away. The gospel of the glory is, that the One who died for my sins is there in the glory with all my sins put away for ever; and that is where the gospel in its fulness begins. It was not till Christ sat down at the right hand of God that the Holy Ghost came down, and that the disciples could go out in the power of the Holy Ghost. It is righteousness that has set the One who bore my sins at the right hand of God, and He is there without my sins upon Him; and having so borne them and glorified God as to them, it is the ministration of the Spirit—the Holy Ghost bearing witness in the gospel that the One who did it all is the One who is now exalted at the right hand of God. I see a Man in the glory, the Forerunner entered in for me. We had no part in this wonderful work that was done, except our sins and the hatred that put Him to death. He died, and God set Him in the glory because He had done a work which perfectly satisfied God. As we get in John, speaking of the Holy Ghost, He will convince the world of righteousness "because I go to my Father." He sits there in the glory because the work is perfectly done—their sins put away for ever for all who believe. It also convinces of sin, because it was my sin which brought Him there on the

cross, where He bore all, and perfectly satisfied the righteousness of God.

The law cannot give life; it can only convince of sin. The work was done between God and Christ; the whole question of sin was settled and done with, and He is my righteousness before God. God's righteousness has been displayed in putting the Man who bore my sins at God's right hand in glory. The Holy Ghost comes and says to me, You have no righteousness for God. Then I try to grow more holy. Quite right in itself that I should long after holiness; but as a means to peace it will not do. But here in Christ I have a divine righteousness that is fit to put me into glory. They that are led of the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. In the cross of Christ it is not merely that my debt is paid, for that might be, and yet I might have nothing as it were to live upon; but God has made me a joint-heir with Christ; and now down here I live looking for Him to come to take me to Himself, to be for ever with Him in the glory where He is.

## The New Creation

2 Corinthians 5:13-21

It is blessed to see in this chapter how the thought of God comes out in the new creation. In this aspect man is gone as to his sins and responsibility—dead in them. The judgment of the first Adam is complete. The old thing is entirely gone. It is a new creation now, and in this new creation I find God instead of man. Even Christ Himself, as known after the flesh, is known no more. True, He was, when down here, the hope and expectation of faith as coming into the world; but the apostle only knows Him now as having died for all and been glorified—all under death whether Jew or Gentile, and Christ no more known after the flesh (that is, as come after the hopes of man in it) but Head of a new creation, where all things are of God, and in which we have been made in Him the righteousness of God. God has manifested Himself in the second Man, and wrought atonement in His death, and now we are the righteousness of God in Him.

In the first creation we see man and his responsibility. In the new creation, all things are of God, and man is reconciled by Jesus Christ unto Himself. We want to have the power of this in our souls, to live as belonging to the new creation, as reconciled by God to Himself, all that belonged to the old creation for ever gone to faith, “old things are passed away, behold all things are become new.”

We see how the apostle walked in the power of this in verse 13. “Whether,” he says, “we be beside ourselves, it is to God.” That is, if he were beyond the influences that belonged to him as a man, it was not an excitement that

belongs to those influences, it was because he was absorbed in God. It is what is called ecstasy. When his spirit was free to rise above present service in what he was in Christ, he was lost in God, carried out beyond himself. If he were sober, if he had to weigh difficulties—come down into the sober estimate of what was before him—it was God in love working in him. His thought was entirely for others in that love. This was his daily life; as to himself, transported with God; and, when he did think about things down here, all his thoughts were for others. It was the love of Christ that constrained him, and he looked upon all around in connection with the death of Christ. It was no longer a living Messiah in the flesh with promises for Israel. All this was over. Christ had died, and he judged that Christ would not have gone into death if men had not been there. The whole history of Adam's race is closed in death. If they had not all been dead, Christ would not have been found in death; why have gone down there if others were not lying there? And therefore those who from amongst these lived were now to live not to themselves, but to Christ who died for them, and rose again. Thus, if he met an unconverted man, he would not think of him as an old acquaintance, and know him as such. He would look upon him as one that was dead and needed to be saved by the death of Christ. Or, if the person was a Christian, it would be just the same. He would not know him after the flesh according to an old acquaintance with him; he would look upon him as one alive with Christ, and his one thought would be that Christ might be glorified in him. Even Christ Himself was not to be known any more, in connection with this creation. He had died to it, and if any man is in Christ, he is of the new creation, where old things are passed away, and all things are become

new, and all things are of God. Man is looked upon as dead, and God brings in a new creation.

We have the same aspect of truth, when in verse 19 he speaks of Christ coming in the flesh. It is not looked upon as fulfilling promises to Israel, but God revealing Himself in grace to the world. “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.” This was the aspect of Christ’s first coming, in which the apostle thought of Him. We know He came to His own, and was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God to confirm the promises made to the fathers. All this is blessedly true; but here we have God in man come here, and the apostle sees neither Jew nor Gentile. If God were in Christ, He acts toward the world. To what portion of it can you confine Him, if it be a question of God displaying Himself in grace in the world? For the same reason, when he speaks of the love of Christ, he judges all to be dead, and sees neither Jew nor Gentile, but a new creation, in which God counts every man that is in Christ.

We know that that is God as to the glory of His divine Person, but the apostle is speaking here historically; and therefore when he looks upon the Lord Jesus living in the world, he sees God in Him acting in overtures of grace to the world. God was in Christ; that is the great fact, that God has been here as the Reconciler, and man would not be reconciled. Does the apostle say that God is reconciling us? No, but that God has reconciled us by Jesus Christ unto Himself, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation to the world: specially, no doubt, the apostles, but in their measure true of all. Man would not have God when He came, and therefore He

had to make Christ sin, to work atonement for us, and now He is at God's right hand, in whom we become the righteousness of God. The apostle does not say to the Corinthians, Be "ye" reconciled, for they were reconciled; but Christ being in heaven, having gone there through death in working out atonement for us, and His presence there being necessary to complete all in glory, He must have ambassadors to carry out His work of reconciliation here; so the apostle says, when he preaches—that is the gospel to sinners—"We pray in Christ's stead, be reconciled to God." That is what he had to say to men as Christ's ambassador. How far are we living thus? Living in the power of God's new creation, judging the whole thing belonging to the first creation as gone to faith, and entering into the blessedness of our place in Christ, in the power of an ungrieved Spirit? Exercised for others, that the life of Christ may have power in their walk and ways; judging evil practically in our own path through the world, but yet having our souls so full of our blessedness in Christ, of what it is to be reconciled to God, that directly opportunity arises, our hearts burst forth in praises to God, and ever go forth after others still dead in their sins. That this may be so practically, we must bring the death of Christ to judge everything in ourselves and in our ways. As the apostle says, "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body," 2 Cor. 4:10. If we do not daily, and hourly, bring everything under the sentence of Christ's death, and judge everything by it, the Spirit will be grieved in us, and, instead of filling us with the joy of our portion in Christ, He will cause the light of Christ to awaken us to the judgment of ourselves, and of our ways.

May the Lord give us to walk in the power of an ungrieved Spirit, bringing everything into subjection to Christ, that we may know what the apostle goes on to say, “Death worketh in us, but life in you.” In thus bearing about in his body the dying of the Lord Jesus, Paul found death to self, and the result was life to the Corinthians. Paul held the power of Christ’s death on the natural man, so that when he ministered among the Corinthians, there was no Paul at all, but only Christ. It was life to them, because death was working in Paul. May the Lord give us thus to live! And may He grant us, especially in a day like this, to judge of men as Paul did, so that whatever the boast of human nature may be, we may see that all are dead, because Christ died for all in grace—for the highest act of grace and love is the proof of it—and that the only living ones are they that live to Him who died for them and rose again, while in our own souls we enter into His new creation. We may have to go down to babes, and feed them with milk, and not with strong meat; but may we ourselves live in the light of this new creation, where all things are of God. We must pass through exercise, and be tried and tested to learn what is in our hearts, and to have our senses exercised to discern good and evil. This is all needful and profitable, but then there is our distinct place in Christ as part of the new creation, where instead of having the first man responsible to God, we have God in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself in grace, and making Christ sin for us, to bring us into the new creation, where all things are of God, and where man is before God in divine righteousness, and, as to his enjoyment, finding himself lost in God. It is God, and not man. It is what God is to man, and the blessedness of man being with God: God we know, revealed in Christ; but

nevertheless God revealed, and man made the righteousness of God, a part of God’s new creation.

# The Lord Jesus In Humiliation And Service

Editor's Note20

Philippians 2

It is ever happy to have the Lord Himself before our minds as the object of our thoughts. The Christian is so completely brought to God, that He goes out from God to shew the character of God to the world. The subject of this epistle is Christian Experience. And you get this experience in the power of the Spirit of God so completely, that you never get sin mentioned in the epistle from beginning to end, nor the flesh, looked at as bad flesh, save to say he did not trust in it. Paul here does not know which to do—die or live. If I die, I am with the Lord; that is better; but I cannot work for His saints. If I live, there is the activity of love for them: and so he does not know which to choose. There is utter absence of self in that, and power. Then, he says, it is more needful for the church that I stay, and so I know that I shall be acquitted; deciding his own case. It is all power, the power of the Spirit of God leading a person out of the reach of sin. If you look at the detail in verses 15, 16, you will find his exhortation to others is an exact picture of what the life of Christ really was: “blameless and harmless”; that is what Christ was—“the sons of God”; that is exactly what He was, Son of God— “without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation”; such was Jesus— “among whom ye shine as lights in the world”; when He was in the world He was the light of the world— “holding forth the word of life”; He was that word of life. The detail is precisely the same

power of the Spirit of God, and the exhortation is just the detail of Christ's life in the world.

In this epistle there are two great principles of Christian life (the last chapter is, he is superior to all cares and all circumstances). In chapter 3, it is the energy that carries a man on, so that everything else is dross and dung—that is Christ in glory. He has seen Him up there, and he says, I must get that. There are hindrances in the way. I will throw them aside, he says. You will lose everything. I cannot help it; I must get Him. Oh, but you will die. No matter; that will be all the more like Him; I must get on to Him, the One up there in the glory, whom I have seen. "If by any means"; that is, whatever it may cost me, even life itself. "Resurrection from among the dead," that is the character of Christ's resurrection. The resurrection of the saints has nothing in common with the resurrection of sinners. Christ is the first-fruits, then those that are Christ's at His coming: He is not the firstfruits of sinners to be judged. Not a hint in Scripture of saints and sinners being raised together. "That I may attain unto the resurrection from among the dead" (the apostle uses a rare and emphatic word to explain his meaning)— what is there to attain to, if the wickedest man in the world goes up at the same time and in the same way? "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection." What is the good of that, if all rise together? The character of Christ's resurrection was the positive seal of God's approval on Him and His work, and so is ours. As regards justification His resurrection is of all importance, for it is the seal of God on the excellency and perfectness of the work of Christ. He was taken out from among the dead as a perfect seal upon His work and Person, and everything else; and so is our

resurrection the seal of our acceptance. Because God delights in us, we are taken out from among the dead, as Christ was. So he continues his running till he gets that. You have Christ in glory, and all is dross and dung except that. He wants Christ instead of Paul, and all he gets by the way is nothing—if he gets even death, it is all the more like Him.

In chapter 2 you do not get Christ in glory as the one he is running after; not Christ gone up, but Christ coming down. One whom I am to be like in this, the graciousness of the walk that He displayed; and that is always going down—going from the form of Godhead down to death. Where do I find what God is fully displayed—righteousness and love perfectly displayed? In death. It is a wonderful riddle that has come out, the Holy One going down—the Prince of Life going into death. We never completely learn, till we see it there—the things that the angels desire to look into. No one knows the Son but the Father. We know the Father, but no one knows the Son; the divinity of Christ is maintained by the inscrutability of the incarnation: God becoming a man—that is unfathomable—and the meekest, lowliest man that ever walked this earth. Paul is taking up the truth of lowliness, etc., but the moment he begins he must bring out Christ. The motive of all exhortations is nothing less than the whole scope of Christianity. God come down and bringing salvation, and gone back again as man. Take the commonest exhortations, the spring and motive is nothing short of obedience to the word of God Himself. Eating and drinking even is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. I am merely eating like a beast if it is not. He exhorts them to walk in lowliness and love (there had

been some little squabbling, I suppose, among them). These Philippians had been sending help to the apostle from a long way off, and he will not reproach them, but says, Now I see how you love me; I see how you care for me and my being happy. Now, if you want to make me perfectly happy, walk in love among yourselves. It is a reproach so delicately brought in that their hearts could not resist it. “And let each esteem other better than themselves.” It sounds unpractical and impossible; but if I think of myself with the mind of God, I see the evil, the sin in myself. If I think of another, and I am full of Christ, I shall see all the value of Christ upon him, I shall see with Christ’s heart, and I can esteem him better than myself, for I see evil in myself, and I see Christ in him. “Let this mind be in you,” etc., that is, the spirit in which Christ was, always going down; first, being in the form of Godhead, and in the glory, He takes the place of a man, and then He humbles Himself again to death. He is the first grand example of “He that humbleth himself shall be exalted,” and that is what we have to do— go down.

Here we get the principle of Christ’s whole personal course, and we get not only what He was, but the delight He took in us. He took us up. His interest is in us, and the expression of this delight was not simply He acts graciously towards men, but He Himself becomes one of them. He went down to death. We go down to death by sin, He by grace; we by disobedience, He by obedience. So He gets by obedience and grace what we get by disobedience and sin. From the first step that we go He takes us up till He has us where He is. Speaking in a general way, I cannot look at Christ in His life and walk till my soul is at peace and settled. If a soul has not

settled peace, you will find it wants the Epistles first, not the Gospels; because the Epistles are the reasonings of the Holy Ghost on the value of Christ's work. John's writings bring God down here in grace to sinners. Paul takes man up there in righteousness to God. Paul takes man up to God in the light; John brings God down to man. You get in the Gospel of John, God brought down to us in our need, get Him talking to the woman at the well, and His disciples wondering, and she finds that in this tired man at the well, she has been speaking to the Lord of glory. I thought, she said, He was a poor tired Jew, who wanted a drink of water. Oh, He says, if you knew how that God had come so low as to be dependent on you for a drink of water, you would have confidence in Him at once. This poor, tired man was the Lord of life and glory, who not only could lay all her life bare before her in its sin and shame, but could fully meet her heart, meet her need, and attract her to Himself, so that she loses all her sense of fear and shame in her anxiety to bring others to Him too. When our consciences are awakened, we want then to know how a sinner can be just with God, and so we turn to Romans and the reasonings of the Epistles; but when the heart knows I am a child, and that the same favour rests on me as on Jesus, I turn back to the Gospels and say, I must look at Jesus— what a Saviour He is! I want Him close, close to me then! brought close to my eye. Then I look back to the Gospel of John and see God come down in Him. I get in Him one who, instead of driving the one who had the defilement away, drives away the defilement, and leaves the poor leper clean and near Him. Where do we find the blessed Lord going as soon as He is called out to His public ministry? To the baptism of repentance. Why does He go there? Oh, He says, these poor people going there

are those in whom God is working. They are taking the first step in the right direction, and I must go with them. I find this perfectness and love in Him. I cannot leave them to go alone, He says, I must go with them. I need not say He needed no repentance, but it was the first right step of that poor remnant, and He will be associated with them. This is not your place, says John. Yes, He says, but "suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." He does not haughtily say "becometh me," but "becometh us." He takes His place in grace along with us (here it was with the Jew), and the heaven is opened for Him, and the Holy Ghost descends upon Him, and the Father's voice proclaims Him Son; the model of our place in grace through redemption.

I get heaven opened four times. At His baptism, when the Holy Ghost comes down on Him. Then heaven is opened, and the angels of God ascend and descend on the Son of man, that is, the highest angels become His servants. Heaven is opened, and He comes out on the white horse to judge. And between these two I get heaven opened for Stephen to see Him. The heaven was opened to Stephen as to Christ. But mark how the glory of His Person is always maintained. When heaven is opened to Stephen, it is that he may look in and see Jesus; but when at His baptism heaven was opened, it is for heaven to look at Him. He was not looking at an object in heaven. Heaven was looking at Him. Heaven was never opened for heaven to look down on anything in this earth till that divine blessed One is there. The fulness of the Godhead is in Him, but He is sealed as a man. The Father says, All My delight is there. What is most despised on earth is the One heaven cannot but be

opened to, and the Father cannot keep silence about Him. A man is the delight of God. Heaven is opened to Him, the Holy Ghost comes down upon Him, and the Father's voice proclaims Him His Son. And it is of profound interest to see that here first the whole Trinity is fully revealed, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

First, then, His place as the manifestation of accepted man is settled. As soon as that is setded, Yes, He says, but these people are in conflict and difficulty, and have got this tyrant over them, I must go and meet him for them. He meets the devil—overcomes him, of course. The devil wants Him to go out of His course, to keep not His first estate; he would have Him leave the place of obedience and a servant on the plea of His being a Son. The written word was sufficient to conquer the devil, and enough for the Son of God to use. All possible salvation depended on His victory; all that victory depended on the written word of God. Never, save at His death, was there such a solemn moment. What He held for enough, and what Satan held for enough, was the written word of God. He bound the strong man by that means, and set about spoiling his goods. There is one man who knows the truth because He is the truth, who is satisfied with the written word, and that is the Lord. There is no craft of Satan that the word of God is not sufficient to meet. There was One as a man wielding a power that was sufficient to deliver man from all the effects of sin. If sick, they were healed—healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with Him—power working in goodness. And what is the effect? They would not have Him. The Lord on earth had power to remove the effects of Satan's power, but behind those was man's heart, which could ask Him to depart. Where

there is a legion of devils, and He sends them off into the herd of swine, the men prayed Him to depart out of their coasts—did not want Him. The quiet devil that influenced their hearts was worse than all the legion of devils that ran noisily down the steep place into the sea.

Satan says, If you take this people up, you take them up at your cost. I have got the power of death over them. But He goes on. Presently Satan, prince of this world, raises all the world against Him. The disciples are afraid, and leave Him; one betrays Him, one denies Him, and the rest run away. Well, then, He says, since this hatred is so great, I must give up My life to redeem them out of it—"Through death, destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

They ask Peter, "Does not your master pay tribute?" Peter comes to Jesus, and He shews He is God by shewing that He knows what is in Peter's heart, and says, "Of whom do the kings of the earth take tribute; of their own children or of strangers?" "Of strangers," Peter says. "Then are the children free." He was the Son of the Great King of the temple, and free; and so was Peter. He puts Himself with Peter. "Notwithstanding, lest we offend" (puts Himself with Peter again), then shews He is God over all, and Lord of creation, by disposing of creation, commanding the fish of the sea to yield up the tribute money, "that give for thee and me"— puts Peter and Himself both together again. It is lovely!

While He was God in everything, He was the humblest, most affable man that ever walked this earth. In death only is He alone. He looked for compassion and found

none. “Tarry ye here, and watch with me.” In His sore trial He looked in Gethsemane for them to watch with Him; they could not, and an angel from heaven comes to strengthen Him. Will He ever give up being a servant? Never? That form of servant He will never give up. Selfishness likes to be served. Love likes to serve. That is just what I find in Christ.

No intellect knows God. We only know God by our wants. Infidels say you cannot have more than the power of man’s mind. If I see a decrepit old woman leaning on the arm of a strong man, and supported by his strength, it is not in herself that she knows what strength is: and that is how we know God. No man can know God by knowing; he would not be man if he did, and God would not be God at all. It is conscience that knows the way God meets us. It is a want in me. Look at Simon the Pharisee and the woman. What did he know of Christ? He felt no need of Him; thought he was putting honour upon Him in asking Him, though in curiosity, to his house, and does not shew Him courtesy even as to a guest. And Christ is not inattentive to neglect. He knows and feels it. If I am cold and indifferent to Him, He knows and feels it all; it touches His heart. God’s essential names are Light and Love. Look at the woman: the light made her know herself, and the love made her know Christ and trust Him. Christ thoroughly knew her heart, and she thoroughly knew Christ’s heart. While Simon had thought Him unworthy of the common courtesies of life, she found a fulness of grace, and of light, and love that could meet all her need. Her sins, which are many (He knew them all), are all forgiven, for she loved much. God’s heart and man’s heart, through

grace, met in blessedness where the Pharisee was an utter stranger.

I learn this lesson here, that the Person of the Lord Jesus may have full power in my heart before I know the fact of forgiveness. The essential names of God, Light and Love, I find both brought out in Christ; the light that reveals everything in me, and the love that puts it all away. When the light comes and manifests me before God, I find myself in the presence of love, that has done everything for me. If I had the light without the love, I must run away and hide myself. If I had the love without the light, it would not do at all. It could not be. I get both in Christ—the divine Light that discovers all, and the divine Love that makes me know that all is put away. When light comes in, the conscience is honest. Take the thief, and hear him—"We indeed justly" —light had discovered that to him— "but this man has done nothing amiss." How did he know? By divine teaching. Would not our hearts all say, He has done nothing amiss? Then again, "Lord" he says—that is divine teaching as to His Person. All His disciples had run away; he alone owns His Lordship there on the cross—comforts His heart in that hour. And what does he ask? Is it relief from his pain? No. Suffering all that terrible agony on the cross, does he ask the One hanging by his side, whose power he owned, to lessen the suffering? No; but to be remembered by Him in His kingdom; and the effect of this is, "To-day thou shalt be with me in paradise." Oh, here was a heart that had found out what He was. A Pharisee is a Pharisee, and a whited sepulchre, but a broken heart is suited to a heart-healing God.

Is He a Servant in the glory? Oh, yes, He says, indeed I am. He says to His disciples, I am going to the Father; I

cannot be your companion any more on earth; but I am not going to give you up. What is to be done? I must fit you to be with Me; give you “a part with me.” You are clean, but you will be picking up dirt in your walk in this world, and this will not do to be associated with Me in glory; I must wash your feet. And that is what He is doing now. He is a Servant to wash our feet now.21 He sets Himself to that service. We do not cease to be clean, looked at as to our standing before God, but we walk through the world and pick up dirt, and Christ is our servant to wash it away. In Luke 12 we find He will be our Servant in the glory. “He will gird himself, and come forth and serve them.” It is divine love unspeakably blessed. He will never give up being a Man. “Let your loins be girded, and your lights burning.” I must have a full profession of Christ, that is, lights burning. Have your loins well tucked up for service, while I am away; when I come again I shall have My own way, and you shall sit down, and I will serve you. Shall I ever forget the humiliation of Christ? Shall I ever forget His manhood in that way, giving Himself for me, and then taking me up there to be with Himself, where He is remaining a Man for me through all eternity; shall I forget? Never! never! through all eternity. I shall never forget His humiliation on earth. While seeing Him in glory animates the soul to run after Him, what feeds the soul is the Bread that came down. That produces a spirit that thinks of everything but itself.

I need not go into detail, but you get in the rest of Philippians 2 all the delicacy of feeling brought out which flows from absence of self, and love to others, because the soul has got imbued with Christ, and is feeding upon Him, till unconsciously it grows to be like

Him. I must have the second as well as the third of Philippians: all the energy you like, but then go and study Him, and live by Him, and you will come out in His likeness, in all His grace, and gentleness, and loveliness. Oh, what a place—redeemed by Him, going to be with Him in glory, and set meanwhile to manifest Him on earth!

The Lord give us to be so occupied with Him who was so full of love, so full of gentleness, so full of lowliness, that we shall manifest the same! The first sin of the world was losing confidence in God. He comes back to us in all these sins of ours and says, Now you may trust me. It is God winning back the confidence of your heart, unbounded confidence in unbounded love—and that not by exhortations from heaven, but by His presence on earth. If you are a poor woman, not fit to face any of your fellow creatures, come to Me; I will have you, trust Me: if you are hanging on a cross for your crimes, you shall go up to-day with Me to paradise. My blood is enough to put your crimes away; my heart is open to receive you."

The Lord give us to know more of that One, who, when He put forth His own sheep went before them—met the lion for them, and delivered them! The Lord give us to realise what He was!

20 Revised.

21 "Washed," in John 13:10, refers to the whole body; "wash," to feet or hands. The words are different in Greek.

## Colossians Compared With Romans And Ephesians

In taking up Colossians, I will begin by comparing it with the epistles to the Ephesians and Romans, in order to help us in understanding the different ways in which the condition of the soul is treated. The chapter I have read (chap, 1) connects itself too, in a remarkable way, with the counsels of God, as well as containing some of the more elementary truths, such as our hope of glory and our responsibility, which makes it practical to all our souls. You will never rightly connect the doctrines of man's responsibility and God's free grace, until you see them united in Christ. From Paradise and onwards you find these very questions proposed by God Himself in the tree of life, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But man broke down in his responsibility, and was shut out from the tree of Life. Thus there were the two sides of the question from the very starting-point of God's ways. The same question was raised by the law. The two things were there, and by satisfying the responsibility man was to find the way to life. Then came Christ, who did satisfy the responsibility, and is the Life. Grace, which bestows the life, gave Christ, who met the responsibility. I receive eternal life through the righteousness of God when I have none, and I have to glorify Him in exhibiting this life in my body.

In divine things, people forget (what they see every day, and which is as simple as possible in human things) that duties flow always from the relationship in which we are already placed. Putting a person into a relationship, puts him as naturally as possible into the duties belonging to

that relationship. If the place is a constant one, the duty is a constant one, as with parents and children, husband and wife. The statement often made, that if I am saved I may do as I like, is thus disposed of. Can my child say that because he is my child he may do as he likes? No; the duty flows from the relationship. If I am a child of God, duty is always there; I may fail in it, and be chastened as a naughty child—quite true; but the duty is there. That is what redemption does; on the total failure of man under responsibility, it brings me the gift of eternal life in Christ Jesus. Thus praise, service, obedience— whatever belongs to the child of God—flows from it.

Now the epistle to the Ephesians gives us the counsels of God, while Romans takes up the responsibility of man, and his failure in it; then his justification from this state. These are connected with two aspects of sin; first, in its lusts and passions, in which man lives in sin; then its aspect as towards God, in which he is dead in sin. On the one hand I find him alive in sin, away from God, seeking to gratify his lusts. Then, I ask, what is the state of this soul towards God? He is dead. Scripture speaks of both states. In Romans, man is alive in sins; in Ephesians, as towards God, he is dead. If looked at as alive in sins, it is a question of putting them away and justification. If looked at as towards God, dead, there is nothing of this; it is his being quickened out of that state — and, therefore, life and a new creation; all that side is connected with the counsels of God. Taking man as dead, there is nothing to be got out of him; he has not a feeling or a thought towards God: evil goes out towards evil, but not a feeling stirs towards God. When Christ is

brought in, he sees no beauty in Him that he should desire Him; that is man.

In Colossians you find both states (chap. 3:7), “In the which ye also walked sometime when ye lived in them” (that is Romans); and chapter 2:13, “You being dead in your sins”—which takes in Ephesians. This epistle then comes between Romans and Ephesians, and takes up both sides.

When we come to Ephesians, we find the counsels of God, the sealing of the Spirit, the inheritance, and then our being made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Consequently, in the conduct of the Christian, it is God Himself who is given as the pattern of it— “be ye imitators of God, as dear children”; and we get the truth in Jesus, which is, you have put off the old man, and have put on the new. It is not a system of doctrine, but that I have done with the one, and have passed into the other. In Colossians you never find the Holy Ghost mentioned, except incidentally and exceptionally, as “love in the Spirit”; but life is the great subject. In Ephesians, the old man having been put off, and the new man put on, the Holy Ghost is in the Christian, as the power to manifest God in his ways, and thus be the expression of God in a man. God is love, and God is light; “walk in love,” and “now are ye light in the Lord”; Christ is the pattern for light, and the pattern for love. There are two ways in which love is manifested; first, the divine love, which shews its greatness in having to do with the vilest, in rising above the evil, and putting it away; secondly, where the object characterises the affections in giving oneself up in devotedness to Him who has so loved us. If I love what is base, it is a base affection, and so on; the affection corresponds with the

object on which it fixes itself. I find both these characters of love in Christ, in Ephesians 5:2, and it is the path for us. He “loved us,” answers to the first; “to God for a sweet-smelling savour,” answers to the second. Love going out to us in every need, but to God as its constant object. It is so with us; we must have God always before the soul, to keep up the character of our love. Here, then, I find the fullest description of what the walk of the Christian is: I am sitting in heavenly places in Christ, not in Adam at all. The works are suitable, and, moreover, fore-ordained. They are suited to the place we are in. If the position is Jewish, the works are legal; but the child is not a servant, nor the servant a child. We are called to walk in works as new in kind, as our position. There I find the Holy Ghost, consequently, as the link to connect me with Christ.

Now, in Romans I find the responsibility and failure of man thoroughly examined and proved. Among the Gentiles there were things too horrible to mention; among the Jews, the law broken; in result, “every mouth is stopped.” The judgment of God is in the simplest and most absolute way revealed. Sentence is pronounced, “there is none righteous; no, not one.”

The apostle is not ashamed of the gospel, because “therein is the righteousness of God revealed.” Why? Because “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.” Whatever is inconsistent with God’s presence He will not have. Mark, the wrath is revealed, not hidden, and the revelation is just as complete as if He were sitting on the great white throne.

In the second part of the epistle (chap. 5:12 to ch. 8) he turns to the nature that produced the fruit. It is not guilt, but state. The guilt is met by Christ dying for our sins, and we have redemption through His blood. The state is met by our being crucified with Him. Then “the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us,” but it is not bringing back the law to give us a rule for right conduct (it required righteousness, but never produced it), but by our walking in the Spirit. He produces the righteousness which the law required. Christ is my righteousness, and the Spirit is the power of life in us, producing righteousness. The law produced nothing but condemnation, provoking the sin. Life and the Spirit of Christ give us the path of godliness in contrast to law, beyond which the epistle does not go as to practical righteousness. Then having been justified by the blood of Christ, and brought to God through Christ, the hope is fully given of being like Christ in glory.

The three following chapters (9, 10, 11) are to reconcile the unconditional promises to the Jews, with the declaration “there is no difference.” They might ask, What will you make of the promises to Abraham? He shews they could not take the ground of promise at all, and shuts up all to mercy.

In Romans, redemption meets the whole case / am in: Ephesians is the answer to the counsels and purposes of God. In Colossians both are found; and as between the two, you have not the full consequences of Ephesians, but you have more than in the Romans: you find in Colossians “risen with Christ”; which is an immense thing for the soul, as all other things are left behind. If merely quickened, I cannot say that. I was lying dead in sins; Christ comes down in grace to where I was,

clearing away, as He comes down, all that belongs to sin. Then God comes in and raises Him and us up together. This involves union; I do not say more, because union is actually by the Holy Ghost. Romans does not give that; for this reason; he takes up an individual and says, You have been living in sins—you must personally be justified. Each has to answer for himself; “I am carnal,” not “we” are— that would take in all. The moment I find that we are all dead together in sins, we are all brought together out of death, God has quickened us together with Christ; wherever you find death and resurrection, it is a step towards union, and involves “one body.”

If you are dead with Christ, I have it in Romans; if you are risen with Christ, I have it in Colossians; but I do not go to sit in heavenly places—that is Ephesians. Consequently (in Colossians) I am seeking the things that are above, not sitting there. I am here—not as alive in the world, but risen—and my affections set there, occupied with Christ, going up after Him. If I speak of the Holy Ghost, I must have union. In Colossians it is life, not the Holy Ghost uniting in one body in the heavenlies in Christ. Heavenly things are our hope (chap, i:5). Instead of beginning in Colossians with the counsels of God, as in Ephesians, we have a long preface of the apostle’s desire for the saints to set them thoroughly in this hope of heavenly things. Both aspects of the truth are important. It is most important that we should learn in Ephesians “to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus”—most important, too, that my heart and affections should be set there; this Colossians does. My hope is laid up in heaven, but I am not sitting there.

We will now look at the prayer of the apostle (v. 9, 10), which comes instead of our calling, as in Ephesians. There you get the blessings and the privileges of the church—the whole body; in Colossians the value and fulness of the Head. It is well for us to see where He sets us. How often we find ourselves doubting about the will of God, and it is always because we have not a single eye. Perhaps we have never thought of the thing before; still if there is doubt, the eye is not single. God puts us through all sorts of things to test the state of the soul. If you do not see, the eye is not clear—the thing is clear. It is the condition of the soul that is tested by all these spiritual exercises. I may think I require wisdom, while all the time it is God testing me. The measure and character of the apostle's desire is, that we should "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing"; nothing short of this. Here, again, the state is tested. I must know the Lord, to know what is worthy of Him. I must know His mind and feelings—must be spiritually minded. It is increasing in the knowledge of Him, and thus we know how to walk. "Strengthened with all might according to the power of his glory." To what? Oh! how different are God's ways and man's! What a poor kind of result it seems! "Unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness!" but nothing tests the state of the heart more. "Patience"—that is just what characterised the Lord's path. Had He a will? Never! He came to do the Father's will; He was patient right on to the cross, and nothing else. In Philippians 2—emptying Himself, He only goes lower and lower—He is the first example of "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." "With joyfulness"—that, too, was seen in Him, therefore He could say "that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves." Will does not connect us with God; broken

will leaves us free to enjoy Him, and I find the very thing that breaks my will in fellowship with Him, and thus it gives me joy.

Now, having this growth, what do we find? Why, the man was meet to be partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light all the time (v. 12), so that after pressing this "growing by the knowledge of God," he can give thanks to the Father for having made us meet. Am I going to be with saints in light? Then I must get all the sanctity and light I can have here. If I am looking for holiness in view of acceptance, it is not really holiness I want, but righteousness. People call it holiness, but it is not really so. There is no proper holiness until there is certainty of salvation. A child has a nature capable of filial feelings, but he may be an orphan and cannot have them, because he has neither father nor mother. So one born of God cannot have holy affections as such. He wants a spirit of adoption, "whereby we cry, Abba, Father," before there can be true holiness. You have been washed clean in the blood of Christ. Have you been allowing in yourself anything contrary to that? It will not do. The blood has been put upon your ear, and upon your hand, and upon your foot. Nothing must be let into the head or done by the hand or foot that is not fit for the blood of Christ. This is how sin becomes so exceedingly hateful. You have gone and found pleasure, if only for five minutes, in that which gave Christ His agony. It is horrible! We have it in the case of the red heifer, in Numbers 19, whose blood had been sprinkled seven times before God. Sins had been consumed when the heifer was killed; but the ashes of the heifer bring me back to the sufferings of Christ, and shew me the horribleness of sin by the very place I am in. This is for

holiness, and is not a question of acceptance. It is the place we are in that gives the measure of the evil.

Now he comes to look at the double character of Christ's glory, and of the reconciliation, unfolding specially the glory of the Head, not of the body. In verses 16, 17, He takes His place as Head of creation—of course, because He is Creator. Then He comes to resurrection from the dead and Headship of the body (v. 18). Here He is not "first-born of creation" as Man, but "first-born from the dead." Then you get all the fulness pleased to dwell in Him. It is not in verse 19, "it pleased the Father"; for given Godhead would be nonsense; but as in chapter 2:9, it is the glory of His Person.

Now we go back to get everything brought into order by reconciliation, and this has also a double character. "By him to reconcile all things unto himself" is not yet accomplished. "You … hath he reconciled": that is done. We are a reconciled people in the midst of an unreconciled world. There is no such thing as an unreconciled Christian; but our bodies are not yet reconciled: they belong to the old creation. There is not a thing between us and God, unless you put Christ. If there is the least thing between us we are not reconciled — "to present you holy and unblamable and unreprovable" in God's own sight! (v. 22).

"If ye continue in the faith." The moment you find saints on earth, you get "if." Now we have the double ministry — "the gospel which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven," not like Peter's to the circumcision. And "the church, whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to

complete the word of God." The moment the church was revealed, the whole circle of the testimony of God was complete. Verse 27 gives us "Christ among you, the hope of glory." The Christ of the Jews was not "the hope of glory," but "a crown of glory" when He came, and not among the Gentiles at all. But now Gentiles who have no tide to glory have Him as "the hope of glory." The epistle to the Colossians is a word on the way, in which you get between the two.

Then I have all the fulness of the Godhead revealed to me in Christ, "for in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." When Christ came there was nothing more to be revealed. To preserve the connection of verses 9, 10 (chap. 2), read "all the completeness of the Godhead," and "ye are complete in him." The completeness of the Godhead is brought to us, and we are complete before the Godhead in Him. Thus we have real circumcision of heart. But what becomes of "the principles of the world"? They are all put away—"Ye are complete in him," and do not want any of these things. First, I go to death as a living sinner, and have the truth of Romans (v. 12). Then I am dead in sins and quickened, and have that in Ephesians (v. 13), in an entirely new creation. He put away my trespasses coming into death, and now He raises me up without them. He does not take the Christian to the heavens, but gets hold of the conscience as to where they are. Ritualism and all the rest of it is smashed. Put a gold leaf between the Head and body, and all is gone—it is death! I can have nothing before God, but that I am complete in Him. All these things were but "a shadow of things to come." What do you know about angels? (v. 18). How do you know they can hear you? Do you know they care for you? Will you

say, It is a great thing to have a friend at court—denying you are in Christ? We have Him as a mediator for our weakness: and I trust His heart more than I do an angel's. He has been a Man in my circumstances, and knows what I feel; angels have not.

Here we are in Romans again. "Why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances?" (v. 20). You have died with Christ, and you have done with the whole position in that respect. It was only a satisfying of the flesh. We have come to the practical application of it all. Here we are risen with Christ (chap. 3), and so far on Ephesian ground, only that we are not sitting in heavenly places; we seek them. You have Him in your heart here that your affections may be where He is. Having died with Him, if He is hid we are hid, if He appears we appear. Then we have the most complete statement of what Christian life is, that we find anywhere in the epistles. He will not own any other life, but speaks of "when ye lived in them." First, you find the gross sins spoken of in verse 5, then in verse 8—no great lust, but the will not broken; and verse 9, untruth. You are to put off all these. They combine the two great characters of sin, violence and corruption. We are never told in Scripture to put off the old man, nor to die to sin. Tell the new man to die? I hope not! Tell the old man to die, and he says, Indeed, I will not; I will live as long as I can! "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh," not have mortified it. I am an active person in putting all these things to death; to mortify is to put practically to death, supposes power—the power of life. Dying is not power. So we read, "seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds."

Now I find the knowledge of holiness according to the nature of God, “renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.” This goes far beyond the mere absence of sin like innocent Adam. “Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind,” etc. “Holy and beloved”; I am that, He puts them into their place always. This is not what I am to put on, but I am to put on what suits this character and relationship; verse 16 looks for the heart being enlarged in the knowledge of divine things. Verse 17, “Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.” This gives us a rule that goes far beyond ‘what is the harm of this or that?’ and is so simple. It comes into any common thing in the day, such as buying a dress. Are you doing it in the name of the Lord Jesus? Can you go to a concert in His name? Of course not. The thing may not be wrong, but it settles everything— hundreds of questions that might arise. It gives me as my measure and rule to be walking in Christ, and living for Christ. I have Christ as my life, and He cannot do it. Then I have got away from Him; I leave Him to do it. If I am in earnest, it is the most comfortable rule possible; but if I am not, it pinches dreadfully: because you may say, Am I never to do anything to please myself? Ah, you betray yourself! What a comfort it is to know what He likes! In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, we know perfectly well if we are doing things in the name of Christ. It goes through the whole character of life in Christ, this “putting off” and “putting on.” It does not bring in the Holy Ghost, but life in us—what life is—He is the power of the life, but it is the life of Christ that is in me.

To speak of the Holy Ghost dwelling in me as my life, would be an incarnation of the Holy Ghost, which is nonsense. Christ is my life; but it is by the Holy Ghost, on the other hand, that I get life and liberty, power and conscious union with Christ.

And now, in closing let me ask: if you can say you have the consciousness of the place you are set in, as made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, can you honestly say, as to the purpose of your heart, I do all things in the name of the Lord Jesus? Are you conscious of having that as the bent, and aim, and settled principle of your life? I may fail in it, but is that my object? If I am going one way, I may trip or go slowly, but I am not going the opposite way. I know you may trip, but I ask, is it the principle of your life to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus? It is an immense privilege. In the commonest things we are able to bring in Christ. The apostle cannot tell the servant in the house not to purloin without going through the whole scheme of Christianity; “that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things, for the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared,” etc. (Titus 2). When the heart is set upon an object, it judges of everything according to it. I do a thing because He likes it; this shews I care for Him. If my heart is set upon pleasing Him, I shall have things as He likes it, and simply because He likes it. If we have our hearts filled with Christ, we shall count it no great sacrifice to do without the dross for His sake!

## Meetness And Growth

Colossians 1

It is a wonderful thing, and the more wonderful the more we think of it, the way we are, as Christians, associated with the Son of God! We are made members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones; of Him, who is the beginning of the creation of God. In the same scripture, where He speaks of being one with the Father, He says, “ye in me, and I in you.” The more we dwell upon it, and think of it, the more wonderful it is; and it is all grace. As we read, “That in the ages to come, he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us by Christ Jesus.” This is the way the angels will learn, and principalities and powers in the heavenly places, the meaning of “the exceeding riches of his grace.” They will see the poor thief; and the woman of the city that was a sinner; ourselves, too, in the same place and glory as God’s Son!

Now, He has brought us into the present intimacy of it, by giving us Christ as our Life, and the Holy Ghost to dwell in us. He has brought us into the closest intimacy and relationship with Himself; as He said, “I go to my Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your God.” Think of the eternal Son of God saying that of us! It ought to be peaceful joy to us, simply settled in our soul. It is just the one who is dwelling in it, and at home in it, who will feel and know how wonderful it is. It is that which you cannot understand if you are not dwelling in it; but when you do get inside, you begin to be conscious of what it is.

God has shewn to us all the fruits of the flesh put away perfectly—that in raising up the blessed Lord Jesus Christ who stood in the place of death for us, and in setting Him in glory, and giving us the Holy Ghost, all that is of man and sin is put away. “When he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high.” It is a blessed thing to know that by His work on the cross, He has cleared away everything that stood between us and the righteousness of God. So that there should not lurk a single suspicion in our hearts as to our place before Him. Looked at as guilty, we are justified; as denied, we are cleansed: as having offended, we are forgiven. He wants us to enjoy all this; and therefore does not leave us in fear of judgment. God has brought us in Christ to Himself—set us there, and given us the consciousness of it by the Holy Ghost come down from heaven. Not yet in possession of all—in that sense we have nothing but the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven—but to faith we have everything. It is this which makes the riddle of a Christian state: we have everything in Christ—glory, eternal life, forgiveness, justification, Christ in us the hope of glory. The work He has done is complete, and we are quickened and have part in it, and therefore the apostle says, “we are saved in hope.” But, as to possession, we have got nothing yet, save the Holy Ghost, and God’s love shed abroad by the Holy Ghost in our hearts. Looked at as to place and title, I am accepted in the Beloved: but looking at me, I am wandering in this world very far from it all; and yet, having the consciousness of all I possess in my heart. The heart thus rests in His love, and can have nothing to desire. He has given us His own Son: His own love has put us in Christ—the very best place that can possibly be

conceived, and in that sense has left us nothing to desire. We are here upon earth to be exercised and tried and tested; and to learn His faithfulness and grace.

You will find in this chapter how growth is spoken of, and the supply of strength; and the total separation of these from meetness for heaven. Scripture never speaks of any need of becoming meet for heaven for the Christian. There is—there ought to be—growth. God will chastise us if we go wrong— we shall find out all these ways and dealings of God with us; but all carefully disconnected from meetness for heaven; and wherever this is not practically known—I do not mean as to words —wherever there is a want of clearness as to meetness hanging about the heart, you will find it hinders peace, because fulness of love is not seen, and present association with the glory. Accordingly the standard of walk comes down. I get occupied with my own heart's state, instead of being occupied with Christ's heart. I never saw a person yet who was occupied with himself, who—to repeat the words—was not occupied with himself! and that is the greatest mischief in the world.

We have sometimes to be occupied with ourselves; there are errors, and we have to judge them; and we have to look not only that there should be no evil, but that there should be growth. But still, if I am much occupied with self, self takes the place that Christ ought to have, and therein is the mischief. A person will come and tell me a long story of what is in his heart; and, of course, a deal of evil. But if I ask him what is in God's heart, he cannot tell me a word! Do you think that a good state? Certainly we shall get into scrapes if we do not judge ourselves; but the judgment of self is an easy and simple thing though requisite, if I am close to God, and in communion

with Him. But, if I am away from Him, prying into my own heart, and all that is there; why there it is still!

You will find what an amazingly high standard there is in this chapter, “that ye might walk worthy of the Lord, unto all pleasing,” for growth and practice. But when I talk of meetness, it is “Giving thanks unto the Father which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.” When I get that, I can look for growth and a walk worthy of the Lord, and this, because I am associated with Him who has made me meet. Do you think the poor thief was meet to go into paradise? What made him meet? The proof of his meetness was that he went there, and surely he did not go un-meet! He went there because Christ died, and He had made him meet. It is that as to which we have to be clear and distinct.

He says, “Ye are complete in him”; that is, where He has put us; and here the apostle goes through the various things which, as a Jew, he might have known. Circumcision: he might be so, or not: a philosopher, or not, and so on; but then he shews, you have got everything in Christ. It is very beautiful the way we find this here (chap 2). “In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” In Him, as a man— all the completeness of the Godhead. “And ye are complete in him.” The words are the same root. We get all the fulness of the Godhead brought to us, close down to us here, in Christ: but if I look up and see Christ there, I see too, that I am complete—filled up to fulness in Him before God. It is a wonderful place indeed, in which sovereign grace has set us. Grace alone could think of such a thing.

If you want to know God the Father where are you to learn Him? “He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father.” Have our hearts ever looked at Christ as our object, and said while looking—I have nothing more to seek? Think, beloved friends, what it is to look at the Lord with the power of the Spirit of God, and to see in Him—that poor, despised Man— God walking on the earth! and when one sat down by His side, and told Him one’s tale of sin, even if confounded unto tears, she was telling it out to God! Is that the thought we have about the Lord Jesus Christ? and He is the same now. God has come, beloved friends, in Christ, and said, as it were, Do not you know Me? in a certain sense like any man, and in a sense not the least like a man at all. Not one single motive ever governed His heart that governed the heart of man; and not one motive ever governed man’s heart that governed His. It was a perfectly new thing in the world. The blessed manifestation of a divine path with a Man in it: not only by outward miracles, but by His ways and words. He made the hearts of those who were with Him burn in them as He talked to them, as He walked with them by the way.

Then, when I look up to God, I say, “complete in Christ.” I have committed sins and the like, but I say, I am not in the flesh, but in the Spirit—I am in Christ, and I know it as He said I should, when He would send the Holy Ghost. “At that day, ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you,” John 14:20. So I find my place in Christ before God, and myself in Him, and God has been glorified as to the way I came there. “Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.” I can therefore give thanks to the Father which hath made me meet, to be a partaker of the inheritance of the

saints in light. True, we have not got the inheritance, and we have to learn our weakness, and failure, and the like. But this casts no cloud on the heart as to what it is before God, because it is in Christ. “He that hath wrought us for this selfsame thing is God”—that is, for the glory. “Who hath also given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.” Do you suppose that when God has “wrought us” He has done so badly? Do you think God has done His work well? Surely He has! What peace this gives to the soul! But the moment it becomes a question of meetness, depending on growth, let a man look at his own heart and say it is meet for God! When then, does he expect it to be so? I do not doubt such desire holiness, but it is a mistake in them as to the way of getting the holiness even as a present thing. There is no mistake in saying that “without holiness no man shall see the Lord”; else the person does not know God at all. But the question is, how to get all this holiness? God chastens us that we may be partakers of His holiness. Not exactly that we may be holy, but “partakers of his holiness.”

Now, having seen this ground on which we are set, we are complete in Christ, meet for the inheritance, and brought into heart association with it all by faith, and as having the Holy Ghost dwelling in us; then the apostle begins about the walk of the person. He says, you must “walk worthy of the Lord”—of the Person to whom you are brought—proving what is that good, and perfect, and acceptable will of God. God has given you a place in His own Son; and His Son a place in your hearts, the hope of glory. He who is the Heir of glory is there in your hearts, you Gentiles. They had title to nothing.

Take a Jew, with whom he is comparing them in this passage. He was looking for Messiah to set up the glory in a carnal way; he had the promises, and forfeited them entirely when he rejected Him, and so is thrown entirely on sovereign mercy. Christ was the minister of the circumcision for the truth of God to "confirm the promises made to the fathers," Rom. 15. What then? They rejected them; and we read "that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy." He distinctly states the two points. People talk of promise to Adam. There was none whatever. There was a statement in his hearing on which Adam could rest; but there was not any promise to him. A promise to Adam would have been a promise to man in his sins. It was a judgment on the serpent made to the second Adam, the Seed of the woman—Adam was not that. "It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Meanwhile Abraham and the Jews got the promises. The latter took them under law conditionally, and lost them. God will accomplish them all yet in spite of their failure. They are for the present cast aside.

As to the Gentiles, what of them? What had they? Nothing. Christ was there; quite true. But mark the way, when one came to look for blessing to Him, in the case of the-Syrophenician woman. Our Lord goes out of Israel, and this woman comes and speaks to Him, as Son of David, of her need. Well? "He answered her never a word." She tries again, calling Him "Lord." He replies, Let the children first be fed, that is, the Jews. "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it unto dogs"—Gentiles. She answers, "Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table." I am a poor Canaanite—a dog—with the curse upon me. I

am entitled to nothing; I have no promises. Still, there is goodness in God even for such. Do you suppose Christ could say there was not? Impossible, for it would not be true. “Oh, woman, great is thy faith, be it unto thee even as thou wilt.” The effect of it not being promise, was to bring out the way in which God was above it all in grace. There was the blessedness in God to be brought out for the want and wretchedness of sinners. Christ makes propitiation, and grace reigns through righteousness. It is God coming in and rising above all dispensation to reveal Himself, and to bring back the soul with confidence to Himself, to enable it to say, Well, I know God, as a Jew under law and promise never could have known Him, and all because I have no right to it. I have a right to nothing, and I have got God! So here we find He speaks of “Christ in you”—not yet “the crown of glory,” as He will be to the residue of Israel (Isa. 28:5)—but “the hope of glory.” It was altogether a new thing that Christ should be amongst the Gentiles; not bringing in the glory, but as the hope of the glory that was to come, and that of heavenly glory.

By this way of complete grace to a mere sinner I get what God is Himself in love, and what He is in righteousness. These both go together in my favour, and that to which grace in righteousness has entitled me—the hope of glory, so that I “rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” The double character of the work of the Holy Ghost in our hearts is thus brought out. He is the earnest of the glory, the inheritance which is mine; and God’s love is shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Ghost, for He is there. The glory is our portion, and therefore we are strangers and pilgrims here, until the redemption of the inheritance.

There is this difference between the Ephesians and the Colossians. In the former we are looked upon as already sitting in heavenly places—not, with—but “in Christ.” In the latter we are dead and risen with Christ; but are looked at as down here upon earth all through, but the hope laid up in heaven. Consequently this epistle, which puts us upon earth, shews us what our path is here. He says—“that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing,” this is the measure, “worthy of the Lord”; as we read again, “He that saith he abideth in him; ought himself so to walk, even as he walked.” Again, “Ye are the epistle”: (not, ought to be, which is true also); but, “ye are the epistle of Christ.” You cannot say honestly you are that, if you are going crooked and astray. But that is the place you ought to be, “unto all pleasing”—so that there never would be anything in you that is not pleasing to Christ. God has put you by grace into this place, and now do you walk accordingly. If I have a child who does dishonourable things, of course that is thrown back on the father, and the father will feel it. “Being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.” You know God. Bring this into everything. Do everything in connection with Him. “Strengthened with all might according to his glorious power”—there I get strength. What is its measure? “His glorious power.” Beloved brethren, do you really believe these things? Do you believe that it is truth concerning us?

Take another verse of which I said but little. The ninth. “For this cause we also since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.” How often we say these words,

and yet what have you been seeking in the wilderness? Is it not just your own comfort—your own will? No wonder then that you do not know what God's will is. Where is there a right path in this world apart from His will? I do not know one: and there cannot be one, I am bold to say. Suppose a child has left his father's house, he never can go right till he has first got back there. He is not a thief in South America perhaps. He may have a very good character there; but he ought to have a bad conscience, and he never can have a right one until he goes back to his father. There is no path for me in this world as such, but the moment I get Christ then there is a path. You go and walk after Him! Poor followers we may be, but "He has left us an example that we should follow in his steps." "Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee, in whose heart are the ways." If only my heart is in the way following Christ, I shall be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. Mark the wisdom of the Lord in this. Suppose I get a director—well, he directs me aright, I get no credit at all; and so there is no wisdom or spiritual understanding in me. But God has taken care to provide for me in His own way. Oh, but, says some one, I do not see the Lord's mind clearly. Then I ask, Is not your body full of light? Then your eye is not single—that is a clear case. Whenever I find that I do not see clearly what to do, there is something that is not single-eyed in me.

Now, all this has nothing to do with meetness for heaven, but a great deal to do with the state of the soul. Well, now we have seen there is this "wisdom "and "strength." Do you suppose you are now going on with brilliant effects, and manifestations of power? Is it to be

all a going on with a nourish? Indeed it is not! You are strengthened unto “all patience and long-suffering with joyfullness.” What a come down that is! It is no easy thing to be patient. Never to have your own will one minute. Is that dreadful? Stay! Ought you not to be doing God’s will? Did Christ ever do His own will? He came to do His Father’s will, and never thought of doing anything else. Why do you think of doing anything else? Because you like your own will best. We look at our own poor foolish hearts thus, and we find the will at work; but we should be doing His will—this is liberty. Suppose I send my child with a message, and he wants to get a run out—why, that is “the law of liberty to him.”

Look at the unspeakable patience you see in Christ. Look at Paul— “truly the signs of an apostle were wrought in me with all patience.” But mark what was inside it all—“joyful-ness.” He was the man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: still He could desire that His joy might be fulfilled in themselves. Paul asks—“Who is afflicted and” —not I relieve him but—“I burn not.” We find that this world is not a place of rest, but of trial. Does this not make the heart say, Why I am going to see Christ as He is?—and hope brightens in the heart at the thought, and enables me to glory in tribulation by the way; knowing that tribulation works patience, and patience experience, and experience hope; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us. It is not putting on outward joy, and a canker in the heart; there are sorrows no doubt in all that we pass through, but at bottom there is joyfulness, and at the end of all Christ Himself. We have got Him as the spring of all joy in our hearts now, and we shall have Him when we are in His presence.

There is a word in verse 13, “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.” It is a total taking us out of the place we were in. It is not simply you are born of God—not the communication of Hfe merely: nor (what is the foundation of it all) the precious blood of Christ cleansing us from all sin. The blood has put away my sins; and I am born of God, truly: but there is more, I have been translated out of the kingdom of Satan, who rules the darkness of this world; and into the kingdom of the Son of God’s love. It is the only place where the kingdom is called so, as in contrast with that of Satan. I was a slave of Satan, and I have been taken right out of it all. It is what the soul cries out for in Romans 7, “Who shall deliver me?” It is not, “Who shall cleanse me?” It is not merely that the blood is there, and the judge cannot touch me; but the salvation of the Lord has delivered me clean out of it all—into the kingdom of God’s dear Son.

The apostle goes on to shew how Christ created everything, and so is to have everything. “All things were created by him, and for him.” He is before all things, and by Him ail things consist. The One who created them sustains them all. Again, “He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead.” Death is below the lowest creation, and Christ went down below it all; the creation got under its power by sin. He went there in grace; tasted death as others never did. The more He knew what life was— the more He felt the power of death. The more He knew what holiness was, the more He felt to be made sin. The more He knew what love was, the more He knew what it was to bear wrath. But He has come up from death, and thus as risen, He is Head of the body;

He takes us into closest association with Himself. He went down to death for us, and now takes us up where He is. God raises us up with Him.

We were alienated and enemies in our mind by wicked works, yet He hath reconciled us. All things are going to be reconciled in earth and heaven—created things; but the saints are reconciled. We are a reconciled people in the midst of an un-reconciled creation. God has not left you part of this unreconciled creation. It groans yet, and we groan too; but we are reconciled to God. So now I understand why I have the patience and long-suffering and joyfulness too. Very unsuited these two in themselves—but very suited to glorify God in. "Reconciled" is a strong full word—everything brought into God's presence, as God would have it; and we are reconciled.

I add one word more. "If ye continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel which ye have heard." Here I get what I always do in Scripture. When you look at a saint in Christ, it is all a settled thing for him. But when you look at a saint as here in Colossians, passing through this world, you will find "ifs" and exhortations (and God forbid that we should weaken one word of scripture), uniformly saying to him, Well now you must get to heaven— you must hold fast—judge things in yourself—lay hold, and the like. But if I am looked at as in heaven, lam "complete in him." Nor is there any question about the faithfulness of God in helping us through the journey. Knowing I am in Christ, my soul can say "Abba"; for I am made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, by the Father; He has done it. What do I learn then, in going through the wilderness? If the manna fails

me a day, I shall be starved. What am I to feed upon then? Or, how am I to get clothes? God took care of the nap of their coats, and the manna never did fail. God must sift us and exercise our hearts, and pull us to pieces here, but none shall pluck us out of His hand: no use telling me this if I was not in danger of being plucked out. I learn, then, the patient faithfulness of God in my circumstances. I would not weaken these words one bit. Christ ever lives to make intercession for me, and I am getting grace from Him every moment; but this is not a question of being made meet. “If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” The foundation is not touched, but when we fail we need to be restored, so that we are kept where we ought to be; that is, dependent upon God.

We want to be settled in Christ, that our hearts may be happy and joyful; and we want to be dependent too; and we learn, as we pass through the wilderness, that if He were to leave us for one moment (but He will not), we have no resource at all. We get these things together in this epistle: the saint reconciled to God, but still journeying on with the hope of glory before him, knowing that he is made meet for it; that now he has to walk worthy of the Lord, and trust the blessed faithfulness of Him who will confirm us to the end, that we may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ; meanwhile growing by the knowledge of God. You see how these things come together. 1. “To present you holy, and unblamable, and unreprovable in his sight.” 2. “If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled,” etc. But looked at as to acceptance, I am made meet to be a partaker of the inheritance, and am giving thanks to the Father who has done it.

## Risen With Christ

Colossians 3:1-17

We get here the blessed side of the Christian state—being risen with Christ, the great groundwork on which we are. It is not that Christ has died for our sins, but that we have died and are risen, and this is the starting-point of the exhortation. We have done altogether with the old man, having died as children of Adam; and we are also risen, having totally done with the world, and yet in it, but risen with Christ; therefore you get the practice of a person risen, and the affections and state and condition of the heart. The Christian is looked at as a person not alive on earth at all; he has died, and now, "If ye be risen with Christ, seek those things that are above." In chapter 2 you get, "Why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances? "You are not living in the world—you are dead. Now set your affection on things above. You belong there; you have not gone there yet, but the new man is not in you to put you into earthly things. The Spirit takes of "the things of Christ" and shews them to you, not to fix your hearts on earthly things, but to deliver you from them; we are to be, in spirit, mind, and affections, up there. We are risen, and having nothing more to do with the world, as to our affections and object, than a man who has died out of it. It does not say, "You must die," but, "You are dead," for that is the Christian state. Christ having died, and He being my life, my life is hid up there in Him. There is complete association with Christ. He has died; I have died. He is hidden up there; my life is hidden. He will appear; I shall appear with Him in glory. Thorough,

complete, blessed association with Christ is the place into which we are put; and it is the starting-point of the character of this life displayed on the earth to which we do not belong. If an angel were here, he would dc that which was God's will for him; but he would have nothing to do with the earth as to the object for which he lived.

The apostle does not allow that we have any life here, but talks of our members: "Mortify"—put to death —"therefore your members which are upon the earth." All that proceeds from the flesh the Christian is not to allow for a moment. Mark how different it is to dying to sin. Mortify is just the opposite, it is putting to death. That is power. If I say, "I must die," that is being alive. We are dead to sin, the world, and the law. Christ having died, we have died. What is true of Him is true of us. Having now life and power, we are to put these things to death. There is no more lust, or self-will, or working of the flesh, if a man is dead. I am to reckon myself dead, not setting about to die to sin, for I should not be able; that is, the flesh, the old man, does not want to die. The apostle says, "Reckon yourselves dead." You have died. Then put off the old man. "Our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed." Sin has been "condemned in the flesh." Now I have the place of power to put to death every evil that the flesh would produce. Put to death your members, not your life in Adam. You are dead; therefore put to death your members. If you let them act, it is the flesh. The Christian has power in Christ— "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me"— to put down everything inconsistent with the fife in which this power is. The life is hid with Christ in God, but our members

are on the earth; and he says, Now keep them in order; you have the power in Christ.

There is not deliverance till you get to that. “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.” We have to watch, not to be careless and let these things spring up; but we have the power to say, Not a single sprout of the old stock shall spring up. The old tree is cut down and grafted. The old stock may begin to sprout, but that is not the tree in common parlance; it has been grafted. We know the stock is there, and so is our flesh there; but we must remember we have power, and we must not excuse ourselves. Our will is not changed; but if Christ is our object, there is power. There is still the law of sin and death; but I am not a debtor to it; it has no claim or power over me. It will have power enough if we allow it; but we have a power entirely above it. The Lord leaves us here to learn to have our senses exercised to discern good and evil, to be tested and tried. The flesh is there; but if we are full of Christ, we are masters of it; if we are not full of Christ, it masters us: but it is our own fault—we have no excuse. We have to exhibit this life of Christ, or else the flesh acts, and then the old man is exhibited. The apostle says, You are not living in the old man at all now; you are living in Christ, and you are not going to walk in these things.

In verse 7, he applies it to their walk. It requires us to make active use of the power. The flesh is soon up if we are not full of Christ. We are to arm ourselves with the power of Christ, and be active in keeping the flesh in its place—down altogether. If I am not full of Christ, for Himself, for His own sake, enjoying Him, the flesh comes out. It will not do to put on your armour at the battle.

Everything we pass through in this world is one of two things: either an occasion of obedience to the new man, or of temptation to the old. The Lord prayed in an agony in Gethsemane; and when they come to take Him, He says, “Whom seek ye?” He had gone through it with His Father, and it was an occasion of obedience when it came. “The cup which my Father hath given me shall I not drink it?” Peter was asleep in the garden; and when the Lord is witnessing a good confession, he is cursing and swearing he does not know Him. If we were full of Christ, temptations would be nothing but occasions of obedience and glorifying God. We need self-knowledge and diligence of heart in abiding in Christ for Himself, so that when the temptation comes, we do not enter into it, and it is an occasion of blessed obedience.

In verse 8, we come to another thing—there is no lust, but the flesh is not subdued. We have no lust to be angry; it is an unsubdued nature, and that is not Christ. This is a second step—” also put off all these.” We have done with these horrid evils that God abhors (and He abhors them even more in His children than in others; His delight in us does not change the holiness of His nature) now put off these which express an unsubdued will, and unarrested action of the flesh. If a man says something to me, and I get in a passion, that is not Christ; it is that which unsubdued flesh gives forth. “Lie not one to another.” Satan was a liar and a murderer; we are to put off lying and violence. Put these off, because “you have put off the old man [faith has done it] and put on the new.” You have done with the old as to its very nature, you have put on the new; now do not bring forth the fruits of the old—the crab apples of the old stock. The new is “renewed in knowledge after the image of

him that created him." The new man knows God, and takes nothing as the right thing but what suits God. It is not merely an intelligent creature; he is not received in that way; but the Christian knows the love and holiness of God in Christ. It is the knowledge faith has of God. There is no measure of the path I am to walk in as a new man but God Himself. That is where the Christian is set. Act in the same spirit and character as He has shewn in Christ. Did He not shew grace to you when you were an enemy? Then you go and show grace. Was He not full of mercy to the unthankful? Then you go and do the same. "Be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect."

Verse n. There is no motive, no life, no character but Christ. "Christ is all and in all." I am not a Jew, a Gentile, or an Englishman; I am in Christ as to my life, and "to me to live is Christ." What we are brought into is Christ, and our object is Christ, and nothing else whatever. The life was expressed in Him, and the power of it is in us as alive; we are brought into it by redemption, and Christ is the whole object and character of it. It is Christ subjectively in me, and objectively outside me. I get in Christ Himself the knowledge of God. He is Himself the image of God. Look at Christ, and you see it all in a man. Christ is everything, and He is in the Christian. The whole sphere of the life, and the object of the Christian, is Christ. Where Christ is the divine life, He is the object of the life. The Father's love is fully revealed in Him too. Then what comes in most blessedly is, that I have His place.

Verse 12: "Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved." Was He not the "elect of God"? He was God's beloved Son. Having thus brought in Christ, the apostle looks at what we are to put on in practice. "That

is your place," he says. You are the objects of God's delight, holy and beloved; His nature is in you; now walk in the consciousness of it, and your heart will be in a state to put on these things that are suited to Christ. If Christ has put us into this place, He looks for fruit. He has cut the tree down, and it is the graft that now lives. Then, Paul says, shew all these blessed fruits. If Christ is my life, He is in me, and He is my object. Remember, he says, what you are before God; walk in the affections of it, in the consciousness of it. You are to have the sense of it, as a child has of its mother's love. A child has the consciousness of the place it is in, and it ought to walk worthy of it, and please its mother; but it must have the consciousness of the place it is in first. It may do every duty without that; but it is only show, there is no heart in it. In Ephesians we get much the same thing: "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children"; go and act like your Father. Here it is another aspect of the same thing: "Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved." There is the character of Christ, and you are in His place of relationship to God; let us see the spirit that belongs to such a place— the place of Christ in this world. It is hard to be put down, and trampled on; but that is what Christ had. "If when you do well, and suffer for it, you take it patiently, this is acceptable to God." That is Christ's character. Did He not do well, and suffer patiently? You do it. It is more important to keep Christ's character than to keep my coat. That is the way it works in the heart. I do not expect righteousness in a world of sin; my business is to shew the character of Christ before the world—gentleness and meekness in a world of wrong— that is superiority. If a man vexes me, we are on the same ground. If I have the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of power, it lifts me above the flesh-But all this is

not natural gentleness. He says, “Above all these things charity, which is the bond of perfectness”—the real love of God, that perfects a thing, and makes it divine; and not merely a gentle nature that we see constantly with no power to resist, no firmness of character, one who cannot say “no.” There are plenty of people to whom it is torture to say “no,” and where it would be grieving the Spirit not to say “no”; that is human kindness, not divine love. This bond of perfectness is a holy thing. Gentleness is very sweet to see, but it will not stand good in a world of temptation. If it is the grace of Christ, and I have divine love and power, I do go through it; for it is divine godly love and obedience.

“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts”—with the spirit of peace, the Holy Ghost not grieved, peace is enjoyed with God in a conscience not injured. Then he adds, “Be ye thankful,” for I get everything from God. I cannot be thankful for everything if my will is not broken; but the moment I look to God as counting the hairs of my head, I glory in tribulation, and count it all joy, every trial and exercise. There is the Christian’s place—the place of Christ ruling in his heart, walking in peace through the world, thankful for everything he gets; it is for his good. Now he is to enjoy the things of his own world. “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.” That is the positive world into which you are brought—“The unsearchable riches of Christ.” It is not head knowledge, but spiritual things— “Singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” We know God’s ways and thoughts in the wonderful word we have, and we have the mind of Christ. The men of the world sing in their enjoyment: you sing together to the Lord. Now the Christian is enjoying his own world with his heart’s

affections. We get the rule for his conduct. It is very simple, very sweeping, and uncommonly satisfactory to the heart that really desires to do the will of God. “Whatsoever ye do, whether in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.” If we look at that “Whatsoever ye do, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus,” it is bringing all the principle and motive for our conduct from the revelation of a Person who is everything to us, not forbidding things. We know in how many things during the week the question arises, Shall I do this or that? Not as to absolutely wrong things; but a person says, What is the harm of that? Are you going to do it in the name of the Lord? No! Then you are getting away from the Lord, and that is the harm—a great harm for the Christian. In taking a house, or buying a dress, in the way I manage my house, is it “in the name of the Lord Jesus”? What can we say? It is leaving the Lord out (not leaving Him altogether), and letting self in. That is what the will of the flesh is.

The Christian has the privilege in every-day things of doing everything in the name of the Lord Jesus. People ask if there is any harm in a concert of sacred music. It is a cheat of the devil. Ask if they are going in the name of the Lord Jesus. They know they are not thinking of Him. Some one says, Can you not come and see this beautiful scenery? God made it. I know He did. Are you going in the name of the Lord Jesus? It is the object, that is the thing. God sent honey to Jonathan when he was going through the wood, and he was refreshed by it. Very right and nice. But if he had been looking for honey, it would not have been fighting the Lord’s battles. There was to be no honey in the sacrifices; but if God sends it, it is right to be refreshed by it, and I am

thankful for it. The question is—where the mind of the man is set and living. If a person is in earnest to do the will of God (and the Holy Ghost could not lead us in our own will to amuse and please ourselves, He is not down here for that), if a person is anxious to live to God, and no one else, he says, Give me a simple rule for the things that turn up every day. “Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.” Then I live with Him in the everyday things. Suppose my father wants this book put that way, and I put it this way; it may be of no importance, but it is a proof I do not care for my father. If the blessed Lord is all to me, I shall be seeking to do everything in His name. We may forget—alas! we do—but if it is on my heart to please a person, I do not forget. Suppose I am walking thus in everything, I shall taste more of Christ, and it will give fixed happiness, instead of grieving the Spirit for some foolish thing I shall not care for in a few years. I shall have Christ for my object in everything I do. We do think much of those we love in our conduct, and I shall have in my mind what He likes, if I love Him. That is what the Lord looks for as One who has loved us and gave Himself for us in grace.

As Christ is everything to me, and I have Him for my life, now I must walk in it, and do all in the name of the Lord Jesus. I am sure it is what makes us happy. We shall find what weak creatures we are, and that is humbling and very useful. There will be that walking with Him that gives the secret of His presence and counsel, as He says Himself, “I will manifest myself to him.” There is the positive living of the heart in the enjoyment of the Lord’s presence, in consequence of living for Him. Are we content to live like Lot, vexing ourselves with the evil we are amongst? or do we give it up, and joy to think of the

time when the Lord comes and says, as He did to Abraham, “I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward”? Are we content if God says that? It was seen in Abraham’s walk. He was called “the friend of God”; and God says, “Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?” The secret of the Lord was in his heart. We find then in what has been before us the remarkable expression of what the life of Christ is, and its workings in us; and it all starts with having put off the old man, and put on the new. God has fully revealed Himself in Christ, and we have received the divine nature. There we are put to understand in our souls what God is thus revealed—Christ the pattern of our walk, and Himself our strength for it.

## The Life Of Christ In The Believer

Colossians 3:18-25; 4

What characterises Colossians is the life of Christ in us; not the effect of the presence of the Holy Ghost, as in Ephesians, but the life of Christ. The Holy Ghost is the power that acts in me: the power and presence of the Holy Ghost is everything to me, assuming that I have life. I am led by Him, the love of God is shed abroad in my heart by Him, He is the earnest of the inheritance: the consciousness and power of all our relationships is by the Holy Ghost; so that our bodies are His temples. Life is equally important; for if we had it not we could not have the Spirit. He could not put His seal and dwell in us on the mere ground of life; but we being sprinkled with blood, He comes as the witness that we are whiter than snow, and dwells in us. The new life has a capacity to enjoy the things of Christ, but no power of revelation; and we need the power of the Holy Ghost to bring these things to us. They are spiritually discerned. We cannot even use the Word without the Spirit; it is the sword of the Spirit. It is not the life that unites me to Christ, but the Holy Ghost— “By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body.” It is the Holy Ghost that is the power, and it may take me clean out of all relationships with this world (the Lord says to Paul, “I have delivered thee from the people and the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee”), and yet in the fullest way He owns the relationships. We find here some that God did create, and some that He did not. In marriage I get, not redemption or the Holy Ghost, but what was set up at the creation; and what God created God owns. All these

relationships are owned in the fullest possible way; they may be dreadful snares, now sin has come in and made everything miserable, and spoiled and corrupted what God made good. Then a power comes in, not grace, but the Spirit, and takes Paul out of Jew and Gentile, and identifies him with a glorified Christ, who sends him with the message of what is heavenly into the world; but he is not of it. “As my Father sent me into the world, even so send I you.” Their bodies were in it, but they were not there morally. They came from Christ; He had sent them. That lifts them above relationships, though God puts His seal on them; and it is one of the signs of the last days, that men are without natural affection. He sanctions them, but they are all to be given up to serve Christ here. Creation is God’s own making, and He never gives up the title to it. Only another power has come in, and from the moment it is a question of Christ I have to give up everything. “Salute no man by the way.” The closest ties were the most dangerous; not that they were not fully owned by God, but “if a man hate not his father and mother … he cannot be my disciple.”

The world—the state of things around—is not what God created it at all; it is sin’s making. I get His beautiful workmanship in it, but spoiled by the devil getting man’s ear. The whole creation is under the bondage of corruption; that is not God’s doing. It is a labour to make people happy; they seek in a thousand ways to forget God, for if they think of God they know they are lost. But there is the world of God’s providence, where not a sparrow falls to the ground without Him; everything is under His hand. He has committed authority to magistrates and so on, and He owns it. If I were innocent as Adam in Eden I should not need

magistrates; now this world would be a kind of pandemonium without such. The Christian is to be subject to such authority—the Queen of England or a Turk, wherever it is. It may not be righteousness. I do not look for righteousness but at the right hand of God—Christ. I do not mean it ought not to be, but I do not expect it. My business is to walk as a Christian, and shew the character of Christ, not to set the world right; when Christ comes He will do that, for He will take it into His hand. If I could only set myself and other Christian right, that would be the thing. The Christian should be the perfect presentation of the character of Christ in the world that has turned Him out. We are the living witnesses of what we are enjoying of the Christ they will not have. The world is under judgment, but in grace God has not executed it; He is sending out His gospel.

Now there is a great system of government going on, and God owns it. There were no servants in paradise; there was no stealing. Now God owns property, etc., it is not the original thing that was instituted in goodness, nor the heavenly condition, nor is it in itself what the Christian is (though Christianity maintains it all)—he is the expression of what Christ is; but he owns and submits to all that God has established. “Servant” here is slave, and nothing but sin brought in slaves. There would never have been such a thing if sin had not been there; but the apostle does not meddle with it. He does not say he approves of it, but he leaves the government of the world just where it is. If I can relieve bodily wants as a Christian I am bound to do it, or prevent one beating another if I can do it by kindness; but I am to leave the world alone. It is hard to do it; in our hearts

we do not like it. Suppose a war is going on, we wish success to one side; it was all settled before you ever heard it. There is a hard-hearted emperor wishing Rome had one neck that he might cut it off, or setting the city on fire, and then accusing the Christians of it; well you must be subject— “The powers that be are ordained of God.”

Wherever I find real power exercised I find God’s authority. If there is a rebellion, and other powers rise up, I am submissive as before. It is my Christian path, though not the relationship God created; there the bond is maintained on the principle of Christianity. Where it is a question of slaves it is—If you can be free use it rather; but if you are bound never mind. You are the Lord’s free man, and Paul sends the runaway Onesimus back to his master. He expects Philemon to set him free, and speaks very touchingly— “I beseech thee, being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ.” But he would do nothing “without thy mind,” “knowing thou wilt do more than I say.” He expects grace; but he leaves the thing where he finds it. You will never set the world right; you have no principles nor power to do it. You can control an unconverted man with unconverted principles, but you cannot deal with him as a Christian. If I am to set the world right I must join with the world, and cannot have any principles but theirs. Then I must give up Christianity: for they have none to be governed by. You can use gracious influence as Christ did, and that we have to do. The Christian is to let his light shine, and the testimony of what his principles are is so distinct and positive that they “see your good works.” If he joins with an infidel he owns infidelity can set the world right. The Christian by

himself has his own gracious godly principles to act on, that the testimony may be there of what his principles can do (Christianity has reformed the world in a sense; for it brought in the pattern of things better, and they are ashamed to do in the light what they did in the dark). A man will not do what is unworthy of a man: but "unworthy of the Lord" you never find that; and that is where the Christian is to walk.

Paul says to masters, "You have a Master in heaven" who will take notice of everything you do. Your part is to shew what Christianity is and does, and that is good to an infidel, or whoever it is. Your confession of Christ is to be so positive, that they should know what to attribute these things to. Let the world go on its own way, and you go yours—that is Christ's. If not, you compromise Christianity, instead of maintaining its testimony.

Remark here, that the obedient side comes first in everything. It is the natural thing the Christian gets into. He is "sanctified unto obedience." He never gets out of it; he fails in it, of course. The Lord says, "As the Father gave me commandment, even so I do." The apostles never said, what often jars on one, I have a right to do so-and-so. It is, "We ought to obey God rather than man." If man hinders me from obeying God, it is wrong. But it is not, I have a right, but I must "obey God rather than man." You get in the path of Christ, the path of divine wisdom, that the vulture's eye hath not seen; and the way to keep yourself in it is to "continue in prayer" (ch. 4:2), incessantly referring everything to God. There is the positive direct intervention of God, everything working together for good; and by prayer our hearts get through grace in connection with this

overruling power of God, whether to stop some mischief Satan is doing, or to open a door of utterance. “We will give ourselves to prayer, and the ministry of the word” —not the ministry of the word and prayer. Whatever the subject of prayer is, there is continually bringing in God, so that the heart is with God. If I am entirely dependent on Him, living in Him, and His word living in me to direct my thoughts, I am sure to get what I ask. Then there is most gracious dealing with regard to my requests— “Be careful for nothing.” “Make known your requests to God.” It does not follow that they are right; but do not brood over anything, bring it to God. Perhaps He may say He cannot grant it; as when Paul asks for the thorn to be taken away, He says, I have given it to you for a purpose; I am not going to take it away. And the power of Christ rested on him through the very thing that had broken him down. So the peace of God keeps my heart.

“Watch in the same” here (v. 2). If I am living with God, I know what to ask God for—I see Satan and danger coming; or else when a snare comes I may not be thinking of it, like the disciples sleeping for sorrow: they were not watching. If I am watching and see temptation, I get power to obey and to shew Christ in it, “with thanksgiving”; for if a person is walking in a path of intimacy with God, thanksgiving is there. Before I get the actual thing I ask for I get His answer, and say, Thank God, He has come in, though not seeing the fruit of it at the moment.

Verse 5: “Walk in wisdom.” As “dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth an ill savour, so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom” —godly wisdom; to give no occasion to the enemy. A

foolish word, a rash expression, may hinder a person receiving the gospel. It may be a slight thing; if it is a stumbling-block to hinder the gospel, that is not slight. You have to carry Christ, and it behoves you to be fit carriers of Christ in the relationship in which you are. “Let your speech be alway with grace” (v. 6). If Christ is dwelling in my heart by faith, and my habitual habit of mind and thought is with Christ, Christ will come out. How many words—not bad or evil—but idle, for the moment without harm meant, do we speak in a day? It is not Christ, and mark, if it is not Christ, it is something else— the flesh. It is not that we are not to be happy, Christ makes us happy, and that will be seen; but our speech is to be “alway with grace.” If we carried Christ in every word, what a life we should live! The joy of heaven to me is, I shall not want my conscience at every step. Here I cannot let myself loose, there are snares everywhere, and I require to keep a wonderful check on myself.

Verse 12. He looks that they should stand “perfect in all the will of God”; not perfect in the flesh, but “growing up to him who is the Head in all things.” The Christian who begins to want proof in his walk that he is a Christian is wrong; others do look for testimony. He is to be totally given up to God, and looking for nothing but His will, the eye single. Do you ever doubt about anything—taking a house, or the like? Ask what the will of God is. If you doubt then, I say your eye is not single. Perhaps you have not found out the cause; but He is teaching you, putting you in circumstances to detect motives you never knew were in your heart, that you may be like Christ, and “perfect and complete in all the will of God.” Is the energy and purpose of our heart

that? It is connected with the consciousness that we belong to Christ. We are set in the world as the epistles of Christ, known and read of all men, that we may manifest the life of Jesus in our mortal bodies. We look to Him for strength and wisdom, and to grow up to Him in everything. Is that the purpose of our hearts in all we do? Is it, I want to do the will of God? The Lord give us to have that as our desire, constant and earnest, and then to “continue in prayer, and watch in the same.” If you want to be happy as a Christian, it is in not grieving the Spirit; and not to do that is to walk close to Christ, and get the secret of His will, that you may enjoy Christ with ungrieved Spirit. I do not say you will see your growth. Moses did not see his face shine; but it was the witness to the people that he had been with God. The Lord grant us to be with God in the dependence of prayer, and we shall get the strength of the Lord, and clear-sighted as to where we are not walking with Him.

[End Of Miscellaneous Vol. 3]

## Note On The Application Of The Types Of The Red Sea And Jordan

April, 1881.

To the Editor of “Things New and Old,”

I do not doubt that your whole desire is to put things scripturally, and that you will bear with me in stating that I think what you say in the article of Correspondence, entitled J.H., Fenihirst, is not scriptural. It is possible that you might find a similar statement in some of my former writings where the points were not so clear to my mind. Yet I think I ever held the Red Sea to be Christ dead and risen for us, and Jordan we dead and risen with Christ. I took this ground in the Archer Street conference and it was resisted on ground like your article, and I examined it afresh. Only, in my case, if it were so, it was merely want of being clear, while a whole system is now made to hang upon what is not correct. The theory is that the passover was Christ’s dying for us, the Red Sea our death with Christ, and Jordan our death and resurrection in Him. All this, except the first, is wrong. First, there is no dying in Christ, nor such a distinction as with Him and in Him. If a person long exercised said, ‘O, I see I died in Christ,’ I should be delighted. He has seen his deliverance, though he expresses it wrongly. But the duTerence is real and practical. When we die with Christ, it is we, “I am crucified,” a real experimental thing, not judicial, though we get liberty by seeing it accomplished in Christ. So we are always dead to something, dead to sin, to the rudiments of the world, dead to the law. Scripture

does say that we are alive in Christ, because that is an actual, subsisting thing; He is our life, we are in Christ.

In the passover, there was one simple truth, God was passing through as a judge, and passed over, was shut out as such. The Red Sea is Christ's death, and resurrection—more than mere non-imputation; Exod. 15:13. It is redemption absolute and accomplished. God is a Saviour and deliverer; Exod. 14:13. The Egyptians were to be seen no more. It was nothing done in us, but for us; the command was, "Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord." Death and judgment were for God's people's deliverance, and the result was, "Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation"; and afterwards, "Ye have seen how I bare you on eagle's wings, and brought you unto myself." As a type, all was closed for Egyptians and Israel. The latter were not in glory (Canaan), not in the wilderness, not in Egypt, but brought to God—not their subjective state, in any respect. That was experimental; this, judicial and final. This was returned to at the end, whatever the exercises and "ifs" of the wilderness. Concerning Jacob and Israel it shall be said as at this time, "What hath God wrought?" whatever Moses, that is the Spirit of God, might give the conscience of among them. But from the mountain where they came to meet God, their journey was an experimental state, to humble them, and to prove them, and know what was in their hearts. And so was the crossing of Jordan, though in another way. The priests' feet must touch the water, the ark is with them, they with it in the passage. There was association. Moses did the work of authority at the Red Sea. The people stood still and saw the salvation, and

when the work was done passed over dryshod. Death had lost its power in Jordan, but in the ark's going through it with them. It is Christ's death, but not redemption; it was going in to what was promised, not going out to God. Hence the stones of death are set up in Canaan; Gilgal comes in. It is experimental, though of faith. At any rate we have no dying in Christ, but with Him. The nearest to it is Colossians 2, where we have the true circumcision in Him, but this is in nowise the same, not even saying how, save by His circumcision, we have the true thing in Him, not the mere Jewish figure. There is a connection between the Red Sea and Jordan. Both are Christ's death and resurrection, but one is for us, where we stand still and see; the other, our having part in it, we have died with Him and risen with Him. The passages (Col. 2:12; Eph. 1 and 2) are entirely misapplied. There is no dying at all there, but sovereign power comes in, and, when we are dead in sins takes us and puts us into Christ, as it raised up Christ when He was dead, and put Him into glory. Many other truths connect themselves with these points, as the character of the wilderness, with which the conditional "ifs "of the New Testament connect themselves: and the confounding Ephesians 2 and Colossians 2:12, with Romans 6, two totally different systems of doctrine, has given rise to wild wanderings of fanaticism; but this would lead me too far.

I crave the forbearance of my brethren, my excuse for criticising their explanation being the immense practical importance for souls. For mark the effect, you have God shut out by the blood on the door posts, and that is all as to Him, and no redemption in the scheme at all; for if the Red Sea be our resurrection with Christ, that clearly

is not redemption, that which is designated by “our “as the ones engaged in it. By redemption I do not mean here the forgiveness of sins by blood, but as used for the operation of God’s power in freeing Israel from Egypt. That involves the blood-shedding and the forgiveness, but went much further. It was the accomplishment of the statement to Moses (Exod. 6:6, 7), when the power and title of Pharaoh were destroyed by judgment, as Satan’s for us. So Exodus 3:8. So Christ (Gal. 1) gave Himself for our sins, to deliver us from this present evil world. (1 Peter 1:18-20; Psalm 106:10.) That sin in the flesh was condemned when Christ was a sacrifice for sin, is blessedly true for us, but that was between Him and God; God sending His own Son did it; our coming into it is another thing. Its being perfectly done there when it was God’s work alone, and hence perfect, is our comfort now. One is God for us, the other—our death and resurrection is wrought in us, in receiving Christ, that we may be rightly before God.

J. N. D.