

AN OUTLINE OF SOUND WORDS MAGAZINE (98 VOLUMES) - VOLUME 1

by Various

Volume 1 of a 98-volume periodical series providing outlines and studies of sound biblical words and doctrines. A resource for careful word-study in Scripture and theological precision.

100 Chapters

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Vol 01-10 - "Christ All Things and in All."

"Christ All Things and in All."

"It is written in the prophets, and they shall all be taught of God. Every one therefore that hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh unto Me" John 6:45.

"But when the Comforter is come, Whom I will send unto you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, Which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me" John 15:26. So prophetically, before the Son came, if the heart indites a good matter and speaks of the things it has composed, it is "touching the King." And the Spirit taking it up proclaims that it is "To the Son, He says, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows" (Psalms 45:1-17, Hebrews 1:8-9). Thus the mystery of the Person of the Son stands prophetically announced also.

Truly, "great is the mystery of piety: God was manifest in flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory" (1 Timothy 3:16).*

[*Note: or "that which," for it is that manifested which is presented to the heart. None but God could, of course, be so manifested; but it is what is so manifested, that is "justified in the Spirit," etc.; so again, the mystery of the Person is declared by the Spirit.]

He, then, is the subject of all divine testimony. And then, "He must be everything (or all things) and in all" (Colossians 3:11). Hence, the new man, where this is consummated — so far. But He is "the characteristic power, active instrument and end" (J.N.D.) of creation. The Son, thus, shall shine in the manifestation of the mystery of God, in the whole creation. But what is God working now by His Spirit?

He writes Christ, by the Spirit, on the fleshy tables of the heart for new covenant liberty in life and righteousness (2 Corinthians 3:1-18). The truth stated at its height as liberty from sin and for righteousness, is "If Christ be in you" (Romans 8:10). For the commission and power of service in the Gospel for Christian liberty and privilege, it is, "But when it pleased God . . . to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him, etc." (Galatians 1:15-16). This following the Gospel in treatise as "Concerning His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 1:1-4). Further, for authority in His service, as disputed at Corinth, it is, "Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me . . . examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith" (2 Corinthians 13:3-5). If we would learn the full power of the mystery and be filled to all the fulness of God, it is by "Christ dwelling in the heart by faith," as "strengthened by His (the Father's) Spirit, in the inner man" (Ephesians 3:14, etc.). And here again, it is the Son, the Centre of His eternal counsels. Again, full growth consists in the "arrival at the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God" (Ephesians 4:13). The work of God, therefore, is to assimilate us to these things, He revealing the truth at the height of it according to Him Who lives before His face. But each state and measure of growth is taken up and Christ

presented to the saint — a full Christ, but appropriately to that state and measure. But always and everywhere, it is CHRIST, whether as dispelling the clouds of legalism in the Galatians; meeting the carnality and disorder in the Corinthians; the philosophy and Judaism — the principles of the world, religious flesh, in the Colossians. Then, positively, in the full untrammelled declaration of individual blessing for the responsible man set up justified and in Christ down here, the Romans declared the same glorious theme; while in the epistle to the Ephesians, it is the Calling in sonship, on the one hand, and the unity of the Assembly, on the other, in the mystery.

It is CHRIST Who fills it all, determines its character in fullest blessing (how could it be otherwise?), everywhere and always. What blessedness in the God Who can thus act towards us So, surely, if the heart express itself (as it must!) in worship it is:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3, etc.). But if Paul (in part) thus, so John, for the circle and wealth of divine love:

"And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God, and eternal life."

"Children, keep yourselves from idols" (1 John 5:21).

C. N. Snow.

Vol 01-10 - "Follow thou Me."

"Follow thou Me."

Substance of an Address at Rothbury, 6th August 1945.

Scriptures read: John 21:1-25 and Revelation 3:20.

I see no reason to depart from the usual interpretation of this passage of Scripture (John 21:1-25); but I wish to give it a special application, and I am assured as "By faith our eyes are seeing Christ at Thy right hand in heaven," it is a legitimate one. The passage, as usually taken, is prophetic, and refers to the great Gentile gathering in the last days. I doubt not the 153 fishes refer to 2 Chronicles 2:17-18. All is on earth of course: there are seven disciples, a spiritually complete number of Israel will be the fishers. Their boat will not sink, nor their nets break, as in Luke 5:1-39. Neither will the haul be put into the boat, but dragged to the shore. But it is at the crisis of the history I would touch it.

They had toiled all night, the risen Saviour stood on the shore in early morn. Had they any meat? "No." "And He said to them, Cast the net at the right side of the ship and ye shall find." Now they can no longer draw it for the multitude of fishes. "It is the Lord" says the disciple whom Jesus loved, first now manifested in this character so familiar to us. Now, brethren, what have we to show for our fishing during the night of His absence? Look at the professing Assembly. Is it not enough to humble us? Unless we take sectarian ground, it is impossible not to be humbled. Where is "His beautiful flock?" What permanency has there been? Has not the history been one of defection, scattering and sorrow from this point of view? Deeply so: indeed, it is just this very thing, pressed upon the spirit, which finds its answer in this passage. What have we? Nothing: my heart thoroughly submits itself to the thought, the conviction. But, "I know WHOM I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." And what at once comes before the heart? A glorious work is going on from the right hand of God, where Christ sits. The net is full: no breaking there; nor is the haul put into a boat. Never mind our little "administrations," brethren. I believe we can get obsessed with them — a subtle form of selfishness and indeed, sectarianism. We are passing — administratively, so to speak, from this scene; and as one passing thus obtains a view of what is unseen to mortal vision, so may we indeed get one of that glorious "administration of the fulness of times," when "He will gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and on earth: in Him." Nor do I say these things to, for one moment, weaken our necessary, absolutely necessary, separation from evil on the one side, and the thorough and honest recognition of the unity of the assembly on earth on the other. Indeed, the whole thought of such separation is that we may truly recognise, and practically own that fact; while it humbles us in the dust, as I have said. No, but the heart needs comfort when it honestly faces the situation, and surely the blessed Lord would give it us in this passage, without us wresting its interpretation; and we can see a glorious work going on, silently, surely. Not one of the least of the labourers, or their labours, will be forgotten; for while full provision meets the fishermen in the blessed grace of their Master, it is also at once said, "Bring of

the fish ye have now caught." O brethren, "our labour IS NOT IN VAIN IN THE LORD." What inducement, in the sense of His grace to labour still, unknown, isolated, facing the "going away" it may be of this one or that. And what is the next thing? Is it not "THE LORD HIMSELF?" Is not this the touchstone to our hearts? And is it not this that brings to light in his true, full character, "the disciple that Jesus loved?"

Well, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou Me," makes it surely appropriate to the present moment; for whatever abides, if it abides, does so in the sovereign "If I will" of Christ. We do well to thoroughly adjust our thoughts to that. Peter is the "Mr Will-be-will" of John Bunyan. Well, if so (and both principles are here), "Follow thou Me." John is as the shadow to the substance — "the disciple whom Jesus loved . . . who also leaned on His breast at supper and said, Lord, who is it that betrays Thee." Where else could he be than "following?" (John 21:20). C. Norman Snow.

'Tis not far off — the hour When Christ will claim His Own!

We soon shall hear that voice of power, The Lord Himself shall come!

Vol 01-10 - "God Our Refuge."

"God Our Refuge."

Psalms 46:1-11. In this beautiful Psalm we are reminded that, amidst all the storms of life, God is the refuge of His people: a deeply important truth to which all believers would assent as a doctrine, though, too often we may fail to avail ourselves of our "refuge" in meeting the difficulties and dangers of the everyday life. The Psalm opens with the statement that "God is our refuge." Again, in the course of the Psalm it is stated that "The God of Jacob is our refuge." Finally it closes by repeating, for the third time, that God "is our refuge." Clearly, then, this is the great truth that is pressed in this Psalm. Men of the world, in seeking a refuge from dangers and difficulties, wholly rely on natural and human plans. Believers, while not despising providential means, have in God an unfailing resource. Are we surrounded by dangers

"God is our refuge." Are we utterly weak in the presence of every opposing enemy? God is our "strength." Do we need help at every moment and in all our troubles? "God . . . is a very present help in trouble." In the opening verse we have, then, the great theme of the Psalm — the confidence of faith that finds in God an unfailing resource, in all the trials we may have to face as we journey through this world. In the remainder of the Psalm we learn the blessed results of this quiet confidence in God:

Firstly, it enables the believer to rise above the fear of the violence and corruption of this present world (vv. 2, 3).

Secondly, this faith leads the believer to walk in the light of the world to come (vv. 4, 5).

Thirdly, while still in a world in which the nations rage, and kingdoms are moved, faith realises that God is "with us" (vv. 6, 7).

Fourthly, faith assures us that God, in His own time and way, will deal with all the evil of the world (5: 8).

Fifthly, faith sees that God, having dealt in righteousness with the evil, will bring peace to the world. "He maketh wars to cease" (5: 9).

Sixthly, in this confidence, faith can wait in calmness for God to act, knowing that God is God, and in due time will be exalted among the nations (5: 10).

Seventhly, in the light of these great truths, faith is established in the confidence that, during the waiting time, God is "with us," and "our refuge" (5: 11).

(1) The conditions of the present world (Psalms 46:2-3). The believer realising that in God he has a "refuge," and needed "strength," and "help," can face all the violence and corruption that is raging through the world with the consequent turmoil and confusion. "The earth," as a symbol, speaks of an ordered and civilised condition. Such conditions may be removed and all ordered government become thoroughly disorganised. The mountains symbolise that which is imposing

and apparently firmly established in the earth. Great empires of the world that have endured for centuries appear to be unassailable; but again and again we see in history, even as God has foretold, that these empires have fallen and been lost in the sea of nations. The Lord can speak of the Roman Empire as a mountain "cast into the sea" (Matthew 21:21). In Scripture the "troubled sea" is often used to set forth the wicked who stir up evil and cannot rest (Isaiah 57:20-21). The "waters" are used to set forth "peoples, and multitudes, and nations" (Revelation 17:15). The roaring and troubling of the waters surely speak of the masses in a state of revolution that overthrows all authority.

If such was the condition of the world in the Psalmist's day, how much more does it set forth the violence and corruption that mark the world of our day, as we approach the end of the age. The godly man, looking at the prevailing conditions of the world, sees the utter failure of all civilisation and the breakdown of the government of the world that has been committed to the Gentiles. He sees imposing empires of this world overturned and lost amidst the masses, that rise up in revolution, so that all authority is shaken and men's hearts are failing them for fear (Luke 21:26). But if the hearts of men are filled with fear, believers, in the confidence that God is their refuge, can say, "Therefore will not we fear."

(2) The world to come (Psalms 46:4-5). Not only does faith overcome the present world, but it walks in the light of the world to come with all its peace and blessing. Faith looks beyond "the waters" of this world that "roar" and make "trouble," and it sees the river of God, and streams of refreshing that "make glad." It looks beyond the imposing cities of men and sees "the city of God." The Psalmist looked for the establishment of Zion — the earthly city — from which blessing will flow to the nations. Abraham, in his day, "looked for the city" whose "builder and maker is God." In our day, believers can say, we "are come unto mount Zion; and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." Under present conditions we see the great cities of this world assaulted and desolated by ruthless violence and corruption. Looking on to the heavenly Jerusalem we see the city into which there shall in no wise enter "anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination; or maketh a lie," and no enemy will ever scale its wall "great and high" (Revelation 21:12; Revelation 21:27). Moreover, the Psalmist, speaking of the earthly Zion, reminds us that "God is in the midst of her." So of the heavenly city, we read "the throne of God and the Lamb shall be in it," and again, we learn that "the glory of God did lighten it and the Lamb is the lamp thereof" (Revelation 21:23). Moreover, if the cities and empires of this world are breaking up and falling into ruin, of the city of God we read, "she shall not be moved." We see that the cities of men have no righteous foundation, and are therefore marked by change and decay. But, like Abraham, we look for the city "which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." What God has founded will never be moved. No power of the enemy will assault it; no evil of man will pass through its gates; no night will ever dim its light; no shadow of death will bring any change; no curse will lead to decay. The "pure river of water of life" will for ever "make glad the city of God."

Furthermore, we have not long to wait for this city to be brought into display, for we read, "God shall help her, and that right early." The better and more beautiful translation is, "God shall help her at the dawning of the morning." Looking at the world around, we see moral darkness increasing, and the clouds of the coming storm of judgment are gathering. But the increasing "works of darkness" only assure the believer that "the night is far spent, and the day is at hand" (Romans 13:12). The dawn of the morning — the "morning without clouds" — is very near, for it is

but "a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry." For the Christian the day of glory will dawn by the coming of Christ as "the bright and morning star" (Revelation 22:16): for the world the blessing will come when Christ, as "the Sun of righteousness" will "arise with healing in His wings." Then, indeed, the clouds will be dispelled, for when the day breaks "the shadows will flee away," and the sufferings of God's earthly people will be healed (Malachi 4:2).

(3) God with us (Psalms 46:6-7). As in the days of the Psalmist, so, with yet greater intensity, in these closing days, the nations rage and the kingdoms of this world are moved. When men "rage" they act in a way that is contrary to the dictates of nature and common sense. Moved by Satan, the prince of this world, men act without reason, even as when the demons entered into a herd of swine they acted in a way entirely opposed to the natural instincts of an animal, by rushing violently to their destruction. Led by Satan, the nations today, without reason, rage against one another to their common destruction, and all the kingdoms of the earth are moved. Nevertheless, God has but to speak the word and all the raging of man will cease. Even so the disciples found when, at the word of the Lord "a great tempest" was changed into "a great calm" (Matthew 8:24-26). At the cross the nations raged and the people imagined a vain thing, only to find that God will speak unto them in His wrath and vex them in His sore displeasure (Psalms 2:1-5).

Nevertheless, whatever storms may rage amongst the nations, the LORD of hosts is "with" His people, and therefore, they can say, "the God of Jacob is our refuge." The God Who is "in the midst" of the city to which we belong (verse 5) is "with" His people on their way to the city. When Jacob was a homeless stranger, God could say to him "I am with thee, and will keep thee . . . I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of" (Genesis 28:15). The God that was with Jacob — a man of faith, in spite of many failures — has also said to believers today, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." If He is with us, He is "our refuge," and the believer can boldly say, "the Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me" (Hebrews 13:5-6).

(4) The righteous judgment of the LORD (Psalms 46:8). If the LORD is with His people, He is against the wicked, and will bring them to desolation when He deals in righteous judgment with the nations. Then will be fulfilled the solemn words of the prophet, "The indignation of the LORD is upon all the nations, and His fury upon all their armies: He hath utterly destroyed them, He hath delivered them to the slaughter" (Isaiah 34:2).

(5) The peace of the world (Psalms 46:9). The righteous judgment of God will lead to universal peace amongst men, for, as the prophet can say, "The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever" (Isaiah 32:17). Men talk of a new order, by which they hope to end war and bring about a universal peace. But the peace of which men dream ignores both the holiness of God and the wickedness of men. It is a peace without righteousness. All the efforts of men will be in vain, for it is the LORD Who "maketh wars to cease," and His peace will be universal, for wars will "cease unto the end of the earth." Then, indeed will the Scripture be fulfilled, that tells us, "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isaiah 2:4).

(6) The patience of faith (Psalms 46:10). Knowing that God is our refuge in the midst of the raging of the nations, and that He, Himself, is about to rebuke the nations and make wars to cease, the believer is called to "Be still." The knowledge that Christ is sitting in the place of power, at God's right hand, waiting until all His enemies are put under His feet, will go far to enable the believer to

sit "still" in a world of turmoil, while waiting for the intervention of God at the coming of the Lord. Resting upon the Lord's words, "Behold, I come quickly," the believer will keep the word of His patience, and thus "Be still" (Psalms 110:1; Revelation 3:10-11). Nevertheless, to "Be still" is a very great test for faith. The flesh is restless, and the energy of nature would ever be active. But where there is no duty to perform, our place is to be "Be still," and in patience wait for God to act in His own time and way, for His own glory and exaltation. "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord" (James 5:7-8). How often the restless activity of the flesh springs from the desire to exalt self. Man is ever active in seeking his own glory and exaltation. The believer is called to "Be still" that God may be exalted.

(7) God our refuge (Psalms 46:11). Having grace to "be still" we shall find, in our practical experience that God "is with us," and "our refuge." In the spirit of these verses, the prophet Isaiah can say, "We have waited for Thee: be Thou their arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble" (Isaiah 33:2). If the Lord is "with us" in this world of conflict, it is that we may be with Him in the coming glory, for this is the desire of His heart according to His own words, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with Me where I am." (John 17:24).

How blessed then for the believer to enter into the good of this Psalm, and live in the calm assurance that, 1. God is our refuge in every storm;

2. God is our strength in all our weakness;

3. God is our help in every trouble;

4. God will deal in judgment with all the evil;

5. God will bring peace to the ends of the earth;

6. God will be exalted in the earth;

7. God is "with us" as we pass on to the glory through a world of strife, and is "our refuge." The storm may roar without me. My heart may low be laid, But God is round about me, And can I be dismayed?

H. Smith.

Vol 01-10 - "Jesus Christ, the Same."

"Jesus Christ, the Same."

Jesus, well-known in His path of humiliation and sorrow in this world, is presented in the glory of His Person in the first chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews. Being the Son, He is consequently the appointed Heir of all things; and in addressing Him God says, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." Hebrews 1:8. Here is the Apostle, through whom God speaks to men; and in whom is introduced and established the divine and heavenly system of blessing and glory that is about to fill the universe. In Hebrews 2:1-18 He is presented as perfect Man, espousing the cause of men, not that of angels; and delivering men from the bondage of Satan, bringing them into association with Himself; and maintaining as High Priest the divine system He established as Apostle. Well do we then to consider, as exhorted at the beginning of Hebrews 3:1-19, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession.

How sweet it is to the soul to contemplate that the One who took the Name of Jesus, the One we know and love as Jesus, is "Jesus Christ, the Same yesterday, and today, and for ever." This sweet and precious Name is often mentioned in this epistle, where He is so active towards us in priestly grace, succouring, sympathising, and supporting us as we pass through the wilderness; having Himself passed the way before us, knowing experimentally all that we have known of its rough ways, and all that we shall ever be called upon to pass through, for He was tempted in all points, like as we are, sin apart. If we are under pressure, in weakness of body, passing through sorrows, or enduring any of the manifold trials that belong to men down here, how blessed for us that He sits on the throne of grace, to which we can draw near with boldness. He does not promise to take us out of the adverse circumstances, but supplies mercy and help for every time of need; lifting our spirits above the desert testings to be occupied with Himself in the presence of God. To this end He passed through the heavens, to appear before the face of God for us. We often fail, but there can be no failure with Him; He ever lives to make intercession for us, and will maintain us all the way until we reach the rest of God. In Hebrews 8:1-13 we see Jesus as Minister of the Sanctuary and of the true tabernacle, which God pitched and not man. Our souls should rejoice and delight to know that Jesus in heaven maintains us down here in testimony for the pleasure of God; preparing a table at which we can serve God in holy and reverential fear, and where we can feed with deepest pleasure. Knowing the Lord in this way we can truly join the praises He leads to the Father in the midst of the assembly. Then in Hebrews 10:1-39 we see Him as having accomplished a mighty work in offering Himself, a sacrifice for sins, once for all. In the glory of this great work, He now sits down at God's right hand; and we have boldness to enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus. God's presence has been opened up to us, and God has given us the moral fitness to be with Him in spirit there, and this through the work of the Lord Jesus upon the cross. Without the work of the cross, and God's working within us, applying that work to heart and conscience we could not be there; but we can enter because Jesus is there, the Great Priest over the house of God. What a place of glory that is! Everything in the holiest speaks of glory, God's glory; and the fragrance of Jesus too fills the dwelling place of God. Even as has been written:

'Tis Jesus fills that holy place Where glory dwells, and thy deep love In its own fulness (known through grace) Rests where He lives, in heaven above. The path of faith we see begun and completed by Jesus in Hebrews 12:1-29. What a path that was, ending with the judgment and shame of the cross! But the joy before Him, the place prepared at the right hand of the throne of God, enabled Him to endure all the judgment and to despise the shame. In lowly grace He endured the contradiction of sinners, and resisted unto blood in the conflict of good against evil. So that we have Him both as an object for the heart and as an example in the course we are called upon to take through this world. If we would be for God's glory, the eye must rest on Jesus, and all inconsistent with Him must be laid aside, and endurance must mark us in the race that leads to where Jesus is gone.

Hebrews 13:1-25 tells us that He is "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and for ever." Whether we view Him yesterday, upon the cross, or today in the presence of God, or to the ages of ages with His loved ones, He abides the same. What comfort to the heart to know Him thus while passing through a world of constant change! Refused by the world, the Lord accepted the outside place, and suffered without the gate. Our place, if we would be faithful to Him, is to share His rejection; therefore are we exhorted to go forth unto HIM without the camp, bearing His reproach. The camp is a worldly system of religion for man in the flesh, out of which those faithful to Christ must remove if seeking His honour, and if desiring His company. The apostle John says, "Little children, it is the last hour." We are on the last lap of the race, and it is the most testing; but if we look to "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and for ever," He will give all the grace and help we need to finish the course aright, and so have His approval at His coming.

J. Muckle.

Vol 01-10 - "My Name."

"My Name." A Meditation.

"Where two or three are gathered together to My Name, there am I in the midst of them" Matthew 18:20.

"He that is not with Me is against Me; and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth abroad" Matthew 12:30.

"The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal. The Lord knoweth them that are His. And, Let every one that nameth the Name of the Lord depart from iniquity" 2 Timothy 2:19.

"Name above every name Thy praise Shall fill yon courts through endless days."

Jesus our Lord is not here. Well we know it. He has gone to the Father, but He has left us His Name; and the Name of a person conveys to the heart all that the person is. The next best thing to having and loving a person, is to have and to love and to honour that person's name. My Mother may be in heaven, but the name of my Mother is loved, cherished, and honoured, as long as I remain in the world to love and honour it. So with the believer's Saviour and Lord. He is in heaven: He is not here. He is risen, He is glorified with the Father; but He has left us His Name.

"We love the Name of Jesus, the Christ of God, the Lord, Like fragrance on the breezes, His Name is spread abroad."

He is the true and living Centre, God's Centre; and all God's counsels find their centre in Him. Man's world revolves round man in sin, but God's world revolves round Man in righteousness and glory: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of His kingdom. Of Him it is said, "Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity, therefore God Thy God hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows."

Now as Christ is the true centre of union, though in heaven, we assemble together in His Name on earth. No other Name should ever have been named, or ever have been heard in connection with the gathering together of His saints for prayer and praise and worship. The Lord Jesus told the disciples that whatsoever they should ask the Father in His Name He would give it them. "Hitherto ye have asked nothing in My Name. Ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full!" "At that day ye shall ask in My Name." This refers to the saints' day, when the Lord is with the Father and the Comforter is here. It supposes that the saints are here below, by redemption, in the place which the Lord as Man occupied when on earth, so that the full value and power of His Name avails with the Father.

Then we are exhorted in Colossians 3:17, "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus; and our testimony in the world is that "There is none other Name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." J. S. Oliphant.

Fruits of the Spirit.

There is this difference between the works of the flesh and the fruits of the Spirit: that in bringing forth the fruits of the Spirit you are always happy, whereas, in doing the works of the flesh there is always bitterness. Even if you are successful in what you aim at, it leaves a taint of its own bitterness behind it. J. B. Stoney.

Vol 01-10 - "The Testimony of our Lord"

"The Testimony of our Lord" A brief word as to the character and course of "The testimony of our Lord" 2 Timothy 1:8.

It has been said, to the effect, that the whole course of the testimony of God has been under review by the Spirit of God in Scripture with all the evils that beset it until its completion, so as to provide divine wisdom for us in every exigency. The character and principle of all has been shown, all coming to light before the canon of Scripture closed. The attack of the enemy upon that testimony may vary in form, but the underlying principle in each case is laid bare by the word of God and provided against. True we need the power of the unction from the Holy One for spiritual discernment; but this is not only not denied us, but assured to us, if we will take the course prescribed: "Think of what I say, for the LORD will give thee understanding in all things" (2 Timothy 2:7, N.T.). This is a great comfort for faith; and let us beware of that state which Jude has to warn the saints of: "Ye who once knew all things" (Jude 1:5 N.T.). The passage in 2 Timothy 2:1-26 quoted above continues "Remember Jesus Christ raised from among the dead, of the seed of David, according to my glad tidings, in which I suffer even unto bonds as an evil doer; but the word of God is not bound." Then, after Paul has enjoined Timothy to put these things, and the solemn considerations of 2 Timothy 2:11-13, before the remembrance of his brethren, the peculiar form of the attack of the enemy is manifested. Coupled with impiety, we have the evil teaching of "Hymenaeus and Philetus; men who as to the truth have gone astray, saying that the resurrection has taken place already; and overthrow the faith of some" (2 Timothy 2:17-18). The course of the man of God is then clearly prescribed. But what is the character of this attack of the enemy? It is subversive of Christianity itself as being God's administration which is in faith (1 Timothy 1:4), and overthrowing the faith of some. It also denies the true character and course of the testimony. It therefore behoves us to pay close attention to the wisdom furnished us here in this whole passage and indeed in the whole epistle, and that in regard also of the testimony of God. In one word the apostle gives the true character of the testimony: "Be not therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner; but suffer evil along with the glad tidings, according to the power of God; Who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, etc." (2 Timothy 1:8-9). This true character of the testimony of our Lord has been, in the wisdom of God for us, thrown upon the screen, so to speak, of Paul and his course in connection with it. How easily might the term "The testimony of our Lord" (not that it could do so truly) pass through our minds; but how arresting the words inseparably connected with it, "nor of me His prisoner!" What does this mean? Ah, it is the secret of the whole matter.

Timothy is called upon to remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead of the seed of David, according to his (Paul's) glad tidings; and then he adds, "In which I suffer even unto bonds as an evil doer." "Jesus Christ raised from among the dead." Now if the resurrection had taken place already as the heretics stated, it is clear that it would not have been added here by Paul, "I suffer unto bonds." No, Christ was raised, but not Paul yet; but on the contrary, he was suffering unto bonds as an evil doer in his prosecution of the testimony of our Lord. And so with us, in this poor

world, if the testimony we render be divorced from suffering, it proves itself not to be the testimony of our Lord and is, in effect, saying that the resurrection has taken place already. Thank God, one is assured that this is not so; but it is a truly exercising consideration in these days of conventional living and popular preaching. Has the salt of our responsibility lost its savour? The word remains, (John 17:14) "I have given them Thy word and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, as I am not of the world." In everything, the enemy would seek to falsify this, in practice and in testimony.

Well, if Paul was bound, the word of God was not. He could not move freely about and preach it as once he had been able, now he was a prisoner; but he could endure: "For this cause I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" (2 Timothy 2:10). Does not this also give the true character of the testimony, the testimony of our Lord, as to its circumstances and spirit in these last days? Assuredly it does. When the Lord comes to take us from our post, the place He has set us in to "Trade while I am coming" (Luke 19:13, N.T.), it will be time enough for us to leave it and our occupation, conditioned as they are by but "a little power" (Revelation 3:8, N.T.). May we indeed, as that passage also speaks, "keep the word of His patience" (endurance). In Matthew 8:1-34 a brief outline of the passage of the testimony across the world, in the path of the blessed Lord is furnished. In verse 18, after the exhibition of His grace, fulfilling the prophecy of Esaias, "Himself took our infirmities and bore our diseases," he commands to "depart to the other side." Ah, that is it. At once his practical destitution is manifested in verse 20, as against the perhaps not insincere desire of the scribe to follow him: "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the heavens roosting-places; but the Son of man has not where He may lay His head." Then comes the agitation of nature, which His word quells; and then on making the land full demon power is manifested in the two Gergesenes, "exceeding dangerous." This word is only otherwise used in 2 Timothy 3:1, of the last days: "In the last days, difficult days shall be there." Now no doubt Matthew 8:1-34 refers specially to the testimony rendered in connection with Israel, but in their great features of the natural and the supernatural these outline what Paul and we also have to meet in the maintenance of the testimony.

While proper christian warfare is carried on in the heavenlies, the place of our seat in Christ and our testimony, there is also the wide sphere of nature, where the natural man disports himself, but where our minds also often move when higher considerations should characterize us. And here it is necessary to distinguish between the action of a spirit using an apostate from the truth, and a christian who fails to judge himself according to the light vouchsafed to him. We may thus become ready tools to Satan, as Peter in Matthew 16:1-28, who, elevated perhaps by the revelation made to him, and in a kindly nature, refused the cross to His Master and was rebuked by Him as Satan: "Get thee behind Me, Satan." In the service of the Lord how easily may nature come in in unjudged motive, and the enemy take advantage of it to damage the work done. Well for us if the thoughts and intents of the heart are judged by the Word of God in all His service, as in all else. How apart was the blessed Master from the start of His service in "What have I to do with thee, woman? mine hour has not yet come" (John 2:4, N.T.); but how tenderly does He care and provide for her when His work is done, in "Woman, behold thy Son" designating the disciple whom He loved, and to the disciple, "Behold thy mother" (John 19:27).

Surely, the testimony of the Lord, in whatever little way we may have it entrusted to us, calls for the utmost watchfulness in this connection. How, too, has that testimony been clouded in perhaps some careless behaviour after the particular service has been rendered. Nature, while fully owned, or it is but apostatizing (see 1 Timothy 4:1-16), must not lead in the service of God. All the sources and occasions of our service should be scrutinized and judged by us surely. We can afford to wait HIS promptings and guidance in it all.

C. N. Snow.

God's Voice in the Scriptures.

"I know Whom I have believed."

They cannot hide from our souls the heavenly beams of our Father's revelation — God has spoken and His voice reaches the heart. It makes itself heard above the din and confusion of this world, and the strife and controversy of professing Christians. It gives rest and peace, strength and fixedness to the believing heart and mind. The opinions of men may perplex and confound — we may not be able to thread our way through the labyrinths of human systems of theology: but God's voice speaks in Holy Scripture — speaks to the heart — speaks to me. This is life and peace. It is all I want. Human writings may go now for what they are worth, seeing I have all I want in the ever-flowing fountain of inspiration — the peerless, precious volume of my God.

C. H. Mackintosh.

Vol 01-10 - "They Spake Often One to Another."

"They Spake Often One to Another."

There is not much to show in these words, but there is much in them. It was the time of the utter decadence of the people: everything worth having was gone; nothing was left but misery and godless pride. What could be done in such circumstances? Yet there were those who "feared the Lord." Anyway, nobody, nothing could take that from those who had it. Then, what did they do? They did not preach, or make public orations; they had no prophet by whose words they could be spellbound for the time being, even though they would not obey them; there was no Elijah, they had to wait for his reappearance to rebuild the altar with the twelve stones of a united people: there was no king to deliver them from the stranger's yoke: they had no power to recover the position in the world which their unfaithfulness had lost to them; they had no ground of visible encouragement in their distressful circumstances; it was no time to sing the songs of Zion, to proclaim their divinely appointed privileges, or even to call a general prayer-meeting. What then? What could they do?

"They spake often one to another." In the informal conversations one member of the company was as good as another, none had anything in which to display his superiority, in which to boast in the time of national humiliation; every voice in the company was formed in the common "fear of God;" and every utterance, however simple or illiterate, expressed that fear.

Moreover, it was no mere Sabbath day formalism. Days, hours, times, did not govern their conversations. It was no perfunctory thing to be done, and to be done with. "They spake often one to another." How often? That depended on the fellowship of the Spirit, and the opportunity afforded them: as it is said, "As often as ye do it — until He come." And is it not striking, the exceeding simplicity, shorn of every adventitious appendage, of that anchor-word to keep the hearts of His disciples steadfast through all the stress of times, "Remember Me?" No artifice of the enemy, no failure of the church in whole or in part, can rob the feeblest saint of that. It was left by the Lord at the last supper, to bind the hearts of His own to Himself through all time until He comes. It imposed no burden: it enforced no duty; it demanded no sacrifice; it required no power; it prescribed no ritual; it set forth no times; but only "as often as — until." A word without a command; a direction without enforcement; a trumpet call without a fixed rallying point: a standard without a bearer; a voice without a crier: a rule, but one of love, it remains by its very simplicity indestructible and efficient for the gathering of every heart loyal to Himself ever since. And after the same manner of simplicity and efficiency is the picture of Malachi 3:16, and an immense comfort for us today as we consider it. The times are evil and getting more so. How long we shall retain the little we have outwardly who can say? And the question is becoming more than ever serious. Then, when all hope is gone (Acts 27:20), what remains in the face of difficulties insurmountable? "God and the word of his Grace" (Acts 20:32). Acts 27:1-44 is instructive as regards the dispensation; John's writings as to what abides unto eternal life. E. C.

Fearing the Lord, and thinking on His Name, The faithful few together often spake. The faithful now His promised presence claim:

Remembering Him, Who suffered for their sake.

Vol 01-10 - "We Faint Not."

"We Faint Not." In these closing days of the church's pilgrimage, who can deny the solemn fact that faintness and weakness, with all their sorrowful results, characterise the saints generally. The prospect might well alarm us, had not the Spirit of God forewarned us of this in the Scriptures, wherein we can always find that which will uplift our hearts in the midst of all the ruin and decay.

How triumphant, and uplifting, are the opening words of the apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 4:1, "Therefore, having this ministry, as we have had mercy shown us, WE FAINT NOT." With Spirit-given power, he had contrasted (2 Corinthians 3:1-18) the permanent glories of the new covenant with the passing glory of the old, which was to be done away. The new covenant is not of letter, but of spirit, for the letter kills, but the Spirit quickens — written, not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tables of stone, but on the fleshy tables of the heart. The new covenant was a ministration of righteousness and life, the old of condemnation and death. As we read the closing verses of this important chapter, we can feel something of the joy that filled the heart of Paul. He had known the terrible bondage under the old covenant (see Galatians 2:4), but he was now in the rich enjoyment of the liberty of the new: "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Corinthians 3:17); liberty that belongs to all the saints of God. When we reach the climax of the comparison of the two covenants, at the end of the chapter, with affectionate desire this devoted servant of the Lord would have all the saints in the enjoyment of the wonderful privilege, "But WE ALL, looking on the glory of the Lord, with unveiled face, are transformed, according to the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:18, New Tr.). Should not these remarkable words demand our most earnest consideration? How often have we heard them: and how often has their precious message fallen on deaf ears? What unspeakable folly is ours! and what irreparable loss we have in consequence! We often speak of poor Peter's folly on the glory mount, for seeking to place the Lord on the same level as Moses and Elias, while we ourselves are but feebly affected by the wonderful glory that now shines in the face of Jesus. Peter knew not what he said; but are not we often marked by ignorance on account of our unfaithfulness and faint-heartedness? On that mount there was a display of the coming kingdom glory, but it is our privilege to behold that face once marred more than any man's, now radiant with the love and glory of God. We gaze upon His glory as Head of His assembly, and as the First-born among many brethren; and we can join in a note of praise that was not heard on the mount. Honoured as they were, Peter, James, and John, could not then have sung, as we can today:

Yes, we see Thee crowned with glory, Highest honour to Thee given; But the glory of Thy Person Is the light that shines in heaven.

Further, there is a blessed result to our contemplation of our exalted Lord. We are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit. It is a gradual process which ought to characterise us all the way through, until, at our Lord's coming, we are fully conformed to His image. Another has said "When I see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, it is the very thing I like to look at, because the Man whom I see in the glory, is the One Who bore all my sins.

Oh! I delight to look at Him, and this is the way I get Christ graven on my heart by the Holy Ghost." What a lovely example the protomartyr, Stephen affords us (Acts 7:54-60). While the stones are being hurled at him, he looks up and sees the glory of God and Jesus. Like his Master, Who, on the cross, cried "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do," he cried "Lord lay not this sin to their charge." Again, the Lord said "Father into Thy hands I commend my spirit," and Stephen says "Lord Jesus receive my spirit." How truly Stephen was changed into Christ's image. May we each know in increasing measure the blessedness of continually looking upon Jesus, for this alone can make us epistles of Christ known and read of all men.

Glorying in this ministry and in its wonderful results in those who, like himself, enjoy the blessings that flow from the contemplation of it, the apostle says at the beginning of chapter 4 "WE FAINT NOT." Deeply conscious of the blessing conferred on him, as one into whose heart had shone the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; and conscious too, that he was a chosen vessel from which this light was to shine forth for the blessing of others, the apostle prepares himself for the fierce conflict, which he knew would assuredly follow his faithful proclamation of the Glad Tidings. "WE FAINT NOT, but have rejected the hidden things of shame, not walking in deceit, nor falsifying the word of God, but by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every conscience of men before God" (N. Tr.). What circumspection before men! What holy zeal before God! What devotion to his Lord! Are not the things renounced by Paul the characteristic traits of the faithless and the faint-hearted? So that the glory of the Lord Jesus should be set forth in his preaching in all the clearness and brightness of its revelation to him, Paul would have no compromise with evil or evil-doers. Would to God that the saints now manifested the features and purpose of the apostle. We must not think that the evils to which Paul refers are non-existent in the church today. On every hand there are those who walk in deceit, and concomitantly falsify the word of God. Nor is it enough to profess the path of separation, in these last days, to be immune from walking in deceit. The Scripture clearly shows that it is possible, for those who once stood firm for the truth, to turn aside, through unfaithfulness and faint-heartedness. Beloved saints, let us take our stand by the side of Paul: let us heed his loving appeal — "I entreat you therefore, BE MY IMITATORS." Then with him, we shall with triumph say, "WE FAINT NOT." When we reach 2 Corinthians 4:7-12 we find such a record of persecutions, sufferings, and trials which would overwhelm the stoutest heart. All the fiery darts of the wicked one, and all the fury and malice of men under his dominion, combined to extinguish the light that shone forth from Paul; but all these subtle and fierce attacks were valiantly withstood, and we get the secret of their discomfiture in verse 7, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassingness of the power may be of God, and not from us." These attacks on the Lord's servant were not intermittent but continuous: no rest, or relief was afforded this zealous herald of the Glad Tidings; "ALWAYS," says Paul, "bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body." There can be no doubt that the life and death of Jesus had made a deep impression on Paul, for in his letter to the saints at Philippi he expresses a deep desire to know HIM, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death (Php 3:10). The apostle knew of the perfect devotion and obedience of the Lord to the will of His God and Father. He knew that the Lord, in subjection to that will, had become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; and he was zealous that his own path might be a copy of his Master's — that the same self-abnegation, the same obedience, the same will-subjection, might, at whatever cost, characterise himself. He knew that

he was a chosen vessel for the outshining of the glorious light committed to him, and that any movement or expression of the will of the vessel would only mar the outgoing of the light. One has said, the more the natural man was annihilated, the more was it evident that a power was there which was not of man. The apostle now adds "We which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake." He well knew what martyr sufferings were, but in them he discerned the working of God to produce the blessed result, "that the life of Jesus also might be manifest in our mortal flesh." This was the lot of Paul and his companions in the Gospel, while the saints at Corinth were having the normal life of men. But what of ourselves, saints of the 20th century? Has Paul no message for us? Are we only to gaze with admiration on the faithfulness and zeal, and triumphs of a devoted soldier of the Lord Jesus, or have we to seek to imitate him? Twice over, in his first epistle to these same believers, Paul expresses the longings of his heart, in these words, "I entreat you, be my imitators;" "be my imitators, even as I also am of Christ." Are these ringing appeals out of date? I verily believe the Spirit of God would have them resound right along through the ages, until they reach the listening ears of saints today; for if their message was necessary in those early days, are they not much more necessary today? We often sing: Our earthen vessels break, The world itself grows old.

If they are breaking for the same reason as Paul's, then God be praised. Let them break! for thus shall the precious light shine forth in this dark world. Again in verse 16 we hear the triumphant notes of Paul, "Wherefore WE FAINT NOT; but if indeed our outward man is consumed, yet the inward is renewed day by day."

R. B. Wilson.

Prayer. In prayer, it is not the lip it comes from, but the ear it goes to, that is the great thing.

G. V. Wigram.

Looking unto Jesus. Our love to Him rises to the measure of our enjoyment of His love to us: we can never rise higher than what we see in Him, whether it be love, self-denial, or service. Hence the practical importance of the words, "Looking unto Jesus."

A. Miller.

Divine Music.

It has been said of Paul, "Such as he are chords on which God strikes, and on which He produces wondrous music; but Christ is the music itself."

Vol 01-10 - "We will Come unto Him, and Make Our Abode with Him."

"We will Come unto Him, and Make Our Abode with Him."

John 14:23. This wonderful promise was made by the Lord Jesus to him who kept His word. Such obedience could only flow from the heart that loved Him, and the consequence of love to the Son is the outflow of the Father's love. A similar thought is found in John 16:27, but a different word for "love" is used. Christ's word can only be really known by those who love Him. It is one thing to know the letter of Scripture, and another to know the word of Christ; although it is only as we know the Scriptures that we can learn His word in communion with Him. Mary of Bethany, in Luke 10:39, shows how His word is learned and known. It is possible to know, as a professing Christian the will of the Lord in measure, a knowledge that brings with it great responsibility (Luke 12:47) but it is another thing entirely to know the Lord's mind and will, as having sat at His feet like Mary, and lain in His bosom, like John (John 13:23-26). Moreover, the mere professor has no power to carry out the will of the Master he professes to serve; but the true disciple while learning of the Lord's mind enters into the enjoyment of His love, and it is in the power of responsive love that obedience subsists.

Vol 01-10 - "With Christ which is Far Better."

"With Christ which is Far Better."

Such was the apostle Paul's thought as to his own departure from this present life. In connection with this subject, there is, to my mind a point for consideration, which has not been much noted. If we are in the hand of Christ now with all its blessed consequences, and among them the fact that no one is able to pluck us thence — Do we cease to be in His blessed Hand when the soul leaves its earthly tabernacle? Surely not. As to the fact of the believer being with Christ in the intermediate state, the Word of God is plain; and if it be asked — "But what will it be to be there?" we have the apostle's words, "To die is gain." We may have to challenge our hearts as to what we know of Christ now; whether we can enter into the apostle's words in our measure, "To me to live is Christ" — just that one word "Christ" finding its echo in our hearts — then "to die" would be an advance; for as the apostle looked at Christ out from an earthly tabernacle, he compared it to seeing through a glass darkly. Hence "the gain" of death. We do not see "face to face" until perfected in glory, but it is the "far better," for there will be no hindrance from the body of humiliation. It is exceedingly blessed to know that part of the Lord's administration in heaven is to receive the spirits* of those saints who are absent from the body into His presence and care (comp. Acts 7:59 with Romans 14:8-9). The "new man" the "man in Christ" is now being wrought in us by God in view of a body conformed to Christ's body of glory, then that which is perfect will have come, but the capacity of that which has been wrought in the soul will be unhindered in the blessedness of His presence, and the unmingled joy of His love, when absent from the body.

[*A beloved brother now with the Lord, pointed out the difference between Ecclesiastes 12:7. "The spirit shall return to God Who gave it," and Acts 7:59. "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." The spirit of the Christian goes to the Jesus Who breathed it (John 20:22) J. G. Bellett.] In John 10:1-42 the Lord speaks of "putting forth" His own sheep, and of going before them when He does so. This "putting forth" places the sheep in an out-of-the-world position. Such a position comes before us in the end of chap. 9 Jesus and the man born blind are together — both of them "disallowed of men." They had taken up stones to cast at Jesus in the end of John 8:1-59 and they excommunicated the man born blind (John 9:34). The Jews who "cast him out" cast him unto the company of the "Son of God." Do we believe in the Son of God? I do not ask: Do we believe that Jesus is the Son of God? We should not be Christians unless we did — but have we tasted of companionship with the Son of God? If so, it must put us morally outside of this present world. Can this knowledge of Him ever cease? It does not belong to the present order of things.

Then in chapter 10 the mark of being the sheep of Christ is that they hear the voice of Jesus the Good Shepherd. They follow Him for they know His voice." Has it not spoken deep down in our souls? By that voice He makes Himself known to us. It reaches us through the Word. His words, recorded for us, are spirit and life.

There may be much hindrance through the earthen vessel; but there in His presence shall we not still know communion with love that human speech could not utter I am sure we shall. Paul,

evidently apart from the hindrance of the body, heard "unspeakable words."

Listen now to the Lord's words, "I am the good Shepherd and know My sheep and am known of Mine." In what way? "Even as the Father knoweth Me and I know the Father, and I lay down My life for the sheep." Will there not then be the consciousness of unutterable love? How will our souls expand in that consciousness of love? The Spirit of God, through the record of the Lord's Own words, will help us into divine intelligence as to what it will be to be in the company of Christ.

Let me here say a word as to the dying malefactor to whom Christ said, "Today thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." How short a time was his in which to really know the One Who hung by his side. Allow me to use a figure — Suppose a room in darkness because every avenue of light had been closed. Take down the shutters, and the room is instantly flooded with light. "In Thy light we see light." The darkness of that poor malefactor's soul was that day flooded with light in Paradise. Christ was the light of life that shone there. It was not yet glory, but it was light and love in the presence of Jesus. In John 11:1-57 we see that death could not take a sheep out of the hand of Christ. Nay, if I may so say, it threw it more completely into His Hand. "This sickness," He said concerning Lazarus, "Is not unto death." In the eyes of men the Good Shepherd had allowed the sickness to terminate in death. They did not see that the sheep in death (so called) was where it was before — in the hand of Christ. Are we conscious of how completely our life is bound up with Christ? "Because I live, ye shall live also." Christ must speak according to what He is, and also according to that which subsists in Him. Hence He said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby." The sisters at Bethany instinctively felt that death could not exist in His presence, as they said, "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died," and we have to read the Lord's reply to Martha in the light of eternal life subsisting in Himself. He was it. Therefore when He was down here, eternal life was here. So He said to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life," and now that He has passed by the way of death, as we speak, to the Father, the eternal life is there. Whether here or there the eternal life is the same, though the way of giving it is different.

Cannot it be said, as Moses said prophetically of the elect of Israel, "All His saints are in Thy Hand?" Their saintly character was that of Mary of Bethany. "They sat down at Thy feet, each receiving of Thy words." Can this life which we have in the Son of God be in abeyance at the departure of a saint to be with Him? They lived through having heard His voice (John 5:24-25). And again, "My sheep know My voice." It has spoken deep down in the inner chambers of the soul. If the earthly tabernacle be dissolved, a hindrance has been left behind; and what the soul has drunk in of Christ while in this tabernacle abides when present with the Lord. Who can say what that presence will be to us? I am bold to say that the real life of a saint — and Christ is that life (Colossians 3:4), will expand in the unhindered and conscious enjoyment of infinite love. T. H. Reynolds.

Reply To "With Christ Which Is Far Better."

Dearest Reynolds, A great deal of what has been on your mind has been a great comfort to me in my solitude of sorrow in this daily darkening scene through which we are passing, as an unreconciled scene to our God and His Christ. I remember attending Mrs Dennett's Funeral at Croydon and speaking a little at the grave on 1 Thessalonians 5:8-11, especially 9 and 10, "Who died for us that whether we may be watching or sleeping, we may live together with Him." The

object of His death is to accomplish the full purpose of His love — to remove death completely out of the way, by its destruction; and where two "heirs together of the grace of life" have tasted together of that love in its fulness, they remain after the separation of the earthly relationship, in the same divine life and love and relationship, only the one that has been freed from the earthen tabernacle, has been freed from what was only a hindrance to the enjoyment of heavenly bliss in the body, and the one bereaved on earth and desolated and a mourner because of the cessation of the earthly tie and companionship and affection has the greatest consolation in knowing that the high life and divine relationship, is being lived by the one taken up together with Him, Who is the source and perfection of it in heaven, as it is being lived by the bereaved one with the same beloved holy Lord on earth, and the moment when the Rapture will remove all the distance between the Bridegroom and the Bride, will be the moment when the separated ones will recontinue the life of holy communion in joy and love tasted already in earthly scenes and contrarities. J. S. Oliphant.

Vol 01-10 - A Brief Comparison of the Assembly in the Ephesian, Colossian and Corinthian Epistles.

A Brief Comparison of the Assembly in the Ephesian, Colossian and Corinthian Epistles. In Ephesians, Christ is head of the assembly which is His body and fulness; hence heaven is its seat, sphere of privilege, place of testimony and conflict. The church is with more difficulty spoken of where Christ is presented in relation to it as "the beginning, firstborn from among the dead" (Colossians 1:18). Here its proper privilege lies in connection with "the things which are above," and "the portion of the saints in light" for which the believer is "made fit" (Colossians 3:1; Colossians 1:12). But Gentiles are viewed, and Christ is in them, the "hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27). This gives the mystery but as hope not present communion by the Spirit, the assembly's proper portion. Life: Christ as life is the point of view, and the features of life in the saints (Colossians 3:5 etc.). Holding the head is but negatively spoken of, though the effect of so holding the head is plainly if more succinctly declared (Colossians 2:19). It is indeed "in one body" we "have been called to peace" (Colossians 3:15). Peace was declared by the risen Son of God in John 20:1-31, which thus seems to connect the two positions anticipating the descent of the Holy Spirit, though He breathes into them there, saying "receive ye (the) Holy Spirit." As part of Christ's glory as centre of "the mystery of God" the church is clearly spoken of; "And he is the head of the body, the assembly," but as reflecting that glory, not as bespeaking its own privileges (Colossians 2:2; Colossians 1:18). The church revolves at a relative distance from Him, so that she may (in her individual members) get a look at Him. But all the "fulness" is in Him (Colossians 2:9), and that for the assembly, for the recovery of the saints, or for their attaining proper assembly position. But union is not enjoyed, though the vantage position for it is given in the saints being "risen" and "quickened together with Him" and "all offences forgiven" (Colossians 2:12-13). Heaven is clear overhead, from the grave of Christ to the right hand of God, where He sits, and not an adverse power can chirp or mutter (Colossians 2:15). Hence all this is transitional to our higher, full and proper position and place. In Corinthians we have what is administrative, but equally divine, for "He" (God) "shall confirm you to the end, unimpeachable in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom ye have been called into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:8-9). Christ as head of the assembly is not spoken of in this epistle; only the headship of man, of the woman, before the subject of the assembly is entered upon (see the opening of chapter 11 where the subject of the assembly starts at 1 Corinthians 11:17). It is the Spirit, the rather, who is spoken of in administration. Individuals, no doubt, were real members livingly united to the head in heaven, but this is not under consideration, if implied. But all is in testing, as life for Israel in the wilderness until the brazen serpent in Numbers 21:1-35. The assembly of God is looked at as, "For also in the power of) one Spirit we have all been baptised into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bondmen or free, and have all been given to drink of one Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:13). In actual assembly, after the supper, which is its first privilege, for which it comes together, away from the things of the individual; for functioning, it is "distinctions of gifts, but the same Spirit . . . distinctions of services, but the same Lord; and there

are distinctions of operations, but the same God who operates all things in all." All truly, thus, divine, though administrative. The gifts are personal in Ephesians 4:1-32 and abide; not necessarily these in Corinthians, though truly divine; while the possessor of one, as 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 shows, may not have the divine nature. All is in administration, a witness by the Spirit to Him made Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36). Hence control and regulation of the gift is enjoined, which would, or should have indeed led them to their real privilege as those to whom administration is subordinated. Power is not our highest privilege (cf. Luke 10:20). The individual then, in possession of his gift, looks to the Lord for the exercise of it. He is responsible to Him for its exercise where again, if a true man, and spiritual, his true place and privilege will guide him, for "God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all the assemblies of the saints." But above this, is God presiding, who alone knows how to co-ordinate the whole administrative order. And indeed, this is of the last moment as keeping open a door for Christ's glory where confusion might prevail. We see this in Eldad and Medad in prophecy in the Camp of Israel, and Caiaphas also later in the gravest circumstances in the council of John 12:1-50. Now all this, though so manifestly administrative, is divine and must never be relinquished because it is divine; and the true man again and the spiritual counts upon the "Confirmation in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ," in the faithfulness of God, to do so; thus proving him to be a true man and faithful himself, if he but finds himself with "two or three gathered to My Name." The ruin cannot relieve the individual of privilege or responsibility, even if the ruin — our failure — has robbed us of the enjoyment of privilege. Our responsibility according to full privilege ever stands for "God is justified when He speaks and will overcome when He is in judgment" (Psalms 51:1-19).

Now "the members are many and the body one;" and there is a complete identification between what is set forth in Ephesians and Corinthians, as Moses of old, was instructed to make the Tabernacle according to the pattern shown him in the mount. What is presented in Ephesians infallibly in Christ is seen everywhere there characterized by the Spirit; in Colossians, it is life; in Corinthians, it is administratively in the Spirit. And it might well be felt, surely, that if, in the obedience of love, the administrative order were without any pretensions whatever, sought and practised, it would at least leave room for the functioning of the body here in the present communion of the saints, according to that which, in the love of Christ, is the assembly's position on high. No doubt it is down here it takes place, but ". . . holding the truth in love, we may grow up to Him in all things, who is the head, the Christ: from whom the whole body, fitted together, and connected by every joint of supply, according to the working in its measure of each one part, works for itself the increase of the body to its self-building up in love" (Ephesians 4:15-16). This thing surely is a heavenly exotic, as is "the unity of the Spirit" that we are enjoined to "use diligence to keep" (5: 3).

Thus, then, the three characteristics of the three epistles, are briefly indicated, that we might seek grace to walk therein in these last days. The contention that, all being in ruin, only what is individual now must be sought, is surely not maintaining faith and obedience. As long as the Supper is taken (and that is left "Till He come"), these things must be observed and walked in by the saint. The pride of a sectarian position will see no attraction in so lowly and humble a path that this indicates, a path to be walked in the fear of God ("They spake often one to another"), where faith may have been driven to "thresh wheat in the winepress to hide it from the Midianites" (Judges 6:11). Yet these things are for each saint, each equally dear to His heart to whom we owe

everything, now and to eternity. All is for such, always, that the taught of God may enjoy such communion in a dark and darkening day "till He come."

All this is certainly not a setting up of anything new; but the rather, it is a call to lowly-minded obedience to the divine testimonies due from us until the term of our responsibilities at His return.

C. N. Snow. The Loving Kindness of the Father.

It would never be pride that would lead any one into a place where he would be broken to pieces, and be shown that he was altogether corrupt and worthless. If God were to elevate flesh, and bring flesh into a place of nearness to Himself, then, indeed, there would be some force in the objection on the ground of presumption; but God does no such thing: the flesh is so far gone to ruin, that it cannot be improved, and therefore God declares in the cross His mind about the flesh, namely, that it is a dead thing; but He, by the same cross, gives the poor sinner life, and not in the power of life in the flesh, He brings the sinner into His presence and sets him at His table; so that it is not the presumption of a poor prodigal that assigns the place which he is to occupy, but the grace and boundless loving-kindness of the father: thus God says to Noah, "The end of all flesh is come before me," and what then? "Make thee an ark of gopher wood" — and in that ark is Noah raised up beyond the region of judgment, and a judged world, into a place of undisturbed communion.

C. H. Mackintosh.

How God's Principles may be Deserted. The principles of God may be deserted by easy gradations. They may first be relaxed, then forgotten, then despised. They may pass from a firm hand into an easy one. from thence to an indifferent one, and find themselves at last flung away by a rebellious one. Many have at first stood for God's principles in the face of difficulties and fascinations, like Abraham — then, merely grieved over the loss of them, like Isaac — then, been careless about their loss or maintenance, like Jacob — and at last, with a high hand, broken them, like Judah.

J. G. Bellett.

Christ in Discipline.

Christ never makes a breach except to come in and connect the soul and heart more with Himself; and it is worth all the sorrow that ever was, and more to learn the least atom more of His love and of Himself, and there is nothing like that, nothing like Him: and it lasts.

J. N. Darby.

Vol 01-10 - A Brief Outline of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

A Brief Outline of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Hebrews 1:1-14. The subject of the Epistle to the Hebrews is Jesus the Son of God crowned with glory and honour at God's right hand, and the heavenly system of blessing and glory centring in Him, founded on His redemptive work. The object of the epistle is evidently to detach the minds and hearts of the Hebrew Christians from the earthly system of Judaism, which was but the shadow of the heavenly, and to direct their gaze to Jesus in heaven in whom dwelt the substance. Of old, God had spoken to the fathers of Israel in various ways, giving in the different dispensations fragments of divine revelation; but in the Person of the Son, God had given a perfect and complete revelation of Himself. None but the Son could reveal God, for only a divine Person could make God known in His nature and counsels of love. Here, as elsewhere, the Spirit delights to unfold the varied glories of the Son, glories consonant with the subject before the writer of the epistle. The first cluster of glories brings out what the Son is to God:

(1) He is God's appointed heir;

(2) By Him, God made the world;

(3) He is the brightness of God's glory;

(4) He is the expression of God's substance. The next cluster of glories sets forth the Son in His own might and greatness:

(1) He upholds all things by the word of His own power;

(2) He made by Himself purification for sins:

(3) He set Himself down at the right hand of the majesty on high. Then follows the greatness of the Son as compared with angels. the most exalted of God's creatures. His place is much better than the angels; and He has inherited a Name, the Name of Son of God, which is more excellent than all angelic names. Angels are called upon to worship the Son, being the messengers of God and the executors of His judgment; but the Son is addressed by God as God, having an eternal throne and a kingdom governed in righteousness. Yet while very God, the Son is truly and perfect Man; and because of His perfection as Man, He has supreme joy among the companions given to Him as God's anointed.

If the Son is the creator of Genesis 1:1-31, He is also the Jehovah seen in relation to His creation in Genesis 2:1-25, for here He is saluted with "And Thou, Jehovah, in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the earth. . ." This is quoted from Psalms 102:1-28, being God's answer to His suffering and death. As Jehovah, He is compared with His works; His glory transcending all in the creation, which is growing old and shall perish, but the Son abides "The Same," the unchanging One. The present creation as a vesture sets forth His glory, but after serving His present purpose it will be folded up; but it is also a covering to be rolled up in the changing of the elements, which

when accomplished will display His eternal purpose and glory in the new heavens and new earth. With this in view, God has set His Son down at His right hand until His enemies are made His footstool. This is not the portion of angels they are ministering spirits who wait upon those who shall inherit God's great salvation.

Hebrews 2:1-18. Because of the character of the present revelation men should give earnest heed to it; for if such as Lot's wife did not escape when she disobeyed the angelic word "Look not behind thee," how will any one escape the more terrible judgment awaiting those who neglect the great salvation, spoken by the Lord on earth, and con-firmed by the testimony of His disciples. As Apostle, the Lord Jesus inaugurated this great salvation; as High Priest He saves to the uttermost those who come to God by Him. The world to come, which subject forms an integral part of the epistle, has not been put under angels, but has been subjected to Man in Christ, the Son of Man. Although lower in rank than angels, Adam was the lord and head of the lower creation, and as such was the figure of Him to come. Jesus, though higher than angels, so that He might die became a little lower than the angels (He became Man); and in His death has established an additional claim to the universe He inherits as Son, of which He is the creator and anointed Man. Having tasted death by entering into its dread reality, the Lord Jesus has been crowned with glory and honour; and the saints are privileged to see Him where He is, by faith, while awaiting the day in which there will be the public demonstration, in a display of glory, that all things are put under His feet.

Those who shall inherit salvation are the companions of Christ and the sons of God; and in bringing His many sons to glory, God has given to Jesus the position of Captain of their salvation. Because of all He suffered here, the Lord Jesus is perfectly qualified to bring God's many sons home to Him in the glory, safely through all the trials of the wilderness He knows so well. Christ is not ashamed of God's sons, His brethren, for they are all of one with Him, having His Spirit, His life, and His nature; and to them He makes known the Father's Name in the midst of the assembly, where He sings praise to Him. All this proves how real Christ's Manhood is: He is Son of Man; He has died; He has brethren; God has given Him children from among men; He took part in flesh and blood; He suffered being tempted; and was found in the place of dependence trusting in God. As risen from among the dead Christ's Manhood is unchanged, but He has entered into entirely new conditions; and it is with Him, on the other side of death, that we are associated as His brethren and sons of God; and it is beyond death that the Sanctifier and the sanctified are all of one.

One of the specific reasons for Jesus becoming Man was to deliver the children from the fear of death. To effect this He entered the "strong man's" domain, and annulled the despot's power. Like David, He slew the giant with his own sword: like Mordecai, He became the deliverer of His people from the hand of the tyrant who was hung upon his own gallows: like Moses, He led His people through the region of death, in which the oppressor and his host were overwhelmed.

Jesus, in grace, has espoused the cause of fallen men, not that of fallen angels; and because of this, in all the details of life He was made like to His brethren, in knowing sorrow, sufferings, hunger, thirst, weariness, and such things. Knowing all these He can be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things relating to God; entering with feeling into all the circumstances of His people, and bringing to them perfect help in their trials. Before entering upon this priestly work, He made propitiation for the sins of the people that every bit of dread might be taken from their hearts. It is

noticeable that it does not say that He laid hold of the seed of Israel, else the blessing would have been confined to Israel; nor does it say that He laid hold of the seed of Adam; for Scripture does not teach universal salvation; but it says "the seed of Abraham," because Christ has espoused the cause of those who believe, the children of the faithful one.

Hebrews 3:1-19. Being Christ's brethren, and sanctified with Him as the Sanctifier, the saints are holy brethren. Israel's calling was earthly, and Moses was their apostle and Aaron their high priest; but our calling is heavenly, and Jesus is both our Apostle and High Priest; so that the Christian system is in marked contrast to Judaism. The Tabernacle was God's dwelling place, and Moses' work there serves to indicate the greatness of Christ's place in God's house. Moses was faithful as a ministering servant, but Christ is faithful as Son. Moses completed the Tabernacle in detail according to the divine instructions, carrying out faithfully the revealed mind of God; but how much greater is the glory of Him who designed and built the vast universe? Christ is the builder of the universe, for He is God, and in the wide universe the glory of the creator shines out. A similar contrast between the bondman and the Son is made in John 8:1-59, where the Son gives us liberty in which we are truly free. Solomon is a type of Christ as Son over God's house, where God says to David in connection with the building of the Temple, "I will be to him for Father and he shall be to me for son." If the house is to be ordered according to the mind of God, only the Son, who knows all His will and purpose can so order it. The house is not a material one as was the Tabernacle (and the Temple), but is composed of men and women, who bear this character, if they hold fast the truth of Christianity. If the Hebrews forsook the boldness belonging to the Christian system and returned to the bondage of law, how could they have the character of the house of God which pulsated with life and liberty? When the Lord was on earth, the Temple had lost its true character as God's house, and at the close He spoke of it to the Jews as "Your house"; and in 2nd Timothy that which still bore the name of God's house is likened to "A great house," where there are vessels to dishonour mingled with the vessels unto honour. Our hope is heaven and the rest of God, but in the mean-time, the Christian (like Israel in the wilderness) is passing through a scene where he must be in constant dependence upon God for supplies. While in the wilderness there is ever the danger of going back; therefore are we warned in chapter 2 of slipping away, and here of hardening the heart. The Holy Spirit in Psalms 95:1-11 warned Israel that they were in danger of failing as their fathers before them and again, at the beginning of Christianity, there was need for the repetition of the warning. Israel's whole sojourn in the wilderness was a day of provocation for God, because of their refusing to listen to His voice. Seeing God's wonderful works, they were yet ignorant of His ways, and this because of the state of their unbelieving hearts. There are two if's in this portion: "If ye will hear His voice " and "If ye shall enter into my rest." Only those who listen to the voice of God, hearing it by faith, will enter into His rest; but this on account of God's settled purpose to bring believers there. God's rest in creation was soon broken by sin; nor did Israel enter God's rest but God will assuredly have a rest, where He Himself shall rest and His people with Him.

There is another warning in Hebrews 3:12 against turning away from the living God; but they were to encourage themselves in the day of grace, which would not always last. Many who took the place of Christians might be mere professors; but only real Christians were Christ's companions, although the others by their profession claimed to be such. The condition of the heart, not profession, proves what one really is, even as is illustrated in the host of Israel. All were in the

position of the people of God; how few were right in heart towards Him. Three events are adduced to bring out Israel's true state:

(1) Their provocation at the Red Sea;

(2) Their sin at Sinai (3) Their refusal of the report of the goodly land brought by the spies.

Judgment did not result from the first as the people were not yet under law: the third was the crowning sin which revealed the source of every murmur, "unbelief."

Hebrews 4:1-16. Reverential fear becomes the people of God; the absence of it endangers the soul. Where no fear of God exists there is no faith in His word; and only those who believe will enter into His rest. It is not enough to be publicly associated with those who receive the good news from God; there must be living faith if we are to profit by the word, for the absence of faith deprived Israel of entering the rest of God. Faith produces fear of God the fear evincing that faith exists. Divine grace in no wise sets aside our responsibility; indeed it is in our responsible life that we show the fruits of divine grace. The very Scripture which mentions the doubt of Israel entering God's rest speaks of His determinate purpose to have some there. This rest, which awaits the people of God, was typified in the rest of creation on the seventh day; and although that rest was broken, God has not turned from His purpose to have His rest; no, nor has Israel's unbelief affected this purpose. From the Spirit's witness in David (in Psalms 95:1-11) it is evident that when Joshua led Israel into Canaan, he did not bring them into the rest of God; nor had they entered it in David's day; so that the conclusion of the matter is, "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God." We have not yet come to this rest, being in a world of toil; but after the days of labour are ended we shall surely have the rest, even as God rested when His work was done. With the rest in view, we are to be marked by diligence which faith begets, and not by indifference to the word of God.

God's word, which addresses itself to us, is living and operative; comes from the living God, and works in living power in the heart of him who receives it. The word is the living instrument which brings God's thoughts to His people, and maintains them in living touch with Himself and its penetrating and divisive qualities in a moral way are greater than those of the sharpest human weapon in material things, for it enters into the heart and divides what is natural from that wrought there by the Spirit of God. The word also enables us to distinguish between our movements and the springs that actuate those movements and gives us to discern the true character of all our thoughts and the intentions of the heart. How indispensable and invaluable all this is to the Christian; to be capable, as the word of God has its place within us, to test every inward spring, every feeling, every motive, every desire, and every action; so that the unsparing judgment of God might be brought upon all that proceeds from the flesh, and to delight in all produced by the word in the Spirit's power. When the word enters the heart it discovers every secret, and brings us consciously into the presence of Him who knows all about us. This is great gain for the Christian, for this knowledge leads him to order his course in the sense of being constantly under the all-seeing eye of God.

Passing through the wilderness to the rest of God we have therefore all the help of the word of God; and besides, the help of the Priest, Jesus the Son of God. To enter God's presence, Aaron passed through the court of the Tabernacle, through the holy place, and into the holiest; but Jesus

in ascending to His place in glory has passed through the heavens. Knowing this, we can hold fast the Christian profession in the exercise of faith. Although so great and glorious, our great High Priest enters into all the feelings of our troubled hearts, having, while here, passed through all the testings of the path He has called us to tread. But all His temptations were from without; there was nothing within of sin to entice Him. Our names, written on His breast, tell of the sympathy of a loving heart in regard to all we are passing through down here; our names written on His shoulders assure; us that His strength is available for us in our great weakness. The throne of God, by reason of man's sin, became for him a throne of judgment; now, through Christ's precious shed blood it is for us a throne of grace. Approaching the throne, not with cringing fear, but with holy boldness, knowing that Jesus is there for us, we receive the mercy needed for each step of the desert, and obtain the grace for seasonable help.

Hebrews 5:1-14. Israel's high priests were established to represent men before God, to offer the different gift offerings and the sacrifices for sins. Being frail, failing men they could enter into the conditions of those they represented: but required to have the efficacy of the sin offering for themselves also, because of their own state. Aaron's honoured office was not his by his own choosing, but by divine call, as Korah and his companions learned to their cost. In calling the Lord Jesus to the Priesthood, God has crowned Him with glory and honour; and the Spirit of God tells us that it is God's Son who has been addressed as "Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." So that if the calling of Christ's Priesthood is signified in the Aaronic priesthood, the order of His Priesthood is according to Melchisedec's.

Before entering into the glory, the Lord Jesus knew what it was to be suffering in the place of dependence, and this in all its depths in Gethsemane and on the cross. The pious Man cried "My God I cry by day, and thou answerest not; and by night there is no rest for me," yet is He able to say on reaching the limits of death's power, "Thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns." The Son, who had ever commanded, learned obedience in these circumstances of suffering; and having perfectly known obedience thus, became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him. He was delivered, saved out of death, after passing through all its judgment, because of His piety and obedience; He will therefore save those who obey Him from all that is against them, whether from death, the power of Satan, or any other enemy or trial in the wilderness. This salvation, an eternal salvation, that will bring us safely through the wilderness to the glory, is originated by One addressed by God as high priest after the order of Melchisedec. Of Christ, the writer had much to say to the Hebrews, but it was difficult to make it known to them because of their low state: indeed, they required the elements of Christianity rather than advanced instruction. They ought to have been teachers, but they were not skilled in the foundations, the word of righteousness; they were in need of milk, having got into a very weak spiritual condition. Solid food belongs to matured Christians, who, by habitually feeding on the word, are exercised in their spiritual sensibilities to discern what is good and what is evil.

Hebrews 6:1-20. Although the Hebrews were in such an immature state, the writer would not proceed to speak of the elements of Christianity, but would go on to what belonged to the full-grown man. The foundations of the faith lie in repentance, faith, the teaching of baptism, what is involved in association with others, the truth of the resurrection, and eternal judgment. From apostasy there was no recovery; those once enlightened with the light of Christianity, and who deliberately turn from it, cannot come back in repentance. Such have never been true Christians,

they have never had divine life in their souls. They have tasted of the heavenly gift, but it was never appropriated: they spat it out; they partook outwardly of the Holy Spirit, as Balaam and Saul the King, had done long before; they tasted, but had not eaten the good word of God; and had come into the benefits of the Spirit's presence in God's house. They were so near to the blessing, yet they despised it; and after professing to accept Christ, they rejected Him, thus crucifying Him for themselves, and exposing Him as One to be refused. God will not suffer this fresh insult to His Son! These apostates had been where the rain, the blessing from God, came; but instead of useful herbs they had brought forth thorns and briars, meriting the unsparing judgment that would certainly come upon them. Even if speaking thus, the writer was persuaded better things of the Hebrews, having the conviction that salvation was theirs. Nor was God unmindful of all that had marked the saints hitherto, their work, their love, their ministry to the saints; yet the journey was not over, and they were to go on until the end, imitating the faith and patience of such as Abraham.

God had made promise to Abraham, but long patience was needed before its fulfilment; a promise of which there was no doubt, for God confirmed His word by an oath, swearing by Himself, since there was no greater. How blessed to see the condescension of God, coming down to our creature weakness to show in a human way the immutability of His purpose; He first promised, then confirmed it with an oath, to give strong encouragement to the heirs of promise. Like the manslayer of old, we have fled to the city of refuge, to lay hold upon a heavenly hope. Israel in rejecting and crucifying Christ destroyed their earthly hopes; God, in mercy, has through the intercession of Christ on the cross, treated them as manslayers rather than as murderers, and so has opened up to them the city of refuge. Their hope is no longer an earthly one, but heavenly; it is an anchor of the soul both sure and firm, connected with Jesus within the heavenly veil, who has gone there as our forerunner. Within the veil, where we shall soon be with Jesus, He is a high priest after the order of Melchisedec.

Hebrews 7:1-28. Melchisedec was a suitable person to typify the Lord Jesus as God's Priest; he was King of Salem and priest of the Most High God. This King of righteousness and King of peace is presented without antecedent or descendent, without birth or death, as a subsisting priest; and is so great that he blesses Abraham, and receives from Abraham the tenth of all the spoils of war. Thus, in Abraham, the Levitical priesthood acknowledges the superiority of the priesthood of Melchisedec, both by paying tithes and in receiving blessing, for the inferior is blessed by the greater.

Since God had announced that Christ's priesthood was after the order of Melchisedec, it clearly implied that His highest thoughts were not connected with the Levitical order; and since the law was based upon the Levitical priesthood, a change of priesthood necessitated a change of law also. The law had never contemplated a priest from any other tribe than Levi, but Jesus came from Judah, of which Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood; and the change of law is more abundantly evident because the different priest has been constituted in the power of indissoluble life, and not according to the fleshly ordinance of the law. Christ's priesthood being for ever involves the setting aside of the commandment of the law regarding priests. The old system perfected nothing; man's conscience was not perfected regarding his sins, nor was there access to God; but in the new system of Christianity, with its better hope, we can draw near to God.

Israel's priests though called of God, were not priests by a divine oath, else they could not be set aside; but Christ is Priest by the swearing of an oath, even as it is written, "The Lord has sworn and will not repent, Thou art priest for ever." So that Christ's priesthood is irrevocable through the oath that makes Him the guarantor of a better covenant. Death prevented the Aaronic priests continuing in office, but Christ, who ever lives, has His priesthood intransmissible; therefore can He save right through to the end of the wilderness those who approach God by Him, ever living to intercede for them. Such then is the greatness and the superiority of God's priest, established in relation to a heavenly system, with a better covenant and an eternal salvation, with a better hope and with better promises; where we can approach God in holy boldness.

Now we have the moral perfections of our great High Priest; a priest becoming those called with a heavenly calling, who are God's sons and Christ's brethren. He is holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and become higher than the heavens. His features are delightful to God, who has given Him a place of exaltation and majesty, yea, the highest place in the universe. Unlike the Levitical priests, He needed not to offer sacrifice for Himself; He was infinitely pure; holy in nature; harmless in all His activities; undefiled in all His movements; separate, in all the thoughts and feelings of His heart, from sinners. But He offered up a sacrifice for sinners in the giving of Himself; He was the perfect sin offering, so perfect that it needed not to be repeated. Priests ordained by the law were frail, failing sinners; but the word and the oath of God (although subsequent to the giving of the law) constituted His own Son a Priest. As Priest, God's Son is perfected for ever; perfected as having thoroughly qualified for the office in circumstances of sorrow and suffering, and as having been set down by God at His own right hand from whence He can minister to His own.

Hebrews 8:1-13. The things engaging us in these chapters are summed up for us in the beginning of this chapter. Our High Priest is so great that He has set Himself down on the right hand of the throne of the greatness in the heavens. First, the greatness of the priest is noted, "We have such a One high priest;" there is also the greatness of His office, "High priest;" then the greatness of the place He occupies, "The right hand of the greatness in the heavens;" and the greatness of His ministry, "Minister of the holy places and of the true tabernacle." How the greatness of the Person of Jesus is manifested in setting Himself down at God's right hand! Who but a divine Person could take this place? The tabernacle that Moses pitched was but the shadow of the true tabernacle, the divine, heavenly system of glory and blessing, founded on the finished work of the cross, where the saints draw near to God. So that the Lord's ministry is not only in contrast to Aaron's, it is also the substance of what was foreshadowed in Aaron's. In dressing the lamps in the holy place for the maintenance of the light over against the candlestick, Aaron was indicating how that Christ, during the night of His absence from the world, would sustain His own in testimony, bringing out in them His own heavenly features, for the pleasure of God. There was also the ministry belonging to the table and the showbread, which foreshadowed how Christ would keep Israel before the eye of God until He renews His public dealings with them. The Minister of the Sanctuary is within the holiest, having the golden censer; maintaining His own there in the savour of His own Person, and as a company of worshippers for God's glory and delight.

Christ as the antitype of the high priest must have something to offer, answering to the gifts and sacrifices of the law; but His priesthood is heavenly, not earthly; and His Ministry includes that of mediator of a better covenant, established on better promises. While building the tabernacle,

Moses was instructed by God to make it according to the pattern shown him on the mount; for the earthly building was but the shadow of the heavenly things introduced by Christ as mediator, and maintained by Him as High Priest. This heavenly ministry of the risen and glorified Christ is more excellent than that of Moses and Aaron. Had the covenant made with Israel at Sinai been faultless there would not have been the need for another covenant; hence the new covenant is of an entirely different order from the first. This new covenant was intimated to Israel through the prophet Jeremiah, and was to be made with both the houses of Israel. Israel had not kept the first covenant, hence God had set them aside; but the new covenant could not be broken by Israel, for it did not rest on their doing, but on what God would do. God's laws were not to be presented on tables of stone, as at Sinai, but He would give them in their minds and write them also upon their hearts, where, in the sovereign working of God they would be kept for the glory of God and the blessing of His redeemed people. Therefore would the knowledge of God be in the hearts and minds of His people, so that they would not require to be recalled to Him, as in the past; and having remembered their sins at the cross, He would remember them no more. The word NEW covenant involves the passing away of the old.

Hebrews 9:1-28. The first covenant was connected with a system of ordinances, and its sanctuary was a worldly one: all the furniture and other articles having special typical value, yet themselves belonging to a system of religion for man in the flesh. (It may be profitable to look briefly at the typical meaning of these things. The holiest is God's dwelling-place, where we can enter the holy place indicating the future place of Israel's priests. Christ is the candlestick, whose beauty is seen by the light which the Spirit produces in the saints; as the table He is our support, and we feed upon Him as the true showbread. Normally, the golden censer would be kept in the holy place, but it went with the high priest into the holiest once a year; now that Christ has entered into God's presence, the censer, and all it speaks of abides in God's presence. The absence of the altar of incense may be on account of its function being taken up by the golden censer; the fragrance of Christ's Person, all His moral excellency and perfections, subsists before God continually. Christ's perfect Manhood and divine glory are seen in the ark covered with gold; the golden pot with the manna tells that God has treasured up in the glorified One the remembrance of all that He was as the Man of sorrows here. In Aaron's rod that budded we see Christ's priesthood confirmed in the power of resurrection (He lives in the power of an endless life); while in the tables of the covenant we see every thought of God for man fully and perfectly answered in His own Son. The cherubim of glory shadowing the mercy-seat are the witnesses that every demand of the throne of God, in righteousness and holiness, has been met in Christ and in the shedding of His blood.) The ordering of the first system distinctly showed that man remained at a distance from God; he could not come within the veil. And this is the system of things upon which the great systems of Christendom have fashioned themselves. Their great buildings have railed off portions, from which the people are excluded in their worship. Then in the first order of things there was a priesthood coming between the people and God; and this too we find in the great religious systems of today. Into the holiest the high priest only could go, and that but once a year on the day of atonement, when he sprinkled the blood on the mercy-seat and seven times before it. All this showed that Israel remained at a distance from God, with the conscience unrelieved by all the ordinances, ordinances which only touched the flesh, and given until God made known what was in His heart for man's blessing. In marked contrast to the system of things spoken of, a system of good things, promised in connection with Messiah, has been established in Christ. These things belong to the

better and more perfect tabernacle, not of the old creation, nor through the sacrifices of animals. Christ's priesthood is not by the blood-shedding of calves and bulls, but by His own blood; that is He does not present sacrifices like the priests of old, but His priestly ministry relates to the work He wrought for God's glory on the cross. Having finished the work given Him to do here on earth, the Lord Jesus has entered into the presence of God having found an eternal redemption. When Aaron entered in, he had to come out again and go in the following year, the sacrifice enabled God to go on with Israel for one year only but Christ has no need to come out in regard to His sacrificial work, the redemption He has found is eternal in its efficacy. The blood shed on the day of atonement, and the ashes of the Red Heifer, had no intrinsic value; their sanctification only related to what was external, to man's flesh, the cleansing of the body; but the precious blood of Jesus purifies the conscience, and enables us to worship the living God. How great is the work of the cross, how precious the blood of Christ! On the cross He was the spotless victim, and He was the true offerer who offered Himself to God by the eternal Spirit. Here is a sacrifice in marked contrast to the beasts offered under the law, but He is the great anti-type of them all He is the true sin offering to which every sin offering pointed. See how the Trinity is engaged in the work of the cross! The Son is the offerer and the offering; it is by the eternal Spirit He offers Himself: and the offering is to God (surely the Father), to secure His will. All the works of the law were dead works, they could not bring peace to the performer; but the blood of Jesus sets the Christian free in conscience from all connected with that order of things so that he might truly worship God as revealed in Jesus.

Although the sacrifices of old could not remove the guilt of the offerer, where there was faith in God there was blessing. There could not be the revelation of the truth of redemption as now known in the death of Christ, nor could there be the knowledge in the heart of no more conscience of sins; nevertheless God, in view of the sacrifice of Christ, could remit the sins of those who believed in Him. Therefore we see Christ presented as mediator of a new covenant, secured by His death, by which there is redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant: and those called to partake of the blessings of the new covenant receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. This is in marked contrast with the law, which if Israel had kept they would have retained the earthly inheritance: but those partaking of the heavenly calling receive their inheritance by divine promise; it does not rest on their responsibility and cannot therefore be lost. In natural things, a testament has no force until the one who has disclosed in it his disposition has died. So it was in connection with the law: when the commandments were given there was the evidence of death in the blood sprinkled on the book and the people. It was a covenant of blood which bound the people to the book of the law whose commandments they had promised to keep. When the tabernacle was set up, it was sprinkled with blood; as were also all the vessels of service belonging to it. These figurative things emphasised that all God's dealings with man depended on blood shedding; and the truth, now fully revealed, is that without shedding of blood there is no remission. This divine necessity was therefore evinced in the representation of the heavenly things being purified by blood, but the heavenly things required a better sacrifice, the death of the Lord Jesus.

Christ, in verse 12 (Hebrews 9:12), has entered into God's presence, having glorified Him in accomplishing an eternal redemption: but verse 24 shows that He has also entered there on our account, as our representative before God's face. Like Aaron He has two sets of garments; the

linen garments in which the work of atonement was performed; the garments of glory and beauty, in which the names of

God's people were engraved on His heart and on His shoulders. Both garments are involved in verse 24 (Hebrews 9:24), for Christ is there as having secured an eternal redemption which glorifies God and brings eternal blessing to us, and as representing His own, bearing their names in God's presence, before His face. But Christ is not in heaven as the high priest of yore was annually in the holiest; Christ is there with His own precious blood, the blood of a sacrifice which needs no repeating because of its abiding efficacy. Once He appeared on earth, in the consummation of the ages, for the removal of sin by His own sacrifice: now He appears in the presence of God for us; soon He will appear for the salvation of His people. Because of sin, the sentence of death lies upon the whole human race, and divine judgment follows death, at the great white throne; but Christ has borne the sins of many, the sins of all who believe in Him, so that they no longer fear death, and have been delivered from the judgment. His saints do not look for death; they look for Christ, who is coming the second time, not to offer another sacrifice for sins, but to save His people from every foe, whether the church at the rapture, or Israel when He comes out of heaven to put the earth right.

Hebrews 10:1-39. The good things of Christianity although foreshadowed in the law could not be clearly seen there. For example, although man's approach to God was envisaged, it never could have been discovered there that men would be allowed into the holiest, to be there with holy boldness in the light of the full revelation of God. Moral cleansing was in the shadow of the law, but not in the perfect way disclosed in the teaching of the Gospel. Although the annual sacrifices foreshadowed redemption, they had no intrinsic value; they could not give the worshippers the knowledge of sins forgiven once and for all; else there would not have been the necessity for repeating the sacrifices year by year. How blessed for us in Christianity to have no more conscience of sins, to realise that all our sins have gone completely through the shedding of the precious blood of Jesus. Instead of removing sins, the yearly sacrifices brought sins to remembrance; ever reminding the people that their sins were there, for indeed the divine sentence of the sacrificial system of the law is, "for blood of bulls and goats (is) incapable of taking away sins."

Coming into the world, as fulfilling the words written concerning Him in the book of God's counsel, the Lord declares by His presence that the accomplishing of God's will is bound up with Himself and not with the sacrifices and offerings of the Levitical system. God had no pleasure in the death of the animals sacrificed on the altars of Israel but how deep and infinite His pleasure in the One who said, "Lo, I come to do Thy will." Thus God has taken away the first order that gave Him no pleasure, that He might establish a new order, founded on the death of Christ. God's will, established in this new order of things, sets apart the Christian for the pleasure of God; and this by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. How great then is our blessing in Christianity: we have no more conscience of sins; and God Himself has set us apart to be for Him, through the death of Christ. The former blessing comes through the shedding of Jesus' blood the latter by the offering of His body. The work, and consequences of the work of Christ, are in marked contrast to what the priests in Israel wrought and ministered. Every priest stood, but Christ sat down, His was a finished work. Every priest stood daily; but Christ sits down in perpetuity; there is no repetition of the work. Every priest ministered often, but Christ needed only to carry out this ministry once,

because His precious blood is infinite and eternal in its efficacy. Every priest ministered often the same sacrifice, but Christ offered the ONE sacrifice of abiding value. The sacrifices of the priests could never take away sins; Christ's sacrifice is indeed a sacrifice for sins. Now, sitting at God's right hand, in the acceptance of the great work He has wrought, Christ, in fulfilment of Psalms 110:1, awaits the time when His enemies are put beneath His feet. Because of this great work, Christ has given us, the sanctified company, a perfection that can never be lost. He sits down in perpetuity we are perfected in perpetuity. We are completely rid of our sins by the wonderful and glorious sacrifice of Christ!

If Israel under law could not know this wonderful blessing the Holy Spirit had nevertheless witnessed concerning it in the Old Testament. In Jeremiah 31:33-34, the Holy Spirit foretold through the Prophet the blessings of the New Covenant. Those blessed under this covenant, which depends entirely upon the goodness of God, will have His laws in their hearts and minds; and He will never again remember their sins and iniquities. Every sin, every iniquity, is remembered at the cross, where God deals with them all in the death of His Son: but having fully dealt with them once, having remembered every one then: they are gone in the death of Jesus, and He remembers them NO MORE. Our sins then having been remitted through that ONE sacrifice, what need is there for any other sacrifice for sins? If the poor Roman Catholic knew the meaning of this precious passage of Scripture, he would not want any other sacrifices. The Priesthood of Christ having been established, the great character of Christ's sacrifice having been brought out in detail, and the results of that sacrifice and its application to us having been clearly unfolded, we are exhorted to enter the Holiest, the very presence of God. How wonderful, that we, once poor sinners, can come before God, where our spirits can range over the vast sphere of Christ's glories, our hearts can rest in His deep perfections: and we can give to our God the praise and worship that give Him pleasure. At all times, whether individually or in the assembly, though our feet are touching this barren wilderness, our spirits can be in the presence of God; and this is the Holiest. There we can learn, in God's own company, the meaning of the gold and acacia wood, and of the variegated colours of the sanctuary; and understand something of the deep significance of the furniture and vessels which speak of Christ to our hearts. Our approach to God is by the blood of Jesus, in the boldness produced by "no more conscience of sins: not in the old way of Judaism, in which there was no real approach, but in the new way of Christianity, where everything lives in the life of God. This is not down here, but within the veil, in the immediate presence of God: and in order that we might have part in that living system, the Word became flesh, and in death secured our title to enter there. In resurrection He is our "Great Priest," and with Him we can enter within the veil. But the heart must be true; we could not be in God's presence with a wrong thought or feeling, or in ignorance of the God revealed in Jesus. We might be before Him as suppliants if ignorant of the true character of God made known in the cross; but the full assurance of faith is produced by the heart resting in what He is thus, and in knowing that God delights to have us in His presence. God, too, has given us the suited state for His presence: like the priests of old we have been sprinkled and washed: our hearts have been sprinkled by the blood of Jesus, and the word has morally purified us, removing the defilement of our old state.

Approach is our present portion, but soon we shall be for ever in God's presence: this is our hope. Therefore are we exhorted to hold fast the confession of the hope unwavering, realising that God will soon fulfil His promise, and bring us into His rest. But we are also to think of each other, and to

regulate our conduct in the light of the approaching day. Apostasy will receive a fearful judgment, for some, having embraced Christianity, gave it up and returned to Judaism, thereby insulting the Spirit of grace, and treading on the Son of God, and treating Christ's blood a common thing. In the earlier days the Hebrew Christians had suffered much for Christ: but they were in danger of slackening and drawing back. They required endurance, so that they might continue to do God's will. It would be but a very little while to Christ's coming, and faith would keep them going on till the end.

Hebrews 11:1-40. The just live by faith, and it is by faith the soul is saved; so faith has a very important place in the life of the Christian, therefore does the Spirit of God deal with it at some length in this chapter, pressing its importance in an epistle that views the Christian passing through the wilderness. Faith lays hold on God, and manifests itself in obedience to His will: counting upon Him to fulfil His promises, and displaying an energy that overcomes every obstacle. Two of faith's main features are brought before us in the opening verse of this chapter: it gives the present substance of what is actually in prospect, and brings the reality of what is spiritual and heavenly into the soul. Faith brings to us now the light of the world to come, and the understanding of what exists now in relation to God and His Christ in heaven. In the power of this faith, the elders have obtained testimony; for they laid hold by faith on what lay ahead, and on what lay outside the natural vision. It is by faith too that we apprehend how the creation came into being. We refuse all the theories and speculations of men, for they cannot take account of what lies outside the natural senses; we know by faith that all sprung into existence by the word of God; "He spake, and it was done."

Abel's faith discerned the need for a sacrifice of blood, which was more excellent than Cain's, the fruit of a cursed earth; for which he received God's approbation, and in which he speaks even until now. He witnesses to the Gospel of God, in telling us, in his sacrifice, that if we desire to be accepted of Him we must present a spotless victim, whose excellency is pleasurable to God. Enoch, the man who pleased God, was taken up to heaven without seeing death: his faith recording that God is able to set death aside. Here then are two men who pleased God; one by the character of his sacrifice, the other by his walk; both evincing the faith that delights the heart of God. Those who approach God, must approach in faith: believing in a living God, altogether interested in us, and rewarding those who believing in Him, seek Him out. If Enoch's faith tells us that God is able to set death aside, Noe's instructs us in the truth of salvation from judgment. Hearing God's word, and believing it, Noah builds the ark for the salvation of his house: an act which condemned the world in his acceptance of God's verdict that it must be destroyed. This faith made him an heir of righteousness. In Abraham we have the obedience of faith, in relation to the calling and inheritance of God; and the faith that makes the called a stranger and sojourner here, while awaiting the heavenly city that God builds. Sarah's faith laid hold on the divine promise, and it gave her strength to accomplish what was contrary to nature.

Having lived by faith, the heirs of God's promise died in faith but their lives were lived in the power of what had been promised. The promises were not realised in this life, for they really belonged to the world to come, where God has given them a better, heavenly country, and has prepared for them a heavenly city. Our present life is therefore in strangership here, not dwelling on the earth, but sojourning not having our hearts and minds in the world we have left behind, but seeking what is heavenly, knowing that God is not ashamed to be called the God of such a heavenly-minded

people.

Abraham's faith rested in the God of resurrection, so that when tested, he offered up his only begotten son. He knew that God's promises were connected with Isaac, and therefore that God would raise him if he were put to death; and indeed, he received him back as from the dead. Isaac's faith comes out in his taking account of the future, when blessing his sons, for faith is the substantiating of things hoped for. Jacob's faith shines brightly when he is about to depart this life, blessing Joseph's sons in the light of God's purpose, worshipping in dependence, and manifesting until the end his pilgrim character. Like his father's, Joseph's faith comes out brightly in his death: in giving commandment concerning his bones, he manifested his faith in God's word about the exodus of Israel from Egypt, about the promises of God in regard to the land, and in the God of resurrection. The faith of Moses' parents discerned that their child was fair to God; they therefore hid him, not being afraid of the command of Pharaoh. Moses' faith was manifested when he had reached the height of fame in Egypt. It was then he refused the attractions of the world, and chose to share the afflictions of God's suffering people rather than have sin's temporary pleasure. With his eye on the distant future, the outside place that Christ had was of much greater value to him than Egypt's treasures. But with Moses, faith was not only the substantiating of things hoped for, it was also the conviction of things invisible, therefore he left Egypt and all connected with it, because his eye was on the unseen, living God. The faith evinced in the keeping of the Passover that Israel's firstborn might be preserved, God here attributes to Moses.

Israel's faith comes out in their crossing the Red Sea; the Egyptians, taking this path without faith, find it the way of death. At Jericho, its great and high walls are no barrier to faith: nor is nationality a consideration to Rahab, with whom God and His interests were supreme. Names of renown in the Old Testament shine with the lustre of faith in this divine record; and many, whose names are not recorded have displayed faith in its manifold features and energies. These are not yet made perfect, but shall be, when God, who has given us a very special portion in association with Christ, calls us to our heavenly part.

Hebrews 12:1-29. The great cloud of Old Testament witnesses have exhibited to us the working of faith in the soul; therefore are we exhorted to lay aside everything that would hinder us in the race towards the glory. Weights are doubtless the unnecessary burdens we shoulder connected with things down here; the sin that so easily entangles is unbelief. Endurance is called for, as the race lasts all the time we are here; but the eye is to rest on Jesus, Who has been in the course before us, the Leader, and Who has completed the course. To reach the heavenly goal, the cross lay in the path of the Lord Jesus; but with His eye on what lay ahead, His place at God's right hand. He endured all the judgment of the cross, and despised its shame. Now He has entered into that which was before Him; His is the fulness of joy, and the pleasures for evermore, at God's right hand. And this is our portion after the race is over; the fulness of joy, and the eternal pleasures.

Lest we should become weary of the way, we are to consider well the path of the blessed Lord. He is a wonderful object for us, and a perfect pattern. There are trials in the way, but let us think of what the Son of God had to endure from sinners in His path through this world. Whatever we may have gone through, we have not yet withstood in the conflict of good against evil unto the death. This the Lord Jesus did! It is one aspect of His death. Hebrews 9:1-28; Hebrews 10:1-39 give His vicarious death; here it is His death as a Martyr.

Much of what we have to pass through here is from the hand of the Father in discipline. This purifying work of God we should not despise, nor faint under; for it is the proof of the Father's love. Chastening helps us to endure, and is also the proof of the relationship in which we stand to God as His sons; the absence of it should make us feel that God is not interested in us. Earthly fathers chasten and receive reverence, should we not submit to the wise chastening of God Who desires through it to make us truly enjoy life? His chastening is for real and lasting profit, to make us partake of His holiness; and if there is grief, for chastening is not joyful, it is to bring exercise, which yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. There are therefore four attitudes to chastening here: we may despise it by treating it of no account; we may faint under it as feeling it is too much for us to bear; we may be rebellious and refuse to submit to it; we may be exercised about it and get great gain for our souls.

It is a time for the strengthening of the hands for God's service, and for walking in the right paths of the Lord; for our attitude and actions may have a detrimental or beneficial effect on others. Peace should mark all our steps, but holiness must be with it; and we are to be watchful lest any form of evil affects us. Grace, not law, is ours; the root of bitterness springs from the flesh profanity despises the inheritance. Finding no place for repentance (such a thing did not appeal to him) Esau, having despised the birthright, did not get the blessing. This was God's government.

Christianity is in marked contrast with Judaism. The latter is a tangible system, where all relates to man in the flesh; where there is ever the threat of divine judgment where the truth is not clear, and God remains unrevealed where there is neither rest nor peace for the heart; where man is constantly under judicial command and legal demand; and where man is utterly unable to answer to all required of him. Nor is there relief for the groaning creation under the law; indeed, the beast that came in contact with it shared the judgment of those under it. Even Moses, the man who knew God as no other in that day, confessed his trepidation in the presence of God as the giver of the law. The divine system to which we have come in the faith of our souls is marked by grace. Mount Zion speaks of royal grace, in which we have our part now, and in which Israel shall rejoice under the new covenant. We have also come to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, anticipating that great day when the church, the living centre from which God will administer the world to come, reflects the living and divine rays of His heavenly beneficence to the confines of the vast universe. The earthly Jerusalem has been the witness of God's righteous judgments; the heavenly will witness His righteous grace in the display of His glory. Already we can behold the universal gathering of the myriads of angels. These great beings, who have carried out so many missions for God, and are even now SENT FORTH to minister to the heirs of salvation: that mission accomplished, they shall join the great throng in heaven, surrounding the Lamb. We also learn now the privileged place of the church as the "assembly of the firstborn enregistered in heaven." There will be many families in the heavens and on the earth, all named of the Father, but the church has a peculiar place among these families; it has the firstborn's place, the place of peculiar privilege and distinction. As enregistered in heaven we are the freemen of that glorious place; having liberty for praising and worshipping in the nearest possible place to God, ever delighting in Him. So that, if the church as the Heavenly Jerusalem speaks of our place outside in the glory, the church of the firstborn tells of our part within the Father's House. In that world God is the moral governor of the universe, maintaining His rights in the wide creation, ordering the vast scene for His own pleasure. What a contrast to the present time, when God is not acting publicly,

but in mystery. There, the Old Testament saints will have their glorified bodies: the spirits of the just men are thus made perfect. Jesus, who has been the means, through His death, of bringing this wonderful system into existence, retains His precious and sweet Name that we have learned down here. It is the name of Jesus that will fill with fragrance that world to come; it is the blood of Jesus upon which it is founded. Abel's blood cried for vengeance; the blood of Jesus speaks of richest, eternal blessing. This then is the glorious system of divine grace; and it is a very solemn thing to refuse the voice of grace in which God now speaks. Those who carelessly disregarded the words of Sinai came in for judgment; what then shall befall those who refuse the tender accents of grace, spoken by God from heaven. At Sinai, the voice of God shook the earth: but soon God is going to shake the whole universe. All connected with man in the flesh is drawing to a close, its days are numbered; and only what belongs to God in the working of His grace is to remain. In grace we have our part in the Father's heavenly kingdom; so that it becomes us, with thankful hearts, to serve God now with becoming respect and reverential fear; ever remembering that our God is a consuming fire, utterly removing in judgment everything inconsistent with His holy nature.

Hebrews 13:1-25. Brotherly love and hospitality are to mark us, like the saints of old; and we are to have in sympathetic remembrance those suffering for Christ's sake. We are to be marked by purity and the absence of covetousness, relying on God, who will not leave or forsake us, but will ever be our helper.

Those who had formerly led them in right paths, but who were now with Christ, the saints were to remember. They were true leaders, for they brought God's word before them, not the reasonings and thoughts of men. Their conduct was in consonance with their word, therefore were the saints told to consider the issue of their manner of life. Such conduct was produced by a faith that might well be imitated. So that a true leader is marked by a ministry of God's word a walk consistent with the truth, and by living faith in God. But the leaders spoken of had gone, yet Christ remained, the unfailing resource of His saints at all times. Jesus Christ remains ever with us when the godly leaders go: and He is THE SAME yesterday, and today, and for ever. When the true leaders are gone, the enemy endeavours to bring in the various and strange doctrines contrary to the word of God which had been ministered. Therefore are the saints warned against them. Here, Judaizing doctrines were evidently before the apostle's mind; doctrines inconsistent with the truth of grace. The doctrines of the law could bring no profit to a Christian, for they had brought none to the Jew. Moreover Christians have an altar of which they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle. The sin offering therefore witnessed a communion in which the Jews, even in their highest class, the priests had no part. But it is in relation to the death of Christ that our communion consists: it is the fellowship of His body and His blood. The blood of the sin offering, on the day of atonement, went into the Holiest, where our communion with God is: we have boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus. The body of this sin offering was burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus, the true sin offering, to set us apart by His blood, suffered, without the gate. Our place is therefore outside with Jesus: outside the system that put Him to death. It is to Him that we go, to bear His reproach. And if we are to be apart from the camp of Judaism, the system of religion for man in the flesh: is it not our privilege and responsibility to be apart from every religion that belongs to man in the flesh, apart from all the sects and systems of Christendom which imitate the Jewish camp? Our city, where our fellowship, our treasures, and our joys are found, is not here, but in the world to come.

While awaiting that abiding city, we are to be marked by the continual sacrificing of praise to God, confessing the Name of Jesus. There are also material sacrifices as well as spiritual; we are to do good and use our substance for meeting the needs of others. Those who lead are to be obeyed, for they are genuinely interested in the well-being of the saints, as having to answer to God for their service. As seeking to walk under God's eye, the writer, evidently Paul, can ask for their prayers: and especially that he might be restored soon to them.

Closing the epistle, the writer invokes the blessing of the God of peace, the God of resurrection, who brought the Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, out from among the dead, in the power of the blood of the ever-lasting covenant. The efficacy of the Lord's work abides eternally: and He gathers in power the sheep of His pasture, as coming out of the domain of death. In the midst of all their distresses the saints can look to the God of peace, the One Who cannot be disturbed by all the evil of the world. He is able to perfect us in the doing of His will through His own working within our hearts. This work within, so pleasing to God, is through Jesus Christ, the true Mediator, to whom glory is ascribed for the ages of ages. Timothy had evidently been imprisoned for Jesus' sake, but was now at liberty: and the writer hoped to see the saints along with Timothy. (This coupling of himself with Timothy is a very strong indication that Paul is the writer). This is the third time that the leaders are mentioned in the chapter; they are to be saluted, and all the saints. Happy are the saints when they have leaders of the character spoken of here; even as in the opening words of the song of Deborah, "For that leaders led in Israel, For that the people willingly offered themselves" (N.T.)

Finally, there is the salutation from those of Italy; saints greeting saints; and the invocation of grace to which God has called us.

Wm. C. Reid. For His, the risen Shepherd's sake, We every blessing pray: With glory let His Name be crowned Through heaven's eternal day!

Vol 01-10 - A Few Observations on the First Epistle to Timothy.

A Few Observations on the First Epistle to Timothy. The subject of this epistle is the house of God — the Saviour God: conduct that is suited thereto in relation to the mystery of piety conserved therein (1 Timothy 3:16). The maintenance of Ephesian doctrine is enjoined, yet is not the subject of the epistle. Fables, other doctrines, and genealogies are warned against as inimical to "God's dispensation which is in faith." God is our Saviour in the epistle, the Lord Jesus Christ our hope, Who will bring to pass at His appearing all that piety looks for and maintains meantime in faith. The law, while fully owned in its authority and proper application (it is not for a righteous man) is risen above as the standard of morality by "The Gospel of the glory of the blessed God;" God rising up in the blessedness of His own nature, and Being, in His Son above all the wickedness of man, and bringing in thereby salvation for all; a remarkable expression. What is therefore looked for is, "love out of a pure heart and a good conscience and unfeigned faith," which the sticklers for law "missed." Certainly the law saved no one. What, then, had saved Paul, erstwhile a blasphemer and persecutor and insolent overbearing man? "The grace of our Lord" overabounding towards him "with faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus:" — a totally new moral being the law could never (nor was it proposed that it should) supply. Truly, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," the only hope for any and every other poor sinner. Glorious word! "Life eternal" is the issue for those who believe in Him.

"Now to the King of the ages, the incorruptible, invisible, only God, honour and glory to the ages of ages. Amen."

Timothy is to enjoin these things, warring the good warfare, maintaining faith and a good conscience. This according to the faith; and then that which is inseparable and necessarily connected with it, as having to do with GOD, — "a good conscience." Some had cast this latter away, and made shipwreck of faith and become blasphemers: that is, the very opposite of the piety enjoined here throughout.

Thus we have, so to speak, the material of the house of God: the product of the Gospel of the glory of the blessed God, sinners saved by the grace of the Lord, by the Christ Jesus Who came into the world to save such. Now we have the first functioning of the house of God; "Supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings . . . for all men" (1 Timothy 2:1); "confiding intercourse with God on the part of one able to approach Him" (see note in N. Tr.). This is the Christian's position, through grace. This intercourse, then, with God, is on behalf of "all men; for kings and all that are in dignity, that we (Christians) may lead a quiet and tranquil life in all piety and gravity." Note the word, "Kings and all that are in dignity;" not here "The King," for the house of God is universal in its bearing; nor is it "authority" as elsewhere, but "dignity." But this being secured, "all men" are prayed for. What for? That they might "be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth." Let us remember this: saved right out of the overwhelming judgments which await this guilty world, saved for Christ's glorious appearing and eternal glory. But let us pause a moment and consider the position in which this places the assembly as the house of God.

We may be assured that, while holding His hands over all things, even the poor brute creation, God's interest today on the earth is His assembly. Do we enter in upon His thoughts and, as we should also, for all men for salvation? Men out of Christ are viewed in Scripture as "senseless" (1 Peter 2:15); the great monarchies, established on earth, after God had taken His throne from the earth in His just rejection of Israel, are, in Daniel, likened to four ravenous beasts. It is indeed true that He gave this universal dominion to Nebuchadnezzar, the rest receiving it through Babylon the first, but He became known under the title of "The God of the heavens" (Daniel 2:37). Israel once had the "Ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth," and God will establish His title thus in the latter day. God's house will be a "House of prayer for all nations" (Matthew 21:13; Isaiah 56:7); but where is God's house today, His house of prayer? Where shall intelligent utterance be made before Him in His house for kings, etc., for all men? In the assembly, formed by the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost! Has God abandoned His thought in this? Impossible! The assembly, a thing wholly apart from this world, in the very constitution of it, as we have seen in the first chapter of this epistle; meddling with nothing in it, its politics, its social institutions or national interests; but set in confiding intimacy with God. Prayer is made there and God orders the affairs of the world in favour of His people, even Christians, that they may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For 'men' the prayer is made there, and God answers in saving men right clean out of this world and all its interests; likewise, for heaven and His eternal purpose. It has truly been said that the church is the seat of the power of God in the world. Are we up to our place and privilege is the question? Have we given it up by our earthly-mindedness and worldliness? All is ruin indeed, but this in no wise hinders "Men praying in every place, lifting up pious hands, without wrath or reasoning," as we shall see. But let us revert to our immediate Scripture.

"For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, Who gave Himself a ransom for all, the testimony to be rendered in its own times (1 Timothy 2:5-6). Now Israel had the truth of the one, true, invisible. Jehovah. Maker of heaven and earth: not revealed indeed, but truly such. Further, the mediator, Moses, was between that same Jehovah and His people, and there was no ministry. But now, God is revealed, the Mediator established between Him and men (not just Israel), and there is a ministry towards all men, spoken of here only as far as Paul being "appointed a herald and apostle, a teacher of the nations in faith and truth" (1 Timothy 2:7). The gifts for ministry are not otherwise spoken of in this Epistle. To conceive of God's house today therefore, after the pattern of what was established in Israel, is to miss the mark altogether, and to lapse to the narrow ground of an unrevealed God: no Mediator, and an unevangelical ministry: unevangelical and inoperative, as the blessed Lord plainly shows in the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:1-42 Levitical ministry does not concern "all men," which can be the only true scope of God revealed. "In Him (the Word) was life, and the life was the light of men" (John 1:4). "The true light was that which, coming into the world lightens (or is light to) every man" (John 1:9). Christ, in the rejection of Him by Israel, becomes the light of the nations, God's salvation to the ends of the earth (Isaiah 49:1-26). Nothing can be of more importance than this, whether as to the functioning of the house of God in prayer, etc., as we have seen, or in direct ministry, however much but "a little strength" (Revelation 3:8) may cause us to act circumspectly as to this. The responsibility however remains, and he who restricts it flies in the face of Scripture, and damages his own soul; not to speak of the account to be given at the judgment seat of the Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10).

How, now then, does the house of God function? Let 1 Timothy 2:8 answer: "I will therefore that the men pray in every place, lifting up pious hands, without wrath or reasoning." It is no question of our being convened therefore; still less is it a matter of a building, but "men everywhere." We can function in the street (in lifting up the heart anyway) or elsewhere. But may we not remember the precious Saviour here, "Who in the days of His flesh, having offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared" (or "for His piety") (Hebrews 5:7). And this really introduces the "mystery of piety", in Him of whom it speaks. Piety — pious hands (compare Psalms 134:2) lifted up, are here called for; piety in the woman, in dress, etc., in the end of this chapter. Suited qualifications and piety in both the "bishop" or "overseer" and "deacon" and their wives, in the third chapter, because the house of God, in which they exercise their local office, is "The assembly of the living God, the pillar and base of the truth," of the mystery of piety. If the house of God supports and displays this mystery, of necessity every one composing it, or in office in it, must bear that self-same character. And what is this mystery of piety? "God has been manifested in flesh, has been justified in the Spirit has appeared to angels, has been preached among the nations, has been believed on in the world, has been received up in glory" (1 Timothy 3:16).

What words are these! Of old, the seraphim (holy burners) covered their faces and feet in the presence of Him whom we now know in this mystery as the lowly Jesus. With what reverence do we need to regard Him. The burning bush of Exodus 3:1-22, the flaming fire and Shekinah glory; and Oh, how much more lie so far hidden, save as the "Godhead glory shone through the human veil" of necessity, which enables us to gaze in adoration unrestrained and unrebuked, as the very life and joy, eternal joy of our souls. God is there, the "I AM," the eternal Son of the Father. But this passage is not a setting forth of His Person, but one cannot but speak thus as in the presence of Him who has thus met us in our sins, and from Simon's house (Luke 7:1-50) to the Father's house on high, fills every nook and cranny with an inestimable glory; yet suited always and everywhere to the deepest need of the sinner, of the saint, and utterly beyond his highest aspirations. Jesus, the Lamb of God, our own precious Saviour: glory be to God eternally in the church in Him! "Confessedly great" is this mystery: "Justified in the Spirit." Who has been so justified? Who is here presented? "God and Man, One Christ," as has been truly said. Nothing else suits the sense here, or fits with the statements which follow. Everything then this blessed Person said and did — words and works — received the sanction of the Spirit. He is declared Son now, in power and resurrection, but it is "according to the Spirit of holiness" (Romans 1:4): object of the highest created intelligences in the heavens; preached among the nations; believed on in the world (our precious and only link here, however the Spirit may seal it); received up in glory. God indeed has come down; and Man has gone up in Him, eternally ONE. "Confessedly great" is this mystery. But it is the "Mystery of piety:" hence all that precedes and follows. We have now briefly to deal with the apostasy from this, and with the provision for these "latter times." The opposition is a false piety. Things good, and to be received and enjoyed by the faithful, are declared by the seducing spirit necessary to be abstained from. We receive them by the word of God, not in mere nature, where all is indeed fallen through Adam. Received thus, and in free and happy intercourse with God, they are for our enjoyment: this is of all importance. (But see too, in the previous chapter, how the order of creation is maintained, in the creation of the man and the woman; and then provision made for the fallen condition of things then obtaining: yet again God's sure promise to those who "continue in faith and love and holiness with discretion" 1 Timothy 4:12-15). Laying

these things before the brethren, Timothy would be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished with the words of faith and good teaching, which he had fully followed up. The rest of the directions to Timothy are of like character. Further, his directions as to behaviour with his brethren; then as to widows, who were to be ministered to; all referring back to this same mystery of piety; then as to bondmen, etc.: all sound words, words of our Lord Jesus Christ. But it had not been our intention to enter upon the details of the epistle. Let it suffice therefore if we pass on to the end of 1 Timothy 6:1-21, Timothy is to lay hold of eternal life; the rich on what is really life, because riches seem to give what only can be found in eternal life; "A feast is made for laughter, and wine maketh merry: but money answereth all things" (Ecclesiastes 10:19). In this passing scene eternal life needs to be "laid hold of." All else soon will pass. But God is about, to introduce the appearing of our Lord Jesus, which will give effect to all that faith and piety have looked for, and bring in through all, things that have been preserved in the meantime. "God Who holdeth all things in life." It is not merely as Israel, who say, "He holdeth our soul in life, and suffereth not our feet to be moved" (Psalms 66:9). This will doubtless bring them through to the fulness of their blessing. Here it is "all things." It would surely embrace the creature, of which it is said, "For thy pleasure they are and were created;" but it could not be restricted to this. The appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ will bring to full fruition and display the whole harvest of glory, which the God of glory has destined in the ages. We are those upon whom the end of the ages have fallen." Now the "good confession" is just the acknowledgment of this supreme authority, which even enabled Pilate to judge the Saviour, "The Lord of glory" indeed (1 Corinthians 2:1-16). This, He confessed. Well, God will show His appearing. And who now is He, here spoken of, who will do so? "The blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen." Elsewhere, the Saviour is described as King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 19:16), but here it is One dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen, nor is able to see, who is spoken of as showing the Saviour's appearing. What, indeed, will that appearing be? Let us pause here for a moment. Here is One spoken of as dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen, nor is able to see. How this impresses the gravity also of the revelation vouchsafed to us in Christ. God is alone revealed to us in Trinity, as we speak: The Father, The Son, and The Holy Spirit. Three Persons, but One God. That revelation has been made to us in the Person of the Son, co-equal, co-eternal, with the Father and the Spirit. If we have the Son, we have all: all the fulness (of the Godhead) dwelt, and dwells in Him (Colossians 1:19; Colossians 2:9). "No one has seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father. He has declared Him" (John 1:18). This revelation in the Son is our present and eternal joy: outside it there is no revelation of God; and, as we have seen, God, otherwise unknown, dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man hath seen, nor is able to see. The thought or desire to so know Him would be but a fallen nature seeking to exalt itself out of creature place, as Adam under the tempting of the serpent. The renewed nature we have, taught of God, shrinks from the bare idea, and clings to the faithful word and the mighty grace which have been vouchsafed to us. In the SON we have all, and infinitely more, than the creature can conceive, now, and for ever. The Father's glory will soon all shine forth in Him: glory be to God.

How blessedly does this epistle, in its doctrine, stand suspended (so to speak) between these two mighty statements of ascriptions of praise in 1 Timothy 1:17, and here 1 Timothy 6:15-16. The epistle concludes with, "O Timotheus, keep the entrusted deposit, avoiding profane, vain

babblings, and oppositions of false-named knowledge, of which some having made profession, have missed the faith. Grace be with thee." C. N. Snow.

Vol 01-10 - A Few Thoughts on Joh_8:1-59.

A Few Thoughts on John 8:1-59. Our hearts are touched as we read the last verse of John 7:1-53 and the first verse of John 8:1-59. Nicodemus, who came to Jesus by night, had said "Does our law judge a man before it have first heard from himself, and know what he does?" and this had broken up the meeting of the council; "And every one went to His home, but Jesus went to the mount of Olives." The Son of the Father is in the world as a lonely stranger, rejected by His own from the outset, and misunderstood by His disciples. The failure of the disciples to understand Him is seen in His dealings with one of Samaria's erring daughters. There, in John 4:1-54, He brought the light to bear upon her conscience and revealed Himself to her, so that she might judge her ruin and her shame and receive into her soul the living water, and become a worshipper of the Father in spirit and in truth. "The disciples asked Him saying, Rabbi, eat. But He said to them, I have food to eat which ye do not know. The disciples therefore said to one another. Has anyone brought Him anything to eat." They did not understand that His food was to do the Father's will and to finish His work: they could not enter into this that His Father's glory was ever before Him. His retirement to the mount of Olives bespeaks the loneliness of the Son of God, but also His unbroken communion with the Father. It was thus that He enjoyed the special refreshment, renewed strength and the Father's support, by which on the morrow He would render His final testimony to His own people, the Jews. Entering into the temple, early in the morning, all the people come to Him, and He sat down and taught them. The poor were ever ready to listen to His rich divine unfoldings, which were the joy of His own heart, but the scribes and the Pharisees were ever plotting against Him, trying to catch Him in His words, and finding fault with His works of grace and power. They bring to Him a woman, taken in adultery, saying, "Teacher . . . in the law Moses has commanded us to stone such; thou therefore, what sayest thou?" But Jesus, having stooped down, wrote with His finger on the ground. He was writing in His path through this world the story of the love of God, and this is indicated in His action here; writing with the finger of humanity, for the Word had become flesh, not the commandments of the law which God had written on the tables of stone, but the Father's commandment, which for His own was life eternal (John 12:49-50).

Lifting Himself up the Lord says to them "Let him that is without sin among you first cast the stone at her." Their persistent asking but brings from the Son of God the out-shining of the light; a light that manifested divine grace to the poor sinner and brought conviction to the accusers. It was true that Moses had spoken of judgment for sin, but this could not hinder the outshining of the Father's grace. But even in the giving of the law had not Israel sinned before the tables were brought into their midst? Did God intervene in unsparing judgment? True there was judgment, but judgment mingled with mercy, else not one of those in the camp of Israel would have been left alive. And was not the adulteress but a picture of Israel? The Lord had to say they were "A wicked and adulterous generation" (Matthew 12:39); and it was to them He had brought the grace of God. He had not come to judge them, but to save; and His attitude to the woman was just the attitude of God to the adulterous nation. But there was not one among them without sin, so there was no one to carry out the judgment of the law against the sinner. He was without sin, but He had not come to

execute the judgment of the law. Not one could stand the light that shone in the Person of the Son: they had come to plead against the sinner, but like their fathers in the wilderness they are exposed as sinners, and being convicted flee from the presence of the light.

After answering, the Lord again stooped and wrote on the ground; no doubt recalling the second writing of the law, which was given with the declaration of God's mercy and longsuffering (Exodus 34:1-7). Without this mercy all Israel must have perished: so here the poor sinner is spared, and retained in the presence of the Lord Jesus to learn of the ministry of grace of Him who had not come to condemn but to forgive.

"Again therefore Jesus spoke to them saying, I am the light of the world; he that follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12). He will not confine Himself within the narrow limits of Judaism, but presents Himself as the light of the world, so that in Him life is made available for every man. He is the source of life for "In Him was life," and He is also the giver; and He is the object of all who avail themselves of the light, so that they should not walk in darkness. Poor, puny man, with his boasted intelligence, charges the Son of God with bearing record of Himself; and this but brings out further light on the greatness of His Person. It is true that He had not come to bear witness to Himself; His mission was to speak of the Father who had sent Him; but even if He bore witness to Himself it was a true witness, for He knew what they did not know, from whence He came and whither He was going. He could speak with divine certainty, knowing that He came from the Father and was returning to the Father. How simple the words, but how rich the unfoldings; He had come to tell them of the Father, of His grace and love, and of the divine affection that was the deep joy of His own heart and into which He would lead His own. (May our hearts take in more of these wonderful unfoldings which the Son delighted to make known!) Not only was His witness true, but His judgment was true, a judgment in which He was not alone, for the Father was with Him in it. How different their judgments in the flesh! He has the constant companionship of the Father, He is not alone (John 8:29; John 16:32); He has the continual joy and support of the Father's company. What a meditation for our hearts; to contemplate the joy of divine Persons who are the source and manifestation of the eternal life that is ours to enjoy. The Father being with Him, and He being the manifestation of the Father, is the proof that His word is true. In John 8:21 Jesus says "I go my way, and whither I go, ye cannot come." He was about to enter into death to secure all that lay in the Father's will for His own glory and for the blessing of His own; and having accomplished that will in death He would enter into the Father's presence to be glorified, the answer to His perfect obedience in life and death. As for the Jews, having rejected the Son, they would look in vain for their Messiah, and would die in their sins; this being the destiny of all who refuse the presentation of the Person of the Son of God. But Jesus not only tells of their destiny, He points out to them the sphere to which they belong, saying, "Ye are from beneath." All the depth of moral darkness was theirs, and this shut them out from the wonderful revelation that shone out in Him Who is from above, from the dwelling place of all light, glory and blessedness. He had come to attract men to Himself that they might taste all the joys of that heavenly scene, and be in the joy of His company for ever. The Jews belonged to this world to which Jesus did not belong; He had no part in the religious system in which the will of man was predominant, and where there was the display of all man's wickedness, enmity and hatred, in his dread opposition to Him Who had come from the Father's world to tell out the Father's grace.

There can be no doubt that this chapter gives us the rejection of the testimony of the Son of God. They ask Him in John 8:25 "Who art Thou?" and He answers "Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning." From the outset of His testimony He had spoken to them of His Father. He was the eternal Word, the full expression of all the mind of God; He was the only-begotten Son Who ever dwells in the bosom of the Father; and the Father dwelt in Him, manifesting in Him His works and His words. What an object of adoration and worship; and how highly privileged we are to thus contemplate the greatness and glory of the Son, and to know that we have been enriched from the Father's resources, manifested in Him. He had many things to say and judge of those who refused His testimony, yea the Father's testimony in Him: but He was there to vindicate the Father as true, even if they refused what He spoke to them of the Father. But they did not understand that He was speaking of the Father: such was their state of darkness.

Anticipating His rejection, the Lord speaks of His death, saying, "When ye have lifted up the Son of Man. then shall ye know that I am He, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things," John 8:28. The Father was His constant companion, for He always sought to please Him. In past dispensations, men of God sought to please God, but every one was marked by failure; but this blessed Person was perfection in all His ways, His service being marked by constant activity and energy, and with a divine fragrance that the Father only could appreciate. As Jesus spake these words, many believed on Him; but all must be divinely tested, so He says "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:30-32). In natural pride they boast that Abraham was their father, and that they were never in bondage to any, manifesting that they never had realised their bondage to sin. Only the Son could give them freedom from such a bondage, and bring them into true, divine liberty. They were naturally Abraham's seed, but in spiritual things nature has no place; indeed they are found here seeking to kill the Son of God. When natural pride finds no place for itself in what is divine it manifests its hatred in bitter opposition. Therefore Jesus refuses their claim as children of Abraham, they were not spiritually of his generation, for they did not do his works; nor were they the children of God, as they claimed, else would they have loved the Son of God, present among them. They stand before Him., convicted; having refused all that He set forth in testimony from the Father; they are manifested as having the devil for their father. In the midst of this company Jesus stands alone in His perfections, the pure, spotless, undefiled, Son of the Father's love, none able to convince Him of sin. How very solemn the dishonour poured out upon the holy Son of God; how wonderful the grace that meets all in meekness and with truth, truth that sets Him forth in all the greatness of His Person, as only seeking the Father's glory, yet able to keep His own from seeing and tasting death; the great I AM, Who existed before Abraham. Not content with rejecting His testimony, denying His personal relationship with the Father, and saying that He was a Samaritan and had a devil, they take up stones to cast at Him. Such is man: thoroughly exposed in the light of Christ's Person and testimony; the brighter the light, the richer the grace, the more the awful depths of man's moral depravity, spiritual wickedness, and hatred to all that is divine, are manifested.

R. Duncanson. No robed Pharisee could stand Before the Saviour's face:

Upon the soil His holy hand Was writing words of grace.

Vol 01-10 - A Meditation on the Ephesian Prayers.

A Meditation on the Ephesian Prayers.

Ephesians 1:3-23, Ephesians 3:14-21.

No. 1.

While it is my primary intention as enabled by the grace of God, to engage your heart more particularly with the two prayers of the beloved apostle Paul in this epistle, I should like to make a brief survey of this land, where there is much gold. In a spiritual sense it is a goodly land, a land of water brooks, of fountains and depths that spring out of the valleys and hills; a land of barley and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of olive oil and honey. I well remember when reading the 33rd chapter of Isaiah, some years ago, being greatly impressed with the poetic beauty of the 17th verse, "Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off." The first part of the Scripture presented no difficulty, the matchless beauty of God's king, in the glory of His Person, entrancing the soul, saturating it with the dew of heaven, yea watered as with the sweet distilling of the Spirit, as Scripture after Scripture concerning God's king passed in review: "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion" (Psalms 2:1-12): and "A king shall reign in righteousness," as declared by Isaiah, the prophet of God's salvation. And I smelled the sweet fragrance of the garments of the king spoken of in the 45th Psalm,

All thy garments smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces; "the garments of Him, who is "King of kings and Lord of lords." The latter clause of the 17th verse of Isaiah 33:1-24 however, was somewhat difficult to understand, until my attention was drawn to the marginal rendering, "the land of far distances." Moses on Pisgah's lofty height beheld Immanuel's land, the earthly inheritance assigned to the children of Israel, in the dispensational ways of God with men. In Ephesians, we stand upon superlatively greater elevations, and view the glorious landscapes of the new creation, where "all things are of God." This epistle has been aptly described as "The epistle of the heavenlies;" and we stand upon these heavenly altitudes breathing the pure and stainless atmosphere of heaven itself, and see the glorious vistas of this "land of far distances," stretching out far and away beyond our ken, to the limitless bounds of the universe of God. As contemplating this scene, the heart finds relief as the lips utter that beautiful doxology of the apostle, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!

It is unquestionably true that the apostle Paul was specially gifted of God, to communicate to men His eternal counsels and His ways in Christ, and also the glory of Christ, in which our eternal blessing and security are so vitally bound up. A careful and prayerful study of these two sublime prayers, so exquisitely phrased, would amply repay the diligent, exercised student of the word of God. In the narrow compass of a few brief verses we have a masterly setting forth of the great truths which are developed throughout the epistle. Please note the attitude of the speaker, remarkably significant, he makes mention of the saints in his prayers, desiring that the God of our

Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory might give them the spirit of wisdom, etc. Paul desired that the truths he was communicating should lay hold of the heart and conscience of those to whom he was writing. Can we not emulate the apostle in this act of intercession? In spite of the tremendous volume of energy and zeal expended by us in the Gospel, how many are sincerely affected by our preaching? And in spite of all the faithful ministry to the saints of God, both written and oral, why is it that our practical, everyday lives are so low in moral tone, sometimes not exceeding the common standards of the world? Is it not because we have not spent sufficient time before God regarding the matter, desiring that His Word may be productive of good in the lives of saint and sinner? In this remarkable prayer, three great subjects are mentioned; "The hope of His calling;" "The riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints;" "The exceeding greatness of His power towards us," that has wrought to put us into the calling and make us His heirs. Please observe that it is "HIS calling," "HIS inheritance," and "HIS power." Everything in this epistle is operative from God; man after the flesh is regarded as dead in trespasses and in sins, without one moral movement Godward, the object of divine mercy and compassion, the subject of divine workmanship, "For we are His workmanship." We are looked upon, in this epistle, as no longer in Adam, but in Christ, for "If any man be in Christ, there is new creation."

Verses 4-6 bring out the calling of God, taking us back into an eternity that is past, long before the dawn of this world's tragic history. But as yet it is no question of the activity of the divine counsel; it is simply the blessed fact that God chose us in Christ. The time was to come for the effectuation of all the counsels of God, when divine strength would clothe itself in human weakness for the accomplishment of these counsels, which were all divine. As yet, in these verses, it is but the revelation of the benevolent intentions of God, to have us holy and without blame before Him in love. Beloved saint, has your heart laid hold of this amazing conception, that God is to have us before Him as the objects of His love continually, partaking of the blessed features of our glorious Lord, "holy and without blame," so that the holy eye of God can rest upon us with the same delight as it rests on that blessed One, of whom God said, "In Whom I have found my delight." And what position are we to occupy before God? the position of sons, for He has predestinated us to this, not merely to make us happy, or to give us relief from the tremendous load of our sin and guilt, but to gratify His own blessed heart. The prophet Zephaniah says, "He shall rest in His love, and joy over us with singing." God has laid the basis of His eternal joy in the salvation of guilty sinners like ourselves. To have been brought into the position of angels would have been a great mercy, but angelic relationship would never have satisfied the counsels of eternal love. His desire was to have us before Him, as partakers of the divine nature, capable of enjoying His counsels and Himself; so that we are brought into favour in the Beloved. You have no doubt noted the change of expression here; it is not "in Christ," but "in the Beloved;" as though God would emphasise and intensify the thought of the wondrous place of near and intimate affection into which His grace has brought us.

Now we come to the second object of His desire for us, that we might know "the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." In His calling we look above: the inheritance, as it were, stretches out beneath our feet. This is found in verses 10 and 11, and brings us to the magnificent result of all God's ways in government in the dispensations of time. It is not merely the kingdom, though it includes the kingdom; but the thought is much fuller; it is everything in heaven and on earth headed up in Christ. We are not the inheritance, we are the heirs, "Heirs of God, joint-heirs with

Christ." Just as God took possession of Canaan as His inheritance, by putting Israel into possession, so when Christ takes possession of all things as Head of the universe, He does so by putting the heavenly saints in possession, and it, becomes the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.

Finally, we come to the power, demonstrated in Christ's resurrection, that was to put us into the calling and bring us as heirs into the inheritance. That mighty irresistible power that was operative in giving Christ that glorious triumph, in raising Him from the dead and setting Him down at His own right hand, far above every principality and authority, and power and dominion, and every name named, etc.; a power greater far than that displayed in calling mighty worlds into being, is operative towards us who believe, in bringing us into the unclouded, unspeakable joy and blessedness of those heavenly and eternal things. A wealthy place beloved!

No. 2. The first prayer upon which we have meditated is a prayer of glory, contemplating our standing and God's power for us; the second is a prayer of love, contemplating our state and God's power in us.

It might be profitable for a little to explore the avenues of divine truth, which have been opened up for the unrestricted exploration, and prayerful investigation, of the one whose heart is diligently set upon acquiring a deeper knowledge of God the Father and His ways of grace and glory. In Ephesians 1:1-23 we have a wonderful setting forth of the eternal counsels of God, God working all after the counsel of His own will; everything operative from God. It is God's calling, God's inheritance, God's power, the surpassing greatness of which is displayed in raising His blessed Son from the dead, and setting Him at His own right hand, far above every principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. This same chapter shows us God doing all the wonderful things spoken of according to the good pleasure of His will, according to the riches of His grace, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will. These are the activities of One, who, after man's disastrous fall, fell back upon the resources of His grace and power, and who wrought for the express purpose of giving effect to all these eternal counsels of glory and blessing. In Ephesians 2:1-22 we have the merciful intervention of God on behalf of those who were dead in trespasses and in sins, those who were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, those who were sinners of the Gentiles, outside the pale of national blessing, apart from Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. But these were the subjects of divine mercy, and as the workmanship of God grow unto an holy temple in the Lord, and are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit. Beloved saint of God, has this amazing conception thrilled your soul? Has the immensity, of this thought left its deep impression upon you that every redeemed sinner is a member of the body of Christ, and is a living stone, forming part of that divine structure which is the dwelling place of God upon earth?

Ephesians 3:1-21 gives us Paul's administration of the mystery, so preciously disclosed in the previous chapters. Paul was a prisoner for the Gentiles, because he had preached to them the Gospel of the unsearchable riches of Christ, and because he had made known to them this glorious mystery, which had been hid in God from eternity. The mystery discloses that the Gentiles

are joint heirs, a joint body, and joint partakers of God's promise in Christ; and God has created all things to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the all-variegated wisdom of God. These spiritual intelligences had seen creation arise and expand before their eyes, they had seen the mighty acts of God in judgment and in providence, but now these exalted beings saw something altogether new in this divine conception, the assembly of God. With these weighty truths engaging His thoughts and filling His heart, the beloved apostle bows his knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom every family in heaven and earth is named. God had been known as Jehovah, the God of heaven, the Lord of the whole earth, and by other names, all more or less restrictive in application; but at the mention of the name of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, every family in heaven and on earth, angels, Jews, Gentiles, and the assembly, range themselves under it. Then he goes on to say, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit, in the inner man. Here we have the work of the Spirit of God, a work of spiritual formation within the heart, providing for Christ there a suitable dwelling place; so that he can say "That the Christ may dwell, through faith in your hearts." In the first chapter, we are in Christ; here, Christ is in us, so that being rooted and grounded in love we may be able to apprehend with all saints what is the breadth. . . . As Christ dwells in our hearts by faith we become rooted and grounded in love, and in this fertile soil the new nature grows, expands, and becomes exceeding fruitful, and seeks to apprehend with all saints — for love will never leave one saint of God out — the wonderful system of divine glory of which Christ is the centre. The Spirit of God alone can make these things real and precious to us. What mortal tongue, yea, what angelic tongue, can describe those heavenly wonders, that stretch far and away beyond mortal ken to the limitless bounds of the universe of God. As we view these wondrous things, truly we are lost, not in perplexity, but in "Wonder, love and praise."

A. Shepherd.

Vol 01-10 - A Short Meditation on 1Jn_1:3-4.

A Short Meditation on 1 John 1:3-4. This wonderful epistle, inspired by the Spirit of God and written by the apostle John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, has quite a unique character, and is entirely unlike any of the other epistles found in the New Testament. The writer's name does not actually appear, but he takes his place with the believers to whom he writes, frequently using the words "we" and "us," though he often returns to the personal pronoun, saying "I write unto you," etc. He unfolds in a marvellous way the new relationship of believers to the Father. However, it is not my purpose to give an epitome of the whole epistle, but only to write down a few thoughts on verses 3 and 4 of the 1st chapter. The epistle commences with a few words about the LORD Jesus, John's beloved Master, Whom he had known so intimately, Whom he had seen and his hands had handled, and about Whom he now wishes to write to his fellow-believers, that they also might have fellowship with him concerning this divine Person. He then adds these wonderful words, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." Have you, my fellow-Christian ever meditated on the deep meaning of these words? First of all, let us inquire into the force of the word "fellowship;" it signifies "The state or condition of sharing in common." Man can have no fellowship with an animal, with his dog, for instance; he may love him, and his dog may return his affection. But mutually to enjoy fellowship there must be the same nature. And further, fellowship between a holy God and sinful man is an impossibility, for God is light, and dwells in light. And yet the verse declares that "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, etc." How can this possibly be? The answer to this question can only be found in God Himself. Listen! God, Who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us. . . .

Love is the very nature of God; and by the working of God and the gift of His beloved Son, every poor, lost, dead sinner, washed in His precious blood, is born again, a new nature is given him, and by the power of the Holy Spirit he is made capable of having fellowship with the Father and the Son. Each believer is now enabled to "share in common" in the Father's delight in the Son of His love, to bask in the Father's love, and by the power of the Holy Spirit to grow in the knowledge of the LORD JESUS. Further, he learns that the Father's love has made all believers His beloved children, and that He actually loves them with the same love with which He loves His own Son. They are made members of the household of God, and have the wonderful assurance that when their beloved Lord and Master returns, they will be made like unto Him, and be with Him for ever, that in the ages to come God might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward them through Christ Jesus. Can anything exceed such a marvellous prospect? What a subject for eternal praise! And the Father's desire is that His children should know and realize His love even now, while passing through the wilderness, and fully enjoy fellowship with Himself and the Lord Jesus Christ, in the power of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit indwells each believer, and the apostle Paul in his closing words to the church at Corinth desires that "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion (or fellowship, the same word in the Greek) of the Holy Ghost, be with you all." What a transformation for poor, lost sinners, beggars from the dunghill, to be brought by faith into the courts of glory, and there received as God's beloved children, made

capable of understanding God's thoughts, of enjoying what He enjoys, and sharing in His delights! To God be all the glory. The reason the Holy Spirit reveals these wonders to our hearts is shown in verse 4; "These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full." Our Father desires His children to be full of joy, in spite of the difficulties and trials of their often long and weary wandering through the wilderness of this world. Listen to the words of our Lord Jesus to his beloved disciples on the night of His betrayal; "These things have I spoken unto you that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full;" and again, in His wonderful prayer to the Father, "And now come I to Thee; and these things I speak in the world that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves." I will quote but one verse more, in the Epistle to the Philippians; "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice." From these we can clearly see that the Christian's life down here ought to be full of joy, walking in living fellowship with the Father and the Son by the Holy Spirit. But we must never forget that we have no power of ourselves to attain to this; the power is wholly outside of us, and the more we realize our own weakness, the more shall we take hold of the power given us of God, even the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead. Does such a life seem impossible to us? It would indeed seem so, if we consider our own weakness, and look at the lives of most of the Christians of our acquaintance. How rarely do we come across a truly rejoicing Christian! But with God all things are possible; and, knowing from His Word what His desire is for us, may we not in our prayers claim, in simple childlike faith, and expect to receive, what He and our blessed Lord wish us to have?

G. F. Barlee.

Vol 01-10 - An Outline of the Epistle to the Ephesians.

An Outline of the Epistle to the Ephesians.

(The substances of Bible Readings held at Thropton with Wm. C. Reid.) Ephesians 1:1-23. This precious epistle opens out for us the highest Christian blessings and privileges, unfolding the relationships into which the blessed God has brought us with Himself, and our associations in nearness to the Lord Jesus Christ. All that God has given to us in the riches of His grace is in Christ, and is the fruit of his counsels of sovereign love, which have been secured by the death of Jesus.

Having stated his apostleship, his authority for writing to them, Paul addresses the brethren at Ephesus as the saints and faithful in Christ Jesus. They were saints by the calling of God, and faithful as answering to the divine call. Because of their unfaithfulness, the Galatians and Corinthians could not be so addressed. With the invocation of grace and peace, the Christian revelation is stated, as in all the epistles bearing Paul's name, that God is Father, and Jesus Christ is Lord.

Breaking forth in praise by the Spirit, Paul speaks of the double relationship of the Lord Jesus to God the Father: as Man He is related to God, and as Son He is in relationship with the Father. According to this double relationship, we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. Israel's blessings were earthly, material and temporal, in association with an earthly Messiah; ours are heavenly, spiritual, and eternal, in association with the heavenly Christ. Our calling, being heavenly, belongs to a system of divine love and glory existing, in God's counsels, before the foundation of the world; and the God of our Lord Jesus Christ chose us in Him, that we might live in the knowledge and joy of His love before His face. For this we must be like God Himself, holy and blameless; and this could only be our portion in Christ, as the fruit of God's own work. Moreover, the Father desired that our enjoyment of His love might be in a relationship of nearness and intimacy; so He marked us out beforehand to share His Son's place in the consciousness of that same relationship. Sonship, the nearest possible relationship to God, the highest Christian blessing, is ours, through and along with God's blessed Son; not by our seeking or choosing, but by God's eternal counsels, according to the good pleasure of His will. Not on account of anything that we are naturally, have we been brought so near to God and the Father, into the most wonderful blessings, which far surpass the loftiest thoughts or imagination of man; all originated in the heart and mind of God, and comes from Him in infinite love and kindness, for the satisfaction and delight of His heart. Indeed, these blessings come to us in spite of what we are, being entirely the fruit of God's counsels, in which the glory of His grace is praised by the display of infinite kindness. This grace also introduces us into God's favour in its fulness and perfection, as seen in Christ His Beloved. We learn what that place is as we see what Christ is to God, and as we realise that His place is ours, for we are there in association with Him. In all that we have considered, God has been manifesting His own thoughts, not in reference to what we are down here as derived from Adam, not as looking upon our natural state in the flesh or our

character as poor failing mortals: He has been telling us of His counsels of love that existed before we had any being. Now we are to see that God has also taken account of our ruin and guilt, and has met our deep poverty in the riches of His grace. And it is in the Beloved, in whom we have been taken into God's favour, that we have redemption, through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. All the efficacy of the great work wrought out on the cross abides in the Person of the Christ, who did the work, where He now is at the right hand of God. Is it not wonderful to think that the same grace which forgave us our sins has abounded to us in enlightening us with the knowledge of the mystery of His will? What a God is our God! He desires that we might know His great thoughts for the glory of His Son. What wisdom and intelligence God has manifested in making such communications! He raises us from the lowest pit to take us into the most precious secrets of His great heart of love. Such a course would not be considered wise or intelligent by the mighty men of the world, but God's thoughts are altogether different from man's, and human wisdom and intelligence are foolishness when viewed in the light of what is divine. And what a mystery it is! To gratify His heart of love, to give Himself pleasure, God has purposed to set Christ, His Own dear Son, as the Head and centre of a universe filled with glory and blessing. This was in the mind of God long before Adam was put into Eden; God purposed it in Himself; and nothing that has happened or will yet take place, during the ages of time, will frustrate or in the least possible degree hinder the accomplishment of the purpose of God. Throughout the past ages, from the days of Adam, man has been displaying himself in all the iniquity, rebellion, corruption, and falsehood of his fallen nature, and as influenced by the powers of darkness; but in the coming ages God is going to display what He is in Christ, in all the moral beauties and perfections of His holy nature, and in all the grace and love of His heart of infinite love. To this end God has enthroned His dear Son, according to His counsels, that as Head, He might fill every sphere of authority and government in the wide universe, to direct, control, energise and sustain the whole scene, for the glory of the Father, and for the blessing of every family named by the Father in that day. But the glory of God is not to be praised in His Son alone; according to the same purpose that has set Christ as Man in His exalted and glorious position, we have obtained as associated with Christ, as blessed in Him, an inheritance. This is no afterthought with God; He marked us out beforehand for this portion; and as regards the present moment, He works all things after the counsel of His own will. Nothing in the present course of things can turn God from His purpose; rather He makes everything subserve His purpose. The counsels of God's will effectuate the purpose of God; even the giving up of Jesus was "By the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." Israel's rejection of their Messiah is turned to account by God, in the great wisdom displayed in His counsels, for now He secures a believing remnant from Israel, which trusts in Christ before the nation turns to Him in repentance; and this remnant has part with Christ in His heavenly glory in the coming day, and is for the praise of God's glory. But this company, sharing Christ's heavenly glory, is not only from Israel; it embraces the Gentiles who now believe the Gospel sent from God. This is the Gospel of our salvation, which presents God to us in all the grace of His heart; which tells of the cleansing efficacy of the blood of Jesus, and of the righteousness in which we are before God through the death and resurrection of His Son.

Having believed the Gospel, God has claimed us for Him-self by sealing us with His Holy Spirit. As in the type of the cleansing of the leper, the blood was first put upon the ear, then the oil was "put upon the place of the blood" (Leviticus 14:28). The same Spirit that claims us for God, and thus marks us for obtaining part with Christ in the coming inheritance, is the One by whom we are given

to anticipate the joys and blessedness of our future portion, for He is the earnest of the inheritance. Already acquired by the death of the Lord Jesus, the inheritance will, at His coming, be redeemed by His divine power. At that day, those from among the Gentiles, who have now trusted in Christ by the Gospel, will be for the praise of the glory of God along with the pre-trusting remnant of Israel. How surpassing wonderful that God's glory is going to be praised in men! A marvellous vessel, God's own workmanship in new creation, composed of those who once were sinners far from Him, called from among Jew and Gentile, will shine forth in all the living glory of God, a glory that will be praised in the whole vast creation. Surely in the presence of such grace, that has given us part in this glory, our hearts bow in wonder and worship

After revealing the purpose and counsels of God, which bring to us the good pleasure of God's will, the mystery of His will, and the counsel of His will, in which Christ's pre-eminent place is secured, as also the blessing of those brought into association with Christ, the apostle prays for the saints. He desires that the saints of God should enter into the knowledge of what God has so graciously made known to them. With confidence he can thus pray for them, because their lives had manifested the fundamental marks of the Christian, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and love to all the saints. Alas! only too often had he to write to the saints about different forms of evil, which God allowed to come out, that we might have in the inspired page His mind regarding them; but here the saints have a testimony regarding their walk which the apostle can speak of with pleasure, and God enables him to unfold to them the deep secrets of His heart. The prayer in this chapter is addressed to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, while that in Ephesians 3:1-21 is to the Father; these answering to the double relationship, already noticed, in which the Lord Jesus stands to God as Man and to the Father as Son. The former relates to objective matters; the latter being mainly subjective. All the glory of which we have read, the glory that already shines in the face of Jesus, and which shall be displayed in Him and in those associated with Him, has its origin in the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory. All proceeds from God and all shall return to God; even as we see all the glory emanating here from the Father of Glory, and returning to God the Father at the close of Ephesians 3:1-21, where we read, "To Him be glory in the assembly in Christ Jesus unto all generations of the age of ages."

Paul first desires that the Father of glory would give the saints the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Him. This belongs to the spiritual state necessary for the reception of the divine communications vouchsafed. It is altogether impossible to apprehend the wisdom and intelligence in which God has abounded to us in the revelation of the mystery of His will apart from having this spirit of wisdom; nor can we truly enter into the blessed revelation that God has made of Himself in His wonderful purpose unless we have the spirit of revelation. This spirit is surely the spiritual affinity, produced within us through communion with God in regard to the communications He has made. We are often content to go on in a low spiritual state in which we cannot enter into God's highest thoughts for us; and the precious things pertaining to the full knowledge of God lie unexplored and unknown. Our knowledge of God largely depends on the character of our communion with Him. Most pray to God for their needs, and about their troubles; others will also pray for the prosperity of the Gospel, and it may be for the whole field of God's interests in the world; but how few comparatively go to God to speak with Him about His purpose and the glory of His Son. It is this last that will give us from God the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Him. Depend upon it, if we are absorbed with present things, even if it be with things

that are right in themselves, we are not likely to be much concerned with God's purpose, and the great wealth of blessing which is ours because of it. It is not that we may not know the terms of the full know-ledge of God as revealed in these preceding verses; the eyes of our hearts being enlightened would indicate that it is necessary to have the light of them in terms* before there can be the true knowledge in the heart. Two things are therefore essential for knowing these things; first, the spiritual state to apprehend the truth; second, the light brought before us through ministry from God.

[*In having the true spiritual state, the eyes of the heart become enlightened with the truth, which consequently brings the divine knowledge into the heart.]

Now we have the three objective matters that God would have us know; the hope of His calling; the riches of the glory of His inheritance in His saints; the exceeding greatness of His power towards the believer. God's calling, as made known thus far in the earlier part of the chapter has in mind the blessed relationship and position of sonship into which we have been brought. The hope of the calling is what actually awaits us in the coming day, when we enter into the fulness of the blessing prepared for us before the Father's face along with His dear Son.

We are also to know the riches of the glory of God's inheritance in the saints. Even as of old Jehovah took possession of Canaan in Israel, so will He possess the universe in the coming day in those He has set apart for Himself, the saints of the present dispensation. Many an earthly inheritance is glorious to look upon, but it is poor as having low fertility and little mineral wealth; others may be rich in minerals, but far from glorious to the sight. God's inheritance to Israel was both glorious and rich as is learned from Deuteronomy 3:25; Deuteronomy 8:7-9, and other Scriptures. So also the vast heavenly inheritance of the coming day, yea the universal inheritance of which Christ is Heir, and which God is going to take up in Christ's co-heirs. Its glories and its riches far surpass all that we can conceive, for even at best, we see through a glass obscurely now. The language of 1 Corinthians 2:9-10 might well be taken up regarding the nature of this inheritance. Not to angels has God given this high honour, but to those who were poor sinners, cleansed and fitted in His grace and by the working of His divine power for His eternal glory and pleasure.

Moreover we are to know the exceeding greatness of God's power towards us; power that has been displayed in taking Christ from death and setting Him down in the highest place in heaven. This is the power that is going to accomplish all that lies in God's purpose; the power that will bring those God has marked out for blessing into the place

He has given them along with Christ. How strange it might seem to find the Man of God's purpose lying in death; the One who is to fill the universe as Head with the glory of God. But He was there for the glory of God, laying the basis in redemption for the bringing to pass of all that was in God's will; and it is from this point that God intervenes. He intervenes with a mighty display of His great power in the resurrection of Christ; in taking Him from the very lowest point, the point of man's greatest weakness, and exalting Him to the very pinnacle of the universe. This one mighty movement of God's power sets Christ above every sphere of earthly and heavenly government, and above every name of renown, both of the present age and the coming age of glory; and this power is about to bring us into the fulness of blessing within the Father's House, and into the inheritance to which we have been called.

Exalted and glorified, Christ has had all things put under His feet; and the Church has been united to Christ to share His exalted place. Even as Adam was head over the lower creation, and as Eve was united to him, so Christ has the Church united to Him, to share His place as Head over all the things in heaven and on earth. But the Church as Christ's body is part of Himself; united to Him by the Holy Spirit, in view of the day of the display of His glory. When Christ fills all in all, the Church, His fulness, is the living and glorious vessel in which the mind and will of the Head is expressed to the vast universe that He fills. What a day will that be for God, when He possesses the inheritance in His saints, and Christ fills the universe in His body.

Ephesians 2:1-22. The great power of God, manifested in taking Christ out of death and setting Him down at His right hand in the heavenlies, is here operative in quickening from among Gentile and Jew those whom God has marked out for blessing according to His eternal counsels. As quickened they now live in the knowledge of God's love, and have been raised up and made to sit in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus. Like Ephesians 1:12-13, the truth is presented separately regarding God's blessing of Gentile and Jew.

First of all, the Gentile is seen as dead in deeds offensive to God and in acts of lawlessness, walking in a course belonging to a world afar from God, where all subsists for the glory of man and for the gratification of his sinful nature. Blinded and led on by Satan, who brings the darkening influences of another realm into this world, of which he has become the god and Prince, those who disobey the truth of God (given in testimony in the Gospel) are found the willing slaves of his power and will. Spite of the light from God, given in God's goodness to Israel, the Jews were no better than the Gentiles, being sons of disobedience. Their lives were lived in fleshly lusts, dictated by the evil impulses of the flesh and by the thoughts of a mind in wilful opposition to God. Not one whit different into practice to the Gentiles; in nature they were children of wrath even as they. Being found without a movement within him answering to God, God must work entirely from Himself, according to His sovereign mercy, if man is to be blessed. But the God Who is presented in chapter 1 as rich in grace and rich in glory, is here seen as rich in mercy, because of His infinite and boundless compassions to Jew and Gentile. Found alike in moral and spiritual death, incapable of the slightest response to what is divine, God communicates to them His own life, an entirely different life to that given to Adam in Eden; it is the life in which His Own Son lives before His face in the heavenly places; and in this life they live with Christ in the sphere of glory and love that He fills. What a salvation is this! Saved out of death's clasp, and from the sinful condition that formerly marked us, we are now able to answer to the thoughts and feelings of the heart of God, as having His life. This salvation is altogether of grace; it is God's sovereign unmerited favour, unsought by us, and unknown till God took hold of us. Observe that quickening is not used of Christ here; in chapter 1 He is raised, but we are quickened before we are raised up. The reason is evident; quickening is a moral thought here, which never could apply to One Who is perfect in every moral feature, the Holy, Harmless, Undeified, separate from sinners. But we are quickened that we might be suitable morally for association with that blessed perfect Man; that we might have part with Him, sharing His place before the face of His God and Father, and ultimately sharing with Him all the glory. In quickening us, God has given us a new state; but He has also given us a new position in raising us up and making us to sit in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. This is the new place which belongs to those associated with the heavenly Christ; it is here we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ, in a world of divine glory and affections, established

in new creation according to God's counsels. How wonderful, that we can turn away from this present world through which we pass, and look up to Christ in the heavenlies, and say "That is our place." Our thoughts should be centred there; our present course regulated by what God has so graciously given us in His own presence. Then God has told us what is before Him in so blessing us: He has given us this exalted position and manifested this marvellous and abundant kindness, to display before the universe in the coming ages, the surpassing riches of His grace. What kindness can compare with God's kindness? He has taken rebel and ruined sinners from the depths of sin and shame, and out from the power of death, and given them to share His Son's place in the brightest spot in heaven. Every saved soul in that vast assembly, sharing Christ's glory, will display to the admiring hosts of earth and heaven something of the wonderful kindness that brought him there, some feature of the grace of God in which He is so exceedingly rich.

Again we read that we are saved by grace. Whether we think of the beginning of the work of grace, in saving us from the dreadful plight we once were in, or its crown in bringing us to the place where grace is to be displayed, it must be evident that we had no hand in it at all; all is from God, His sovereign intervention to bless us. But faith laid hold on the salvation proffered in the Gospel; but even this precious faith did not spring from anything in us, it was the gift of God. Nor was this great salvation presented to man on the principle of works. The Law had proved man incapable of receiving on that principle; moreover, this principle excluded all thought of human boasting; that day of the display of His rich grace will be for God's boast, and ours of Him. God then has been working for us, to bring us into such untold blessing, but He has also been working with us and in us, for we are His workmanship. His workmanship is in new creation; we are formed after Christ's image in suitability for the place we have in Christ now in the heavenly places, and the place we shall have with Christ in the glory of the coming ages. But there is the present object of the new creation; the beautiful features of the new creation are to be manifested in the old creation circumstances in which we are now found. The light of heaven is to shine forth in the body of humiliation; the good works so manifest in the life of Jesus are to be richly shed in the Christian's walk. God has nothing else for us here than that we should walk in the steps of His dear Son. There is naught but good, perfect goodness in the new creation; and it is wonderful that its precious fruits can be brought to this barren waste in those on whom God has wrought. There are no good works in man naturally; he never could have received salvation on this ground; but what man could not produce for God, God has produced in man, and all the outcome of His wisdom, grace and power, in new creation.

Knowing our present portion in Christ, and our future in the glory with Christ, we are not to forget the pit from which we were dug. This will but serve to enhance in our eyes the richness of the grace of God. We were poor Gentile sinners in the flesh, and as uncircumcised, kept out of the place of privilege in which favoured Israel enjoyed dispensational and ceremonial nearness to God, with the knowledge of God in the revelation of Himself to the fathers and in the Old Testament Scriptures. As Gentiles we had no claim on Christ, for He was Israel's Messiah; nor could we claim blessing from the covenants containing the promises, for these were not made with the Gentiles; all that Israel possessed was for themselves, not for sharing with the nations. There was no single ray of hope to break in upon our darkness; a darkness in which we were as having given God up, not thinking it good to have Him in our knowledge. What a position! what a state! what a prospect! Never a longing within the bosom for God, unaware of our desperate need, not a

single glimmer of divine light upon our goings, not a prospect of blessing before us; but distanced from all good and love in our evil ways, our course was shaped for eternal misery in perdition.

What a contrast to all this is now ours through the intervention of God! We are in Christ Jesus, occupying this blessed place before God's face, having been brought into this place of nearness by the precious blood of Christ. The blood that was sprinkled on the mercy seat of old, and before it seven times, foreshadowed for us God's glory secured in bringing a people near to Himself by the blood of Him Who shall fill the whole universe with God's glory. And Christ Himself is the peace of Jew and Gentile blessed in Him, and made one in Him. There are very pronounced distinctions between Jew and Gentile; they are not one in position, manner of life, religion or outlook; the law has made these distinctions; it was a wall which kept the Jew separate from the Gentile. The law set out what kind of life the Jews should live; they were to live for God as apart from the Gentiles with all their idolatry and corruption. But in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, the law has been set aside as the rule of life for the converted Jew; it never was the rule of life for the Gentile; nor was it ever given as the rule for the Christian's life. Christ is the rule of life for the Christian; and it is in Him that God has formed Jew and Gentile into one new man. Two different kinds of men, both sinners, could not but be at enmity, for both had different and opposing rules of life. Indeed, the Jew had the law as his rule of life, but the Gentile was lawless, doing what was right in his own eyes. But God has now ONE man, and he is a NEW man. Hence there can no longer exist the old enmity. Both Jew and Gentile have gone from before God's eye, and the new man that is before Him bears all the blessed features of Christ, His well-beloved Son. But God has not only brought the Jew and Gentile believers into right relations with each other; He has brought them into right relations with Himself. There was not only the enmity existing between Jew and Gentile, which kept them apart, the law of commandments contained in ordinances; there was also the natural enmity of man's heart to God, in Jew as well as Gentile. That enmity had to go before man could be reconciled to God. How was God going to dispel the enmity of the human heart towards Him? The answer is found in the Cross of Christ. In that Cross, in which the heart of God has been told out in all its mighty love, our old man was crucified with Christ; the old man in whom there were found and displayed the features which alike marked both Jew and Gentile; and the love of God told out there has been shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, thus displacing every bit of enmity towards God in those who have the Spirit. This wonderful reconciliation has been effected in one body, into which all believers, whether Jew or Gentile, have been formed for the pleasure of God. That the rich blessings, secured by His death, might be brought to us, Christ Jesus has preached peace to the far off Gentiles through the Gospel, and peace to the Jews who were near to God as His earthly people. Both needed the good news of peace, which could never have been found by the lawless Gentile, or enjoyed under the labour and burdens of an exacting and cursing law. And not only does the Christ bring to us the blessedness of peace, but through Him Jew and Gentile, have access by One Spirit to the Father. Here we reach what God has in mind for us while awaiting the full blessing of the coming day. His presence is open to us; it is to HIMSELF that we can come, to be found before Him in the deep enjoyment of His love, to enter into the glorious thoughts revealed in His purpose, and to worship Him in spirit and in truth. What communion is ours! This is now ours in the nearest possible relationship to the FATHER himself.

Such privileges and blessings being ours, we can realise that we are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens of the saints, and of the household of God. We participate in a

spiritual and heavenly way in all the blessings and privileges of the City and House of God. Of this spiritual structure the New Testament apostles and prophets form the foundation, perhaps both personally and in their writings; and as having received the truth ministered by them, we have been built upon the foundation. Of this building, Jesus Christ is the chief corner-stone; the One upon whom every section and every line of the structure converges; who gives character, ornament, and beauty to each detail and to the whole, and in whom we read every thought of God relating to its erection, purpose and glory. In this glorious Person, the whole structure is reared; it all bears His features; it grows gracefully and silently (like Solomon's building) towards its glorious destiny, a holy temple in the Lord. When the building is completed, with every saint of this dispensation in his own place, according to God's counsels, it will be the shrine of His glory, the vessel in which God will dwell to display what He is in the Lord Jesus; Who from this place will administrate the world to come. Meanwhile, as acknowledging the authority of the Lord, the saints are built together for a dwelling of God by the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 3:1-21. A comparison of the opening verses of Ephesians 3:1-21 and Ephesians 4:1-32 shows that this chapter is a parenthesis. On the basis of the great unfoldings of the previous chapters, Paul is about to exhort the saints, and to emphasize his remarks speaks of himself as a prisoner on their account: this at once leads him to develop the truth of the mystery, the announcing of which had brought him into bonds. Had he preached only to the Jews, or proclaimed a Gospel which gave the Gentiles blessings on a lower plane than the Jews, he would not have been so persistently and bitterly assailed; nor would he have now been incarcerated at Rome. But he gladly accepted his lot, glorying in being the prisoner of Christ Jesus.

Having received an administration of divine grace for the Gentiles, Paul had the privilege of making it known in his ministry of the Gospel, and in his ministry of the truth of the mystery. This mystery, a wonderful divine secret, as we shall learn, was not given to Paul by man; he received it directly from heaven. Apart from the divine disclosure to him, he could not have spoken of the things connected with the mystery in the previous chapters; the truth of the church as the body of Christ in chapter 1 and the reconciling of Jew and Gentile in one body to God as declared in chapter 2 could not have been made known without the knowledge of the truth of the mystery. This glorious secret reveals that Jew and Gentile in being united to each other by the Spirit are also united to Christ their Head in heaven.

God had not made known the mystery to the saints of old; nor was it hidden for them or for us in the Scriptures of the Old Testament. Many things which have now come out plainly in the Gospel are to be found in the writings of the prophets. Peter expressly declares this; the prophets looked into their own writings to discover the secrets connected with the sufferings and glory of Christ, but the Holy Spirit told them that certain things they had ministered were for the saints of a coming generation and not for themselves. But THE MYSTERY was not among these secret things; its revelation awaited the ascension of Christ and the coming of the Holy Spirit. It was not to Paul only that God made known this secret — although the ministry of it was peculiarly his — but also to the apostles and New Testament prophets by the Holy Spirit. Here, the mystery is unfolded in three distinct parts: Jew and Gentile are joint-heirs, a joint-body, and joint partakers of God's promise in Christ by the Gospel. That Israel had been promised an inheritance by God was well known. Abraham was the heir of the world, and his seed became partakers of the promises, nor will God set aside His promise for Israel's blessing; but there had never been a hint in the Old Testament of

an inheritance in which Jew and Gentile would partake on the same footing without discrimination. Israel's promised inheritance was earthly, but the mystery divulges an inheritance hitherto unknown, a heavenly inheritance, yea one which enfolds all that has been created, of which Christ, according to God's purpose, is the heir, and the saints joint-heirs together and with Him. The Jew had no natural claim on this great and glorious inheritance any more than the poor outcast Gentile, but in believing the Gospel both are brought into the most exalted place to share the high honour of association with Him whom God has glorified in view of acquiring the purchased possession. Nor is there any hint in the Old Testament of the removal of the distinctions between Jew and Gentile, and that they should be formed together into one body. God had promised that in Abraham and in his seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed, but this gave Israel the central and dominating place among the nations. Again God told Israel that if they were faithful they would be the head and the nations would be the tail, and if they were unfaithful they would be the tail and the nations would be the head; even as it has come to pass in Israel's history. The Mystery brings out something of an entirely different character, something beyond all human conception, what is the fruit of God's love and wisdom; that the Jew and Gentile should be formed into a living organism, functioning for the pleasure and will of God, in which the life and heavenly features of His dear Son should be manifested and continued in the world out of which He was cast by men.

Moreover Jew and Gentle jointly partake of God's promise, set forth in Christ, and made known in the Gospel. This is not a promise of the old economy, for the Gentiles were strangers to the covenants of promise; they were without hope on that line, for the promises belonged to Israel. Paul tells us something of this promise elsewhere. To Timothy he writes of himself as apostle of Jesus Christ by God's will "according to the PROMISE OF LIFE — which is in Christ Jesus;" and to Titus he says "In hope of eternal life, which God, Who cannot lie PROMISED BEFORE THE AGES OF TIME." God's promise in Christ belongs to eternity, it is not at all connected with the promises made to the saints on earth in former days. Eternal life and all connected with it in the glory of God infinitely transcends the best of earth, and to this Jew and Gentile have been jointly called. God has promised us heavenly things in the Gospel, things belonging to the heavenly Christ; the hope He has made ours is laid up for us in heaven; all for Jew and Gentile jointly belong to the new creation, are spiritual, heavenly, and eternal. Of this precious mystery, Paul was God's chosen minister; it was the gift of God's grace to him to make known to others what had been communicated to him. For such a work the grace of God must form the vessel in consonance with the character of the ministry, and this is accomplished by the working of His power. If God would have Paul present Jesus as Son of God in his preaching, He first of all reveals His Son IN him; so here, there must be an inward spiritual formative divine work in keeping with the truth to be ministered; the vessel is formed, fitted, and filled by God. Paul realises the magnitude of the favour bestowed upon him, and viewing himself in the light of this surpassing grace, he speaks of himself as less than the least of all saints. A true estimation of grace makes us appear small in our own eyes, and enables us to carry out the divine service entrusted according to God's will.

Grace, known in the heart through communion with God, enabled Paul to announce among the Gentiles the Gospel of the unsearchable riches of the Christ. The wonderful nature of this Gospel and the opposition it brought both demanded the constant supply of grace in its preaching. Prophets, sent from God, had told of the coming King; the glories of the Messiah, long promised,

had been seen in vision and were spoken of and sung with rapture. These were the searchable riches of the Christ, made known to Israel, the riches and glories adumbrated in David and in Solomon. Great are the glories that shall yet shine forth on earth, as Christ comes out of the ivory palaces, His garments smelling of the sweet spices, and made glad through the praises of His willing people. But the Gospel preached by Paul speaks of greater riches, the unsearchable riches of the Heavenly Christ. What dazzling glory shines in Jesus' face! All the glory and riches belonging to the place He fills as the Head over all things to the church, the Head of the body, the Head of every principality and authority in the vast universe, yea of every office and place He now fills and shall yet fill for the glory of God and pleasure of the Father. There is the boundless wealth belonging to Him as a Divine Person, but here it is rather what has been put into His hand as the Man of God's counsels, the Anointed Man who fills the throne.

Paul was also to enlighten men with the truth of the administration of the mystery. This administration belongs to the working of God, who through the Gospel secures both Jew and Gentile, and by His Spirit brings them together for the fulfilling of His will. From every clime, from different nations, from every class of society, God is drawing men together by His grace; and is forming them into a company suitable for union with Christ, to have part with Him in His glory, and to be for His holy affections. Even now God's mind is being carried out in and through that company, in His own great wisdom; it is the only company on earth which knows God's mind and which can set forth His thoughts. It is not here a question of the church's failure; it is what God is doing in spite of all our failure. But He wants us to know His thoughts; we are to be intelligent in the carrying out of His will. Thinking again of the unique and glorious character of the mystery, Paul tells us that it was hidden throughout the ages in God. Here is the deep, deep secret of God's heart, the fruit of His counsels of love, the crown of all His activities, the Masterpiece of His skill and workmanship, and the completion of His word. He did not tell this to Abraham, His friend, or to Moses to whom He made known His ways; this wonderful, precious secret, nestled in God's own bosom throughout the ages till Christ was set down at His own right hand.

Observe too that the present moment was before God's mind in creating the universe; the considering of which surely magnifies the importance of the day in which our lot is cast. It is in this day, when all around to natural sight is confusion and failure in the church, that God is displaying to the greatest of heavenly beings the resources and treasures of His wisdom. Herein is wisdom that could not be unfolded in the power and glory that outshone in the works of creation, that could not be disclosed in God's ways with the Patriarchs, with Israel, or in the government of the world. The hosts of heaven could sing and shout for joy at the laying of the earth's foundations, and in God's providential dealings with men they have doubtless seen wonderful things; but God had reserved the display of His all varied wisdom for the present time, when a company of men should be gathered out from men for the pleasure of God; in whom God wrought in new creation, forming them into one body in Christ, and continuing in them the precious moral features that were manifested in His Son in this world. That God should form such a wonderful vessel from such material surely displays a wisdom far excelling that hitherto manifested in all God's operations in the universe; that in that vessel God's thoughts should be intelligently manifested by and in those He has wrought in new creation must cause the heavenly hosts to marvel at God's ways. How very feebly have our poor hearts entered into the greatness of God's thoughts regarding what the church is for Himself at this moment of time! Creation is but the platform on which the purpose of

the ages, which God purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord, is being wrought out and displayed. Before a single movement occurred to usher in the creation, the great plan was before God in all its completeness; and all that has transpired throughout the preceding ages, has but subserved His eternal purpose in Christ Jesus. The Gospel is not an afterthought with God, but was in His counsels; necessary for the accomplishing of His purpose, that Christ might be the Head of a universe filled with glory. And while awaiting our part with Christ in the coming glory, we know the joy of access to God's presence with holy boldness in true liberty of spirit, as being in Christ and as having the faith of Christ. In telling the saints of his bonds on their account, Paul desires them not to faint, but rather to boast. Well might they delight to speak of the grace given to Paul to suffer for their sakes, that they might be enriched with such wonderful divine communications. But the natural tendency is to faint in knowing that the one, who had brought to them the testimony of God was incarcerated on its account. Would there not be the tendency to fear and shrink from the afflictions that faithfulness to such a testimony would bring? But Paul prays for them to the Father, yea, in the deepening exercise of his heart and increased earnestness for their blessing, he bows his knees. The prayer of Ephesians 1:1-23 has the calling, the inheritance, and the power of God, as its subject, three objective matters; here the subject matter of the apostle's prayer is largely subjective. One element may be looked upon as objective, "to apprehend — the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;" but the thought of apprehending that vast sphere of divine glory is also subjective. There are five elements clearly subjective:

- (1) The strengthening of the inner man;
- (2) Christ dwelling in the heart by faith;
- (3) Being rooted and grounded in love;
- (4) To know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge;
- (5) To be filled unto all God's fulness. Does not the apostle pray for the saints as realising that clear exposition of the truth will not of itself produce the impression that God desires to make upon the hearts and lives of His people? If we are to receive right impressions in the heart through the communication of the truth, the heart must be in a proper state. Still, it is good to know that listening to the truth produces the very exercise that will give the state of heart to receive it.

Paul then prays to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom every family of men and angels in heaven, and every family of men on earth, is named,; each family blessed of the Father in the peculiar relationship in which it stands to the Father for all eternity. Each family will have its own place and portion, for there are many abodes in the Father's House; the church being named "The church of the firstborn ones, whose names are written in heaven." What deep satisfaction to the Father's heart, to have every family in the vast universe in right relations with Him. The sons of God who once shouted for joy, will still be there; but there will be many families of men, all redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus, responding to the Father's love. The Father is the source of all, and all will return to the Father; and He will rest in the securing of all that Christ has brought to Him, when all things are reconciled. The first part of the request is that the Father, according to the riches of His glory, would give us to be strengthened with might by His Spirit, in the inner man. Every believer, as having been wrought upon by God, and as having received the Holy Spirit, has the spiritual capacity for the reception of truth; but it is evident from this verse that

special communications from God require special divine preparation of heart, if these communications are to be impressed on the heart. But there are great divine resources for the production of this spiritual state, the riches of the Father's glory. Does not this imply that it is as occupied with the Father's glory that the Holy Spirit will form us to receive the truth of the Father's counsels? We are prone to be engrossed with our needs, and it may also be with our service for the Lord, things which are necessary to speak to the Lord about; but there should be time for communion with the Father about His things, about His glory and Him who, in that glory, sits upon the Father's throne. Engaged then with the glory of the Father, in the many ways in which it is brought before us, the inner man is strengthened with divine power by the Father's Spirit. And if engaged with Him in whom the riches of the Father's glory shine, the apostle prays that He, the Christ might dwell in our hearts by faith. If Christ dwells in the seat of our affections, at the centre of the moral being, will He not control all the inward springs, the thoughts, the feelings, the desires, and every impulse and movement? Moreover the word here is "The Christ" which would embrace all connected with Christ in the place He occupies as God's anointed Man. Do all Christ's interests engage our affections? Are we truly concerned about all that belongs to Christ in the place of glory in which the Father has enshrined Him? Things down here would lose their hold upon the heart if the Christ had His true and rightful place there. It was just in this the Ephesians broke down later on; the Christ lost His place in their hearts, for they left their first love. Faith looks to Christ, brings Him into every circumstance, controls every inward movement, and consequently the whole life. Being rooted and founded in love, is having our springs in the love manifested in the Lord Jesus Christ knowing divine love in present enjoyment, and allowing no present circumstance to move us from the sense that we are loved by the Father and the Son. If our roots are in love, we shall grow in love, and manifest too all the precious features and fruit of love and founded in love, like a building resting upon a solid rock foundation, our souls are firmly established in a love, proved to the utmost, and known to be eternal, infinite, and unchangeable. Is this the state of our souls? Alas! too often the thoughts are concerned with other things, the mind and spirit are not resting in the divine nature, and not drawing upon and being built up in the love of God. With the inner man divinely prepared in occupation with the Father's glory, with Christ having His home and holding sway in our hearts, and with all our springs in love, we may take our stand, in spirit with all saints, to behold a wonderful vista. What a vast scene opens up before the spirit, depth, length, breadth, and height. Is it not the glorious sphere in which the Mystery is the centre piece? That is surely the realm in which the glory of God will be displayed in the church, in Christ Jesus, for all eternity; where the unsearchable riches of the Christ shall shine forth; where the glory of the Father, in all its effulgence, shall fill the universe where He rests, and in which He shall find His joy and pleasure for evermore. Abraham, from his place, was privileged to view the land of promise, north, south, east, and west; and Moses, from Pisgah, beheld the same; but how surpassingly great our privilege, to stand even now in spirit with Christ, Who dwells in the heart by faith, and to view that glorious scene, in which all that the Father is in His nature and glory are displayed. It is easy to understand now why the inner man needs to be strengthened, for here is something far too wonderful to behold without divine preparation of heart and spirit. As we explore these vast fields of glory, our hearts rest in the love of Christ. How needful for our hearts to feel the throbbings of that love as we survey the glory. We are to have part in that glory, but with Him who loves us with a love that passes knowledge. His love has been expressed in death, but the object before Him was to bring us into that wonderful glory, that we might share it as His companions. We shall enjoy

the love of Christ fully in that day, but God's desire for us is that we might know it now, and know it as a love which passes knowledge. The final desire of the prayer is that we might be filled to all the fulness of God. All the fulness was pleased to dwell in the Son while on earth, in view of reconciling all things to the Godhead, and all the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily in Him now at God's right hand; as our poor vessels are emptied of self and all connected with the present course of things, they may be filled with the fulness of God, if we are in communion with God about these great things, opened out by the Spirit in this epistle. God's desire for us then is that every one should be so filled with His fulness that our lives should be the reflection, in a moral way, of the glory set before us. As united to Christ by the Spirit, we live in things that are eternal; and we are to live here in the power of what is eternal and heavenly, bringing into every relationship in which we are found the features of Christ, entering intelligently into God's will and purpose. In the measure in which we are filled with God's fulness, these things will characterise us. But it is not only filled with the fulness, but filled unto the fulness, for that fulness can not only fill our poor vessels, but also the vast universe of God in Christ.

Engaged with our own weakness in the light of the illimitable resources of God, we might well be dismayed, but God is our God, and He desires to bless us and fill us with His fulness; indeed He is able to do far exceedingly above all that we ask or think. Where there is any desire on our part to enter into God's thoughts, and to be marked by the features set forth in the prayer, we can speak to God about it, in the sure knowledge that He is able to do above all we ask or think. Within us, in the Holy Spirit who indwells us, is the power to accomplish God's will in all these things; it is simply then a matter of allowing the Holy Spirit to engage us with Christ, the object of the Father's pleasure, and the centre of all His counsels of glory and love; and as we are so engaged the vessel will become emptied of all desires and thoughts after present things, and be filled even unto God's fulness.

We can surely join with the apostle in this note of praise to the Father, ascribing glory to Him. When the fulness of God has accomplished all for His pleasure in the days of the administration of the mystery, it shall display itself in glory in the church for eternity. What has been manifested in grace will be displayed in glory! Unfailing treasures of glory are to be displayed in the eternal age, shining with brilliance and splendour in the church, reflected from Christ in whom it subsists. All the glory belongs to God, and is in His dear Son, His anointed One; but the church is the vessel through which the light of the glory streams. And what a vessel! Formed in the wisdom and power of God, conceived in eternal love, the fruit of His counsels, fashioned in the skill of His own workmanship, meet for the display of His own glory. Contemplating such a consummation to all God's ways, and to all Christ's toil, the apostle says, "Amen;" and every heart that beats true to the Father and the Son would join to repeat, "Amen."

Ephesians 4:1-32. The truth of the mystery having been developed, and the saints prayed for in relation to this great revelation, Paul is now free to continue from the point at which he broke off in the first verse of Ephesians 3:1-21. As prisoner for the truth's sake in faithfulness to the Lord, and because of his great love for them, evinced in sufferings through which he had passed and was passing, the apostle was surely competent to freely exhort the saints in line with what he had written to them. Their divine calling, holy and exalted. is to have a practical answer in this world; therefore Paul desires that the saints should walk becomingly, bringing the light and dignity of the divine call into the minutest detail of life, walking in the steps of Jesus. Our course down here is to

be worthy of sonship, worthy of being united to Christ as members of His body, worthy of being the dwelling place of God; and the true heavenly dignity that is ours is to be manifested in low thoughts of self, the absence of all self assertiveness, in endurance through manifold trials, and in bearing with one another in love.

Only by expressing the features of Jesus can we go on together as Christians in this world, and this no doubt accounts for their coming in before the exhortation to use diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit. Viewed essentially, as subsisting in the Spirit, this unity cannot be broken, but looked at practically, where human responsibility exists, it has been broken to pieces. Nevertheless it is still possible for saints, by diligence and by the manifestation of the traits of Jesus, to endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace. This unity cannot be kept where man's mind and will control; only where there is liberty for the Spirit to make known the mind and will of God, and where there is the habitual endeavour to carry out the expressed thoughts of God. Such a condition cannot be enforced, it is the fruit of communion, hence the word "in the uniting bond of peace." How very far removed this is from the common desire, even among true believers, of peace at any price. If divine principles are sacrificed for peace, this is not the peace of the unity of the Spirit, which can only be kept where God's word regulates everything. From the unity of the Spirit the apostle passes to the great circles of unity, existing in relation to the Persons of the Godhead, where believers have their part. The first circle is in relation to the Holy Spirit, and may be looked upon as the true Christian circle, where is the one body which has been formed by the One Spirit. Only true believers in Christ have part here; we are members of the body by the new creative work of God, a body which derives its nutrition and direction from its heavenly Head. There is but ONE body, a truth which is to govern all who would endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit. Again there is but ONE Spirit, who is to guide and to lead all who have part in this living circle of blessing and privilege. In God's dealings with men providentially, the Holy Spirit is spoken of as "The Seven Spirits," but in Christianity He is the One Spirit, the power uniting all that belongs to God in the new creation circle into which He has called and brought us. The hope of our calling is to enter into the glory with Christ, and be with Him before the Father, in the joy of His love, for evermore. This hope belongs to every member of Christ's body; one destiny awaits us all; we have but ONE hope of our calling. In the second circle all relates to the ONE Lord, our Lord Jesus Christ, and is evidently the circle of Christian profession. The ONE faith is the doctrine of Christianity, given to us in the Holy Scriptures, which Jude tells us was "once delivered to the saints." No man could be looked upon as a Christian (in any sense) who refused to acknowledge Jesus as Lord, or who did not accept the Scriptures as the setting forth of the doctrine of Christianity. It may be that some say "Lord, Lord" in a mere formal recognition of Jesus, without divinely given faith in the soul; and nominally assent to the body of Christian teaching without its having power in their lives; but this could not invalidate the reality to the true believer that there is ONE Lord and ONE faith, truths which delight his heart and regulate his walk and ways. Entrance to the circle of Christian profession is by baptism, and in Christianity there is but ONE baptism. It might be that Jews are baptised in the Name of Jesus Christ; that some were baptised in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and others baptised in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; but it is the same baptism, the truth of which is opened out to us in different Scriptures. The third circle is the universal circle, where all things are in relation to God the Father. God the Father is the source of all the things found in the universe; He is supreme, and His impress is found upon all. Who can look into the heavens by night, or examine through the microscope the minute

creatures that come from God's hand without discerning His creatorial glory. Even if man has fallen, and has degraded himself and brought God's glory with dishonour into the dust, he still bears the image of God, no matter how badly he may have disfigured it. As Christians, if we would keep the unity of the Spirit, there must be the recognition of God in the universe He has brought into being. No one could claim to keep the unity of the Spirit if he accepted human theories regarding the creation. If God permeates the vast universe, He dwells in His saints. It is one thing that it can be said of men generally regarding God, "In Him we live and move and exist," and quite another that God dwells in His saints.

Grace is given by Christ, according to His wisdom and sovereign pleasure, to all His saints; each receiving what Christ desires to be expressed in testimony in this world. Every bit of grace given sets forth the triumph of Christ over the enemy, for before communicating it He must first lead captivity captive. There are also special gifts from Christ, enumerated in verse 11; they are given from the place of His exaltation and supremacy. While on earth the Lord appointed twelve apostles, but when He went on high their apostleship was reckoned to them in a new way, and there were others who received this same gift (Acts 14:14; Galatians 1:19). It is not that the apostleship of the twelve is gone forever; their names are found in the heavenly city as "The twelve apostles of the Lamb;" but the foundation of the building of Ephesians 2:20 not only contains all the apostles of the glorified Christ, but also the prophets given from heaven. Before imparting these gifts the Lord Jesus went down into the lower parts of the earth, into the dark domain of death. Coming forth in triumph He has ascended, having overcome every hostile principality and authority; leading captive every foe; annulling the power of the enemy; ascending above all the heavens to fill all things. The descent of the Lord here is not from heaven, as in Php 2:6-7; it is from the earth, where, as Man He had been for the glory of God. Have we not here the presentation of a Man great enough to enter in His own might into the domain of death, and great enough in His glorious triumph to pass through the heavens? How blessed to see the greatness of Man, the Man of God's right hand, whom He has made strong for Himself. Like Samson, He goes down to the citadel of the enemy, where the gates are closed upon Him, and in triumph He tears away the door, bar and all, and carries them in triumph to the top of the hill. This glorious Man is going to fill all things! In passing from the lower parts of the earth to His place above all heavens, He has passed through every sphere in the universe in the might of His glory and in the display of His wonderful victory; none in all these spheres could challenge His power or His title, and when His present session is completed, He will be manifested to fill all things. When Christ fills all things He will not be alone, for in Ephesians 1:1-23 we have seen the church to be the fulness of Him who fills all in all. Therefore, from His present place in glory He is even now working to secure, fit, and educate the members of His body for their place with Him in the universe of glory that He is about to fill. To this end He has given gifts to men, some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some shepherds and teachers. As we have seen from the close of Ephesians 2:1-22 the foundation work has been laid in the work and writings of the apostles and prophets; the members of Christ's body are called by the Gospel preached by the evangelists; the saints are cared for and taught by the pastors and teachers (a joint gift) that they might learn the mind of God and walk for His pleasure. God desires to have His saints grow to maturity; He would have them entering intelligently into His thoughts for them, and the gifts are given with this in view. Moreover there is a definitely ordained ministry from the ascended Christ to maintain what is of God in this world. The Risen and Ascended Christ cares for His church, His eye is ever upon it; He needs not

that men should ordain those whom men educate to care for His assembly. He will see to it that there are gifts for the edification of His body, so that His saints being fed and nourished, might function in the place divinely given to them. The work of the ministry will continue, nor will the body cease to be edified, until we all come to the unity of the faith and the full knowledge of the Son of God. If the apostles and prophets have personally gone home, they remain with us in their writings; there are still evangelists, pastors and teachers. Although no spiritual person would presume in this day of brokenness and ruin to call himself an evangelist, pastor or teacher, the gift, where possessed, is readily recognised. Yet in spite of all the ruin, Christ will continue the work of the ministry, until all saints hold in their souls the doctrine as it is set forth in the Scriptures, and until all know the blessed Son of God in the height of His glory, in the abundance of His heavenly resources, and in the deep affections of His heart. "The faith" is really the great sphere of divine revelation, and "The Son of God" is the One who fills that sphere. Only as we learn the truth from the word of God can we arrive at the unity of the faith; and only as we are truly acquainted with the Son of God in living communion can we arrive practically at the unity of the knowledge of the Son of God. But the gifts are also given to bring the saints to the full-grown man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ. In Ephesians 1:1-23 the church is seen, according to Gods counsels, as the fulness of the Christ who fills all in all; here the gifts are given to bring the saints practically to what the church is in the counsels of God. Christ's rich and wise provision for our spiritual development and education is made that we might not remain immature and unskilled in His word, that we might not be affected by all the varied doctrines of religious leaders, whose diversity and contradiction manifest that they have no part in the unity of the faith. Craftily manipulating the Scriptures to give colour to their teachings, such men use every device, conceived by the cunning of man, to build up their evil systems, from which the true Christ is excluded. The divine safeguard against all this is to hold the truth in love. It is not enough to be mentally acquainted with the truth: the truth must be held in the affections and manifested in the life, as only then can we grow up to Christ, the Head, in whom every feature of the truth subsists. All our resources are in Christ, who can direct us aright, keeping us from all the evil teachings that abound, feeding the soul, sustaining and satisfying the heart; being withal the object upon which our eyes can rest with perfect delight, so that beholding in Him the truth in all its beauty and rich perfection we take character from Himself to answer to Him in His traits of heavenly grace. Thus it is that the church comes to the full-grown man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ.

Every member of the body stands related to Christ the Head, and also in relation to every other member of the body upon earth; and all the supply for the body comes from the Head, being communicated to the different members by the joints of supply. This is not a matter of formal ministry, for the gifts are not in the body as such. Gift is largely connected with the house: in the body all are members. But each member of the body has its place and function, that each saint might contribute, according to his measure, to the building up of the body. Administration has its place in the Christian economy, so has gift, as the earlier verses show; but we must not forget that there is a living organism here on earth, the production of God, maintained by the Head in heaven, yet self-edified by the effectual working of every part. Love, in which the truth is held for the pleasure of God, is that in which the body is built up for the well-being of the saints.

Participating in such grace and privilege, the practical life of the saints should be marked by different features from those of the Gentiles around, among whom they once had their communion. The reception of divine grace demands that our walk should be for the glory of God. The ungodly Gentiles are not affected by the revelation of God; their steps are directed by their own vain thoughts, and unenlightened in their souls they have not the divine life that God has given to the Christian. Ignorant and hard hearted, and throwing off all the tender feelings properly belonging to men, such have given themselves up to the base passions of their fallen and unregenerate nature, which can never be satisfied. A glance at Romans 1:21-32 will show how man got into this debased condition. Men gave God up in three distinct ways; consequently God gave man up body, soul, and mind. How different from all this are God's things, the things we have learned in the Christian revelation, as having heard Christ's word and voice in the Gospel, as knowing the truth as it is in Jesus, learned through the wonderful provision made for our instruction by the ascended Son of God.

There are three parts of this precious truth stated:

(1) Our having put off the old man;

(2) Being renewed in the spirit of our mind;

(3) Our having put on the new man. The old man is the embodiment of every proclivity and moral feature of Adam fallen, developed in the whole human race. In the cross this man was fully exposed and received his judgment from the hand of God, he was crucified with Christ (Romans 6:6); in our confession of the Lord Jesus we have accepted the judgment of God on our old man, having virtually said, "I have finished with that man for ever." Baptism is really the professed putting off the old man. Then there is to be the practical recognition of this in the putting off the habits belonging to the old man whom we have disowned. Christianity gives a complete change of the spirit of the mind, which being renewed, enables us to look at things in an entirely new way. Self and the world no longer colour the outlook; our thoughts, desires, feelings, and purpose are quite new, being controlled by Christ and His interests. Like the thought of the old man, the thought of the new is abstract. If the old man is the embodiment of all that is evil, the new man is the embodiment of every moral feature pleasurable to God. Every feature of righteousness, love, and holiness, the beautiful traits manifested down here in Jesus, belongs to the new man created by God. This new man is not Christ Personally; he is Christ characteristically. From Ephesians 4:25 to Ephesians 5:2 we learn how righteousness is to mark the saints; from Ephesians 5:3-21 it is rather holiness that is prominent. Indeed we may look upon the remaining part of the epistle as the expression of the features of the new man, created according to God in righteousness and holiness of truth.

(1) The public testimony is more in view in Ephesians 4:25-32; Ephesians 5:1-21;

(2) The home circle is contemplated in Ephesians 5:22-33; Ephesians 6:1-4;

(3) Ephesians 6:5-9 would be for us today the business circle, but may be for some part of the home circle;

(4) The sphere of conflict in Ephesians 6:10-20. Our relations with each other are much before the apostle; "every man with his neighbour" (5: 25); "to one another kind" (5: 32); "speaking to

yourselves" (Ephesians 5:19); "submitting yourselves to one another" (Ephesians 5:21). Having put off the old man and put on the new man, we are to finish with everything savouring of falsehood, and to be wholly occupied in speaking what bears the character of truth; and this because we are indissolubly connected in divine ties in the body of Christ. No one would wilfully damage a member of his physical body; surely the members of Christ's body are dearer to us and of far more value. Communicating truth to each other will bring edification, for the truth builds up.

Righteous anger has a place and time, but we must watch lest the devil gets in. Oftentimes we begin in the Spirit and end in the flesh; the divine safeguard for us is to keep short accounts, for prolonged anger is almost certain to lose its righteous character and make room for the devil. The erstwhile stealer is not to return to his wrong ways, but with toil and honest work provide for his own needs and also for the needs of others. What a contrast to taking from others this is; it is the fulfilment of the righteous requirement of the law, loving his neighbour as himself. Our mouths are to express the features of the new man; pure and edifying words are to evince a good and graceful conversation, beneficial to those who listen.

God's Holy Spirit in sealing us has claimed us for the day when all shall be claimed in redemption, so that we must not allow anything unholy in our thoughts, words, or ways that would grieve Him. Our feelings are dulled by acquaintance with sin, but how infinitely sensitive the Holy Spirit is to anything which savours of impurity, falsehood, or unrighteousness. Every trait of the flesh, whether in the inward feelings of the heart or as expressed by the tongue or other members of our bodies, is to be put from us kindness, compassion, and forgiveness the rather marking us. God has shown His forgiveness to us in Christ, who died for our sins upon the cross; we are to come out like God in our dealings with one another.

Ephesians 5:1-33. Our duty and privilege as God's beloved children is to imitate Him, to manifest His character, being marked by His compassions. How wonderful is His love to us, and how great the kindness and affection told out in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. The deep love of the Lord Jesus caused Him to die for us, a death in which God has been perfectly glorified, and in which the Lord offered Himself for the pleasure of the heart of God. Not only did He give all He possessed, like the man who bought the field and the merchant who sought the pearls (Matthew 13:1-58)

He gave HIMSELF, and more He could not give. Christ was the true Burnt Offering, who gave Himself up to death to secure the glory of God, and the acceptance of those whom God would bless. All the inwards of the spotless victim were laid upon the altar, for in that death the perfection of the inward thoughts and feelings of Christ were brought out for the delight of God. There were no selfish motives with Christ; He went into death that the world might know that He loved the Father, but also in obedience to the Father's commandment. What sorrows, what sufferings were Christ's, but He considered not Himself; His constant desire was the Father's will. Do we not have the answer to the Peace Offering in Christ being a sacrifice to God? The Burnt Offering was wholly for God, but the offerer and the priest had their part in the Peace Offering. How great is the privilege of contemplating in communion with the Father and the Son the perfections of Jesus made known in His death. While feeding upon the Christ who died for us we can think of the Father's portion, the fat and the inwards, the food of the offering, all the inward excellencies and perfections of Christ ascending up as a sweet savour for Him. Christ's love for us, told out in this wonderful death, is to affect us in our walk down here; He is our pattern, and we are to be for

God's glory and pleasure as manifesting Christ's spirit.

How vile and unsavoury are the lusts of the flesh, they are the very antithesis of the holiness, purity, and sweet odour of what we have just considered. Such things should not therefore be named among those who are set apart for God; our conversation too should be pure, and even what is called harmless jesting is not convenient, thanksgiving being more suitable for Christians. Those who walk in uncleanness cannot have part in the Kingdom of Christ and of God, for all there is pure and holy, like God Himself; and spite of man protesting his religion and philosophy, the wrath of God will assuredly fall on all who have disobeyed the commandments of God. Why then should we have fellowship with those upon whom God's judgment is about to fall? Like them, darkness once marked us, it was the principle of our moral being, the controlling force of our lives, so that not a single thought or action of ours was in harmony with the will of God. Now we are light in the Lord, having derived this nature from God and as having come under the authority of the Lord Jesus, where God and His will are known. We are to walk then as children of light, transparent in all our steps, nothing covered up in our movements, manifesting the fruit of light in all goodness, righteousness, and truth, proving in the path of His will what pleases Him. The works of darkness bear no fruit, for God, so that we are not to participate in them any more than with those who do them, but rather are we to expose such works by the manifestation of what is divine. Things are seen in their true character when the knowledge of God is brought to bear upon them. The light that reveals God exposes everything inconsistent with His nature and character.

Although every true believer is alive spiritually, some are so influenced by present things as to be little different, in their practical life, from the men of the world. Such are not dead, but through earthly mindedness, worldliness, or lethargy are asleep among the dead. They are called upon to awake, and to arise from the company in which they are found, that the invigorating rays of the heavenly Christ might shine upon them, to energise them afresh, and to bring them renewed joy and blessing. Our every step is to be taken with care, directed by divine wisdom in a course the worldling has never known or trod, and every opportunity for the manifestation of good, where all is evil, is to be seized with earnestness. In such a world there is no occasion for the Christian to be foolish; his business is to learn the will of the Lord.

Drunkenness does not belong to the new man, but to the old man that we put off. Our ecstasy is from the Spirit of God, not from wine, which excites the natural man. Moreover, those filled with the Spirit are marked by joy, thanksgiving and submission to one another. How different the expression of the joy the Spirit produces and the expression of the joys of nature produced with wine. The joy of the Spirit comes out in singing what delights the heart of God. Psalms are evidently experimental compositions, in which we joy before God, because of His goodness to us in the circumstances through which He has brought us in His mercy. Hymns are paeans of praise in which we address God and tell Him and the Lord Jesus Christ of the thoughts and feelings of our hearts regarding the wonderful love made known to us, in which we respond to the grace so richly manifested in Jesus. Spiritual songs express our thoughts of the greatness, glory, and perfections of Christ; and tell out what we have felt of God's ways and counsels, as having learned from God, as taught by the Spirit. These precious compositions become the vehicle of expression from the heart, enabling us to speak to ourselves and to sing to the Lord in our joy and gladness. Then we are to give thanks at all times for all things to God the Father in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Only one filled with the Spirit could do this. When the Lord Jesus was rejected by

Israel, and had to upbraid the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done, it is recorded of Him, "AT THAT TIME, Jesus answered and said, I thank Thee, O Father." In the moment of His greatest sorrow from Israel He answers with thanksgiving to the Father. The third mark of being filled with the Spirit is submission. Submission to evil is not in the apostle's mind for a moment, for evil has no place in the assembly of God. It is a matter of giving way in things which do not affect the conscience, the subjugation of one's private judgment to that of others in the interests of the things of Christ. No spiritual brother would submit to evil in the things of God, there is no question of submitting or compromising where the glory of God is concerned; we could not submit to evil in the fear of Christ. There are of course times when diversity of judgment arises as to how certain things should be dealt with in the assembly, which are serious enough, and where a spiritual brother may differ from his brethren; in such a case the same attitude should be adopted if the submission can be in the fear of Christ. It may be hard to submit, especially if one is confident of the correctness of his judgment, but one filled with the Spirit can leave his judgment with the Lord, to be vindicated in His good time. From Ephesians 5:22 to Ephesians 6:4 we have the Family Circle, in which the features of the new man are to be manifested. Husband and wife is the closest and most intimate of natural relationships and therefore comes first. The normal Christian household is contemplated, where all acknowledge Jesus as Lord. Because the husband holds his headship and consequent authority in relation to the Lord, the wife is to submit herself unto her own husband as unto the Lord. God's wisdom has set the husband as head of the wife even as Christ is the Head of the church; so that even as the church is dependent upon Christ for guidance and supplies, the wife has been placed in dependence upon her husband for her resources and direction. It is not uncommon to find a wife with greater discernment, judgment, and mental ability than her husband, but this in no wise relieves her from the place of subjection, divinely given, even as the church has been subjected to Christ. How blessed to see the relationship of the church to Christ introduced to give force to the divine instructions for human relationships. Paul does not take us back to Eden to support his exhortations by what was then established, but rather lifts the subject into the realm of God's counsels, that the light of heaven might illumine and give colour to the common things of this life. And if he does go back to Eden, it is to show that Adam and Eve prefigured Christ and the church. Creation's light does display the beauty of the relationship of husband and wife, established by God, but how greatly the relationship is enhanced by the light of God's counsels.

If the wife is to be subject in everything to the husband as the church to Christ, Christ's love for the church is to be the character of the husband's affection for his wife; a love which took Him into death, a love which passeth knowledge. The husband is to love his wife with a love that would give himself, for Christ also loved the church and gave HIMSELF for it. Observe that when the love of Christ is presented "For me" (Galatians 2:20), "For us" (Ephesians 5:2), and here "For it," the measure of it is He "Gave Himself." Whether it is individual, collective, or corporate in its presentation, the love of Christ is infinite, unfathomable, unchangeable, and eternal. But the church has been secured by Christ's death that He might prepare her for companionship with Him in His glory, and that she might be worthy of His affections. Therefore has the church been set apart by Christ; and He purifies it by the washing of water by the word. Our blessed Lord cannot suffer defilement on that which is dear to Him, therefore with unwearied service He removes from the church every trace of contact with the defiled scene through which it passes. Only the word of God can free the heart, mind, and spirit from the things around us; so that by the ministry of the

word the Lord Jesus keeps our thoughts engaged with Himself and with the things that are above, where all is pure and holy.

All this is in view of the nuptial day when Christ shall present the assembly to Himself, glorious. What joy that day of presentation will bring to the heart of Christ and to the heart of His Bride! Like Him, she is glorious, with the glory in which God arrays her; nor is there a mark of impurity or imperfection upon her, not a trace of age or decay upon the beautiful companion of the glorious Christ of God. His moral features too are hers, for she is holy and blameless; Christ will have His wife even as the Father will have His sons, before Him in love, holy and blameless. This portion then shows what Christ has done for the church, what He is doing with it now, and what He is about to do with it in the coming day.

What an incentive all this is for the husband to love his wife; but there are further instructions, he is to love his wife as his own body, for the man who loves his wife loves himself. No man in his right mind ill-treats his body, but rather feeds and cares for it. Christ likewise nourishes the church with the richest supply of food from heaven, and cherishes it with His own perfect love, for we are united to Him, being members of His body, having come from Him. Eve was derived from Adam before she was united to him; and because of this a man is to leave father and mother and to be joined to his wife, and the two become one flesh. With the light of this chapter how wonderfully beautiful is God's presentation of the relationship of Adam and Eve; and what wisdom is displayed in secreting so early in the history of man His thoughts of Christ and the church. Adam and Eve though first upon the scene, set forth God's original thoughts, conceived in relation to His counsels before the world began. Though exulting in these great revelations we are not to forget that the husband is to love his wife as himself, and the wife is to reverentially fear her husband. Here lies the true secret of matrimonial happiness, and it is because these Scriptural exhortations are not heeded that so much sorrow and distress are found in the homes of many.

Ephesians 6:1-24.

Following the divine instructions for husband and wife, and the precious revelation of the truth of the relation of the church to Christ, comes the exhortations to children and fathers. Children are to obey their parents in the Lord because it is the right thing to do; parental authority having been ordained of God from the beginning and commanded in the law. Obedience in the Lord supposes that no command from the parents is contrary to the Lord's will, but is rather the expression of His will for the child. We live in a day when honour to parents is not the rule in the world, and such a state emphasises the privilege belonging to the children of Christian households of adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour in showing the honour becoming to parents. Under the law, a promise of well-being and long life accompanied this commandment; how much greater then will be the divine blessing, under grace, for those who obey. Fathers are to be watchful lest they provoke their children to anger. Much harm has been done to children by overbearing fathers enforcing their own wills and not the Lord's, and by rash and harsh judgments. Children require careful and prayerful handling, which casts the parents upon the Lord, that His discipline and admonition, with its wisdom, grace, and kindness might be ministered to them.

Under the conditions prevailing, when the epistle was written, the injunctions to bondmen and masters would belong, in the main, to the home circle. Because of the changed social conditions today these instructions largely belong to the business circle. As in the previous relationships

considered the subject vessel is first addressed, and obedience commanded. The wisdom of such a command must be evident to any one with the knowledge of the truth, or with experience in the world. Through disobedience man fell from his position and state of innocency and blessing in Eden; his blessedness in the Garden depended upon simple obedience to God's word, which indeed is the first principle of blessing for the creature at all times.

Under law obedience was demanded, but man proved himself incapable of keeping the law; under grace the Gospel is presented for the obedience of faith, which God provides; and the commandments of God for the Christian are the delight of the nature derived from God. Human relationships cannot possibly subsist in harmony if the subject vessel is not obedient, and the Christian servant is to obey with fear and trembling lest in anything by manifesting the spirit of disobedience he brings dishonour upon the Name of the Lord. Simplicity of heart in obedient service bespeaks undivided purpose of heart in serving under the eye of Christ. The man of the world works better when his master's eye is upon him and upon service readily seen, but the Christian, doing the will of God serves as well in the master's absence and in things unseen. Such service is from the soul, wrought ungrudgingly with good will as to the Lord, his heavenly Master, and not as unto men. Although the earthly master may not reward the good and diligent service rendered, the Lord will richly recompense the most menial task performed under His all-seeing eye. What an incentive this is to labour heartily in the ordinary duties of life! Here we read, "Whatever good each shall do, this he shall receive of the Lord." In Colossians the truth is complementary. "He that does a wrong shall receive the wrong he has done." It may be said that these injunctions were for slaves, and while this is true, the spirit of what is enjoined should surely characterise every believing servant.

Masters are to realise that the heavenly Master of their servants is their Master too, and their conduct should be ordered accordingly. If the Lord is going to repay good with good, they ought to do the same, for it is surely the privilege of the saint of God to follow in the steps of his Lord and Master. Nor should threats be used, for these are usually made in temper, and if not carried out authority is weakened. If threats are carried out to maintain authority, it is often to the hurt of both master and servant, so that it is better to maintain discipline by wiser methods than with threats. God has no respect for persons, so that whatever our position, whether master or servant, we are to keep this ever in mind. The man who heeds these exhortations will be the best master or the best servant.

We have been considering the features of the new man manifested in the public testimony (where the saint's relations with his neighbour are prominent), in the home circle, and in the business circle; now we are about to consider how the features of the new man are connected with the conflict into which we have been brought. If such is the order in which the truth is presented by the Holy Spirit, does it not suggest that we must be right in our relations in each of these circles before we can be found in the conflict according to God's will? A man who is not right with his brethren, his wife, his master or servants, because of his faults, cannot have the armour properly fitted. The new man is created in righteousness and holiness of truth, and righteousness and truth are parts of the divine armour. If practical righteousness is not manifested in the different circles in which God has placed us, and our conduct is not according to truth, the enemy will readily overcome us. Is it not in these circles that the armour of God is fitted, and we prepare ourselves for spiritual conflict?

"Finally brethren" indicates that what we have considered leads to this climax; we are to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Of ourselves we are no match for the enemy, but the Lord has met and overcome him, and if we are strong in Him our very weakness will but make way for the only power that can defeat him. The might of His strength has been displayed in His going down into the domain of the enemy, in overcoming him, and in leading captivity captive. We have to meet a foe whose power has been broken, but who seeks to overcome us with his wiles. In the strength of Him who defeated the enemy, and with the whole armour of God on, we need not fear the foe. When Joshua met the man who was going to bring down Jericho, he learned that He was the Captain of the Lord's host; and so long as Joshua and Israel relied on Him they defeated the enemy; relying on themselves they fell an easy prey to a few men from Ai, and to the wiles of the Gibeonites. Our struggle is not with flesh and blood so that natural weapons will avail nothing; our foes are principalities and authorities, the universal lords of darkness, the spiritual power of wickedness in the heavenly places. Here are unveiled the great forces of evil that influence this world in its hateful opposition to all that is of God; powerful spiritual beings, wielding mighty diabolical influence over the minds and hearts of men. These have immense spheres of spiritual authority which have become alienated from God in their fall, authority used to oppose God and to thwart His designs for the blessing of men. From their heavenly spheres of rule they bring their darkening influence to bear on men whose hearts are filled with hatred against God, who become their willing instruments for opposition to God's testimony. Such is the moral darkness in which man is found, his mind blinded in wilful ignorance of God, the prey to wicked spirits, and pursuing a course that leads to eternal ruin. In the conflict this dreadful array of evil is against us: we meet the wicked spirits as we seek to enter into God's presence for communion with Him regarding the rich spiritual blessings He has given us in Christ in the heavenly places; we meet their human agents down here in seeking to earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints. If we compared the opposition of the forces of evil with our weakness we might well be dismayed, but in the presence of the Lord and the power of His might the great giants disappear.

Against such foes we must have the panoply of God if we are to withstand in the evil day in which our lot is cast, a day that will last till the conflict is over. First we must withstand the assault of the enemy, then there are the things to accomplish in the conflict for God, and having done all we are to stand in possession of what we have secured in the conflict. Like Shammah, one of David's mighty men, who stood in the midst of a plot of lentils and delivered it out of the enemy's hand. Shammah withstood the enemy, secured the plot, part of God's inheritance given to His people, and stood there in possession. There is no opportunity in this warfare for putting off our armour; our foes are wily and vigilant. If we are definitely set for the Lord's interests, the enemy will soon make his presence felt, and if we overcome him in the Lord's strength, we should watch against his seeking to regain from us the ground he has been forced to relinquish, or perhaps something else that we have held for God. Is it not through lack of watchfulness that we so often and so sadly fail? Flushed with success, there is the danger of endeavouring to stand in our own strength in the ground taken from the foe in the strength of the Lord, and thus expose ourselves to one for whom we are no match in ourselves. Standing is therefore the great thing for us, but we can only stand if we are properly equipped by God.

Now we have the parts of the panoply of God, in which we are to stand in the conflict. First of all the loins are to be girt about with truth; truth in the inward parts will regulate our whole course, and

enable us to carry out God's will. Every inward spring of the moral being contributes to express what we really are; and unless all our desires, thoughts, and feelings, are affected by truth, yea protected by truth, the enemy will get a point for attack, and we cannot stand for God if we have wrong thoughts of God, or wrong feelings about Him, or if selfish desires and wrong motives control the life. Truth in the inward parts comes through communion with God, by feeding upon the word, which in communion the Spirit forms in us, giving that moral state which protects against the attacks of the enemy. The heart is the centre of the moral being, and it becomes us to be guarded against anything that would lower the moral tone of the life, which so largely depends on the condition of the seat of the affections.

Righteousness is to be our breastplate, protecting the heart as regards the conscience, for we must be right in our relations with God and with men to maintain a good conscience, if we would stand in the presence of the foe. Paul exercised himself to have a good conscience without offence in everything towards God and men, which surely means he always sought to have the breast protected with the breastplate of righteousness. A man with a bad conscience is of no use for meeting the enemy, for the enemy can readily engage such with his own failure and easily overthrow one whose heart condemns him. Will a man with a bad conscience seek to possess the portion in the heavenly places that God has given him in Christ, or endeavour to maintain the height of the calling wherewith God has called us? How very important it is therefore to allow nothing in the life that will affect the conscience, and so allow the enemy an unguarded spot for his fiery darts. Of wisdom, it was written of old, "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." This is the path for the Christian: peace is to mark all his steps in the shoes brought to him by the Gospel. The Gospel not only brings good news of peace made by the blood of the cross, and of peace with God for those who are justified by faith, but exhorts us, if possible, to follow peace with all men. What a contrast this is to the ways of men naturally, of whom it is recorded, "The way of peace they have not known." How very often the word peace appears in the epistles. One of the marks of the kingdom of God is peace we have been called to peace in one body; and we are to seek peace and ensue it. Will a quarrelsome Christian, engaged in fleshly contentions, be able to meet the subtle foe? His fleshly contentions are no match for the enemy, and the state of heart of such a disposition leaves room for the inflamed darts of the wicked one. In Christianity nothing is to be done in the spirit of strife, but in the spirit of Him who was meek and lowly, whose every step was peace. The shield of faith brings God into every circumstance of life, and this defeats the purpose of Satan, who seeks to bring distrust of God into the heart as he did with Adam and Eve in the beginning. Could we possibly participate successfully in the conflict connected with God's will for our blessing without absolute confidence in God? Unflinching confidence in the might of Christ's strength and in the goodness of God will quench every inflamed dart the enemy can produce. Faith relies on Christ Who has already met and defeated the foe; bring Him in, and every wicked suggestion of the enemy is dispelled. When the spies brought to Israel the report of the land, of which they said, "Surely it floweth with milk and honey," they said also, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we." They had not taken the shield of faith they forgot God; they were not strong in the Lord and the power of His might. But Joshua and Caleb were men of another sort; they had the shield of faith, and quenched the inflamed darts of the wicked one, saying, "If Jehovah delight in us, He will bring us into this land, and give it us, a land that flows with milk and honey."

Protected by the helmet of salvation, the thoughts are engaged with what God has accomplished for us and will yet accomplish. The mind has a very important place in divine things, and has to be guarded against the enemy. In the quiet confidence and consciousness that the issue of the conflict is with God we can lift up the head in the presence of all evil, knowing that God has already given us part with Christ; He has blessed us in Christ, and soon will bring us home to heaven to be with Him and like Him for ever. Yet our helmet here is not the hope of salvation; it is the enjoyment of a salvation presently known, for even that which is in prospect is ours in spirit now. Ephesians presents God's counsels, and our blessings according to those counsels, as established in Christ already seated in the heavenly places. So that in chapter 2 where it twice says, "Ye are saved by grace," it observes between these two mentions, He "has raised us up together, and made us sit down together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus." What a salvation to engage the mind; our place is even now in Christ in the heavenly places. Thus engaged in mind, our thoughts are protected from the evil one, and we can go forward to occupy the divine ground for the glory of God and our own spiritual enrichment.

God's word is the sword of the Spirit, a weapon against which Satan has no defence. See how the Lord Jesus used this mighty sword when Satan confronted Him in the wilderness! Thrice did He say, "It is written;" and the wicked one left Him for a season. To use the sword of the Spirit, we must know the Scriptures; but there must also be the spiritual condition, through living communion with God to be able to use the sword aright. It is the Spirit's sword, therefore we must be under the Spirit's control to use it effectively. Satan sought to use the Scriptures against the Lord; he was not wielding the sword of the Spirit. We must therefore not assume that an answer from the Scriptures is always the sword of the Spirit: the word of God is living; the application of the living word is the sword of the Spirit.

Lastly there is prayer, which is a very important part of God's panoply for us. Lack of confidence and dependence upon God will surely expose us to the watchful foe. In the wilderness the Lord met Satan with the word, the sword of the Spirit; in Gethsemane, "being in conflict He prayed more earnestly." We are to use the word as the sword of the Spirit, and we are to pray with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit; the conflict is spiritual. Praying at all times is to be cultivated, for we are to watch unto this very thing with all perseverance; and we are to persevere both as regards going to prayer and while engaged in prayer, for the enemy seeks to keep us from the presence of God even when we are bowing the knee. Prayers are not to be narrow, but to embrace all saints; the whole sphere of God's operations on earth will be remembered by those intelligent regarding the scope of God's testimony. Paul, because of the special ministry committed to him, had a claim on the prayers of the saints; and his work among the saints at Ephesus emphasised this claim: but how gracious of him to desire their prayers, that they might partake with him of the privileges belonging to the sphere of Christ's interests. The apostle especially requested their prayers that he might be given utterance to announce with boldness what lay upon his heart, the mystery of the Gospel. This was Paul's unique ministry; he spoke of "My Gospel," for in his preaching there were revelations ministered only by him, preaching which presented the glory of God and the glory of Christ. Deeply embedded in the Gospel preached by Paul is this great mystery, (which was also his peculiar ministry) which disclosed the eternal secret of the heart of God in announcing rich, heavenly, and eternal blessings for the church in closest union with Christ. On account of preaching this glorious truth, Paul, Christ's ambassador in this world, was bound with a chain. How

very solemn for the world to treat thus the representative of the heavenly Christ, who held out to them nothing but divine blessing. Spite of his circumstances, the apostle wishes to be bold that he might speak becomingly of this wonderful theme.

Knowing the concern of the saints for him, and desiring that they might be encouraged, Paul graciously sent Tychicus the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, to tell them all about him and his concerns. He then seeks for them peace with love and faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. On leaving His own, the Lord left them His peace; Paul would have the saints to enjoy this peace. All that we have is the sovereign gift of God, and comes to us through the Lord Jesus Christ. The final word invokes grace on all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruption; the grace that will enable us to enter into the wonderful revelations given in this epistle, and to answer to the exhortations for the expression of the heavenly light in every circumstance down here. Wm. C. Reid.

Vol 01-10 - Brief Notes on the Epistle to Titus.

Brief Notes on the Epistle to Titus.

Introduction. The great subject of the Epistle to Titus is the maintenance of godliness, that becomes us as Christians, in our individual lives; in our earthly relationships, and in our attitude toward the world. In this Epistle the apostle does not unfold the order, and behaviour, that should mark us when come together in assembly, as in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, but instructs us as to the conduct that becomes us in our private lives. This is surely of the first importance, for it is possible to be exceedingly careful as to our outward demeanour when found together in assembly meetings, and yet careless as to our behaviour in the family circle, in business connections, and before the world. Carelessness in the private life will surely lead to hypocrisy that uses a fair profession in public to cover up a poor walk in private. To this carelessness in the private life, may we not trace much of the weakness that often marks the assemblies of God's people, even if meeting according to Scriptural order? In the course of the Epistle, the apostle, again and again, insists on the connection between truth and godliness. If the truth is not maintained, godliness will surely fail; if godliness is not maintained the truth will fall into disrepute. Nevertheless, the apostle does not unfold the doctrine, nor is the maintenance of sound doctrine the leading subject, as in the Epistles to Timothy. He is rather pressing the importance of the right behaviour which is consistent with true doctrine. From the first chapter we learn the qualities that should mark those who undertake the care of God's people, hold fast the truth, and rebuke the unruly. In the second chapter we have set forth the behaviour that becomes us as individuals, in the different relationships of life, and which is consistent with the grace of God by which we have been so richly blessed. From the third chapter we learn what is our right attitude, as Christians toward the world, in consistency with the kindness and love of God toward men.

Titus 1:1-16.

(Titus 1:1-4). The introductory verses are of the deepest importance, for in them the apostle briefly alludes to the great foundation truths of Christianity, which form the basis of our practical walk as believers; govern our individual life before God, as well as in our relations with one another, and our attitude toward the world. The apostle speaks of believers as "God's elect." The election of God includes all the chosen of God, whether from among Jews or Gentiles, and thus takes us outside Judaism which recognises only those of Jewish descent. There follows a striking summary of the outstanding marks of God's elect:

Firstly, such are marked by "faith" which is the door into all blessing (Acts 14:27), and brings the believer under the shelter of the work of Christ, and into relationship with God. It stands in contrast to a religious profession which consists in the performance of ceremonies, and submission to ordinances, that are possible to the unregenerate apart from faith in God.

Secondly, "the faith" of God's elect, will lead to the acknowledgement of the truth, in contrast to mere speculations and reasonings of natural men, about the truth, by which they are not only

"never able to come to the knowledge of the truth," but are led to "resist the truth," and become "reprobate concerning the faith" (2 Timothy 3:7-8).

Thirdly, we are reminded that the truth will ever lead to a life of godliness, in contrast to error which leads to ungodliness. In writing to Timothy, the apostle warns him against those in the christian circle "who concerning the truth had erred:" of such he has to say, "they will increase unto more ungodliness" and "overthrow the faith of some" (2 Timothy 2:16-18). In this passage in Titus we have "faith," "truth," and "godliness" linked together. In Timothy we are warned that the overthrow of faith, error, and ungodliness are bound together.

Fourthly, the godliness, or "patient continuance in well doing" of the elect will lead to the sure and certain "hope of eternal life," when godliness will have its bright reward, in contrast to the portion of unbelievers who, by unrighteousness, are passing on to indignation and wrath (comp. Romans 2:6-8). The hopes of a Jew, or a man of the world, are limited to life in this world, and centre in earthly possessions, and worldly ease and prosperity. The Christian's hope is connected with a life that is not dependent on the things of time, or of this world. Eternal life was promised before "the ages of time," and connects the believer with the counsels of God for eternity. As we pass through the world it enables us to enter into fellowship with God as the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ (1 John 1:3), and in its fulness will only be enjoyed in life's eternal home. Therefore, while we have this life as a present possession, it can also be set before us as our hope.

Fifthly, the truth as to godliness, and our hope, has been manifested by God's "word." Believers are not left to tradition and the reasonings of their own minds, but they have the authority of the unerring word of God for the assurance of the truths they believe.

Sixthly, the truth manifested in the word, has been made known to us by the "preaching" which had been specially committed to the apostle, with all the authority of God, for the Gentiles, and, as we know, to be continued by "faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2).

Seventhly, the apostle's salutation indicates that if we are to acknowledge the truth, walk in the godliness that is consistent with it, have before us the blessed hope to which it leads, understand the word which unfolds the truth, and proclaim it to others, we shall each need, even as Titus, "grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour."

(Titus 1:5). Having brought before us the outstanding truths of the Christian faith, the apostle states the reasons that led him to write this Epistle. Titus had been left in Crete for a twofold purpose: first, to set in order certain things that were lacking in the assemblies in Crete; secondly, to appoint elders to maintain order. To carry out this service Paul writes to give Titus definite directions so that he may act with the authority of the apostle according to his instructions.

Today we have no apostles, and no apostolic delegates, to appoint elders, and for any to claim such authority would be mere pretension. It has been pointed out that there are no such directions in any of the epistles addressed to assemblies, clearly indicating that no authority has ever been given to assemblies to appoint elders or choose their own leaders. Nevertheless, we are surely to profit by these directions, and thus learn what are the qualities that still prove an individual brother fitted for watching over the interests of the Lord, and guiding others in the maintenance of order and godliness in local assemblies.

It will be noticed that it is not the possession of an eminent gift that fits a believer for such service, but rather moral qualifications. He is to be blameless, not only in his personal conduct, but in the circumstances of life both in the family circle, and in his relations with others. One has said, "While giving the evangelists and teachers their place, we should also value those who in a similar and less obtrusive way are devoting themselves day by day to strengthen the bonds of affection, and to repress the sources of disorder which, as we all know, continually spring up in christian assemblies" (W.K.).

(Titus 1:6). The one who would seek to maintain order in the house of God, must first show that he can maintain order in his own house. He must be blameless in his family relations — the husband of one wife, and his household free from all charge of riot and unruliness.

(Titus 1:7-8). Moreover, the one who would press godliness on others, must himself be marked by godliness. The apostle thus contrasts the ungodliness of the flesh — marked by self-will, passion, violence, and covetousness with godliness — marked by hospitality, the love of goodness, discretion, righteousness, piety, and temperance.

(Titus 1:9). Moreover, the one who would instruct others in the word, must himself hold fast "the faithful word" as he has been taught through "faithful men" (comp. 2 Timothy 2:1-2). "Holding fast the faithful word," will enable us, on the one hand, to encourage God's people with sound doctrine, and on the other hand, to "refute gain-sayers." It is not the knowledge of error that will enable us to meet it, but the knowledge of the truth — "holding fast the faithful word." We need to be "wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil" (Romans 16:19).

(Titus 1:10-11). In contrast to those who hold fast the truth revealed in the "faithful word," that leads to godliness, there were men, in those early days, who were "vain talkers," teaching error, and thus deceiving their hearers, and leading to ungodliness among the people of God by subverting whole houses. Such were actuated by the low motive of base gain. These false teachers were especially found amongst the Jews who opposed the truth by seeking to lead Christians back to a religion of outward forms and ceremonies in temple worship, that appeals to the flesh. When here, the Lord exposed the leaders of a corrupted Judaism, as being hypocrites who honoured God with their lips, but with a heart far from Him and who had turned the House of God into a den of thieves. The flesh does not alter, and thus christian assemblies are faced with the danger of linking with a profession of Christianity the outward forms of the circumcision, which ends in using a religious profession as a means of gain.

(Titus 1:12-14). We further learn that in seeking to maintain order and godliness in the assemblies of God's people, we have to take into account the different characteristics of people formed by their particular circumstances and nationalities, which may lead to the flesh showing itself in special evils. The circumstances of the Cretians made them particularly liable to deceitfulness, laziness and gluttony — characteristics to which one of their own prophets had drawn attention. Such manifestations of the flesh, so contrary to godliness, called for severe rebuke, in order that they might be "sound in the faith," and thus preserved from Jewish fables, and the commandments of men that would turn from the truth.

(Titus 1:15-16). To turn back to false teaching, and make a religious profession for false gain, is to open the door to all the natural tendencies of the flesh, and thus lead to ungodliness. Souls would

thus become defiled in "mind and conscience." This leads to the terrible condition in which a profession of God is linked up with works that are a practical denial of God. In the sight of God, such professors are "abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work found worthless." Is not this a solemn picture of Christendom in these last days that has the "form of godliness, but denying the power thereof?" (2 Timothy 3:5.)

Titus 2:1-15.

(Titus 2:1). In the second chapter we have brought before us the godliness that is consistent with, and the outcome of, sound doctrine to which the apostle refers in verses 1, 7 and 10. The behaviour, of which the apostle speaks, is that which becomes Christians in their individual and private lives in relation with one another. We thus learn that Christianity affects the smallest details of the every-day life, and that sound doctrine will lead to a godly life in every stage, and relationship, of our path on earth.

(Titus 2:2). In aged men, godliness will be manifested by sober mindedness, gravity of manner, discretion in words and acts, and soundness in the faith, in love and in patience.

(Titus 2:3). The aged women are to be marked by behaviour that becomes those who have to say to sacred things. By reason of their age and experience of life they will probably have a large acquaintance with others; let them beware lest such knowledge becomes an occasion for slander. Their age and infirmity may necessitate the use of a stimulant, but let them beware of becoming enslaved to much wine. By reason of their age and experience they should be able to teach what is right and good, and thus in a special way admonish the younger women.

(Titus 2:4-5). The younger women should be attached to their husbands and children. Discreet in their words and actions; chaste in their dress and deportment; diligent in home work; good, and subject to their husbands, so that nothing in their lives may give occasion for the word of God being brought into contempt.

(Titus 2:6-8). Young men are to be discreet in their words and ways. Titus, himself, being a young man, is especially exhorted to act in a way that would be a pattern for the young men, both in good works and in doctrine. Again we learn how intimately the life and the doctrine are connected. On the one hand, if the life is not right, the teaching, however correct, will have no power; on the other hand, let us beware of being content with good living while indifferent to sound teaching. In doctrine we are to avoid any perversion that would tend to corrupt the truth. Further in teaching we are to maintain gravity and thus avoid all extravagancies of manner that would bring the teaching into contempt. Moreover, we are to be careful to use "sound speech," and beware of using words and expressions current in the world but entirely out of place in divine things, and that would lead to the teaching being condemned. Acting in the light of these exhortations, those who seek to oppose would be silenced, having no evil thing to say of us.

(Titus 2:9-10). The christian servant (or "bondman") should be marked by obedience, and carry out his duties in a way that would commend him to his earthly master. This would involve that they refrain from contradicting their masters, or robbing them, but, on the contrary show all faithfulness. Thus, while acting rightly to their earthly masters, they would in all things adorn the teaching "which is of our Saviour God." In the closing verses of the chapter we have a striking summary of the doctrines of Christianity that lead to the life of godliness. The world can, in measure, recognise

and appreciate the right conduct to which we are exhorted in the first part of the chapter, but it knows nothing of the working of grace in the souls of believers, of which the apostle speaks in the closing portion. The current religion of the day is ready to preach morality and right conduct, but ignores the grace of God which alone is the true source of all godliness. How important then to have our souls established in the grace of God, without which morality will yield no lasting blessing.

(Titus 2:11). At once the apostle brings before us "the grace of God" as the foundation of all our christian blessing. We learn that grace brings blessing to us: teaches us how to live in the present world (verse 12); and gives us to look for a blessed hope in the future (verse 13). Seeing that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, we should hardly be surprised if the judgment of God had appeared. But the amazing fact is that the first appearing of the Lord Jesus has brought the grace of God into the world; for, while the law came by Moses, grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. Again we read, "God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved" (John 1:17; John 3:17). Moreover, if "all the world" is "guilty before God," this grace of God, that brings salvation hath appeared "for all men" (N. Tn.).

Directly we open the New Testament, we are face to face with the blessed fact that the time had come, in the history of this ruined and guilty world, when God had intervened for the salvation of men through the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, for we read, "Thou shalt call His name JESUS (1:e., Saviour) for He shall save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). In order that this salvation might be available for all, Christ Jesus "gave Himself a ransom for all" (1 Timothy 2:4-6). When ascended to glory, the message is still that there is no salvation in any other, "For there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). So, from the birth of Christ to His ascension, we see set forth in Him the grace of God that brings salvation for all men.

(Titus 2:12). If the grace of God brings salvation for all men, it also teaches those who receive the blessing through faith in Christ how to live a consistent life. So far from grace leading us to be indifferent as to our walk, it will lead, not only to the denial of ungodliness and worldly lusts, but, to a life marked by sobriety as regards ourselves, righteousness in our relations with others, and piety in relation to God. So living, the Christian will be a true witness to the grace of God "in the present course of things" that, alas! is marked by ungodliness and lust.

Sobriety will deliver us from having inflated ideas of our own importance, and lead to a sober estimate of ourselves in the presence of God. If living righteously we shall give to all their rights. Living piously we shall act in a spirit of reverence that walks in secret before God, and in the confidence of faith, brings everything to God. It is the opposite of the sanctimoniousness that leads to wearing a religious garb, the making of long prayers in public, and mere outward display, in order to gain a religious reputation before men. Characterised by sobriety, righteousness, and piety, the believer would be preserved from all eccentricities, and would present a well-balanced life, that would become a witness to the grace of God.

(Titus 2:13). Moreover, grace begun on earth will lead to glory. It gives us a blessed hope beyond this present age, with all its violence and corruption, that will be introduced by the "appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ." At His first appearing we saw "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye

through His poverty might be rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9). At His second appearing we shall see "the glory" of Christ. At His first appearing, in His lowly grace, He became a homeless stranger in His own creation, with not where to lay His head. At His second appearing He will be manifested in glory as "the blessed and only ruler, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords" (1 Timothy 6:14-15). When He appears in glory, believers will be with Him, and like Him, and perfectly at home with Him, for the grace that brings salvation fits us for the glory. If grace makes us strangers in this world, it makes us at home in the glory of the world to come.

(Titus 2:14). This blessed Person — Who is indeed "the great God," and yet our Saviour, the Man Christ Jesus — Who will come in glory to deal with all the wicked in judgment, is the One of Whom the believer can say, "He gave Himself for us," to "redeem us from all lawlessness," in order to secure for Himself a people exclusively for Himself, who will be zealous for the good works that will mark the life of godliness to which grace leads. He has thus established a claim upon us — a claim of love — that we should be for His pleasure. Christ has died for us, that henceforth we should not live unto ourselves, but unto Him that died for us and rose again (2 Corinthians 5:15). No one has such a claim upon us as Christ, for, as one has asked, "Who in this world, the nearest or dearest, ever gave himself for you?" To live for His pleasure will set us free from all lawlessness.

(Titus 2:15). Already the apostle has exhorted Titus to speak "the things which become sound doctrine," and now again he not only instructs him to speak of these things, and thus expound them, but to "exhort" his hearers to carry them out, and, if necessary "rebuke" any opposition to them. He was not to be hindered, if any man sought to pour contempt upon him, because he was a young man.

Titus 3:1-15.

Having been instructed as to the behaviour that becomes us in our relations with one another, we are now reminded of the conduct that should mark Christians in reference to the world we are passing through.

(Titus 3:1-2). As the elect of God we are called out of this world to share in the blessed hope of the coming glory of our Saviour Jesus Christ. As strangers in this world, it is no part of our responsibility to interfere with its government. Whatever the character of the worldly powers our place is to be subject, and obedient to rule. Whatever evil may mark their works, our place is to be ready to every good work. Whatever the character of the rulers, themselves, we are to refrain from speaking evil of any man. Whatever violence or injustice we may have to meet, our place is to act in a spirit of gentleness and meekness that refuses to insist upon our rights.

We know that it is not always easy to act in this spirit, for naturally violence, injustice and insult, stir up resentment in our hearts, leading to revengeful thoughts, if not angry denunciations, and the effort to avenge ourselves (Romans 12:18-19).

(Titus 3:3). To enable us to refuse the tendencies of the flesh, and act according to these exhortations we are reminded of two truths:

First, if we find it difficult to meet evil with good, violence with gentleness, and insults with meekness, let us remember that we, ourselves, were once ignorant of the grace of God, and, in those days, we, like the world, were marked by disobedience, deceit, lust, malice and envy. This

being so, it surely becomes us to meet in a spirit of gentleness and meekness, the evils in others, of which we ourselves were once guilty. To act otherwise, would only be to fall back into acting in the flesh by meeting evil with evil.

(Titus 3:4-7). Secondly, as a yet greater incentive to act in the spirit of grace towards others, we are reminded of the kindness and love in which God has acted towards men, and the mercy which has saved us from the judgment we deserve. If then God in His mercy has saved us from the world and its evils, it becomes us to show kindness and mercy to others as we pass through the world.

Let us remember that we were not saved by any meritorious works that we have done, but through the mercy of God. Not only are we saved from judgment, but a new life has been imparted to us, and the Holy Spirit given to us to live this new life. By this new life lived in the power of the Holy Spirit, we are cleansed from the old life with its ignorance, lust, malice, and envy. We are thus washed with the cleansing that will mark the regeneration, when in the days of the Kingdom all will be made new. If we are saved from the world, and cleansed from the old life, it is in view of the glorious inheritance to come, in which eternal life in all its fulness will be enjoyed.

(Titus 3:8). The word by which these great truths are made known to us is faithful. Therefore, we can with all confidence affirm these things, and exhort those who have believed to maintain the conduct that is consistent with them. These things: the grace of God, the conduct to which it leads, and the hope that it gives, are good and profitable unto men.

(Titus 3:9). If there are things to affirm which are good and profitable, there are also things to avoid. There is the danger of the mind being occupied with "foolish questions," with genealogies, contentions and strivings about the law. Such things are unprofitable and vain.

(Titus 3:10-11). Moreover, there are not only certain things to be avoided, but there may also be persons that we should reject, or "have done with." An "heretic" is not necessarily one that teaches false doctrine. In the Scriptural meaning of the word he is one who makes a party to uphold certain views. If deaf to a first and second admonition, it is evident that he is perverted from the path in which we are called to walk, and having refused all admonition, we are to refrain from further intercourse with him.

(Titus 3:12-13). The epistle closes with a glimpse of the godly care that should exist among the saints in reference to the Lord's servants, and those who devote themselves to the ministry. The apostle desires the company of Titus, but seeing the need in Crete, he instructs him not to leave until Artemas and Tychicus arrive in the island. He desires also that believers should continue in their temporal work, not only to meet their necessary wants, but also to enable them to help in meeting the necessities of the Lord's servants, and thus bring forth fruit that would abound to their account (Php 4:17-18). H. Smith.

Before the perfume could rise to God for a sweet smelling savour, the incense had to be beaten very small, and laid upon the coals of the altar (Exodus 30:1-38, Leviticus 16:1-34). The prayers of believers, the product of their diverse trials and sorrows, are a sweet savour to God. David says, "Let my prayer be set forth before Thee as incense, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice" (Revelation 5:8; Psalms 141:2). From the German.

Vol 01-10 - Come — and Rest.

Come — and Rest.

"Come ye yourselves apart and rest awhile."

How rich the recompense for hours of toil — The presence of our Lord! To Him without the camp
let us draw near With hearts where perfect love has cast out fear, And in such gracious tender
accents hear His ever precious word.

"Come ye yourselves apart" to sacred bower Where dew-drops glisten on the fragrant flower — Is
this our place of rest?

Nay, He who chose the desert bleak and lone, Where round His holy form the wind did moan,
Must give no shelter to His own Than on His loving breast.

"Come ye yourselves apart:" in days of old Exultant followers their triumphs told To One who
sympathised.

How they the feeble mind and limb made sound, The fettered captives' cruel chains unbound His
reassuring smile their service crowned — And this they greatly prized.

"Come ye yourselves apart." Oh tender call!

Stifling the sob within the breasts of all The loyal friends of John.

He who for Christ such splendid witness bore Was dead; "the voice of one" would cry no more:

They came and found where all was dark before The light of noon-day shone.

"Come ye yourselves apart and rest awhile." May we know more the sweetness of the smile He
still in glory wears For those who in the attitude of prayer With Him their every joy and sorrow
share.

Christ only has the ever open ear, He only knows and cares.

E. Scougal.

Vol 01-10 - Comfort at Jesus' Feet

Comfort at Jesus' Feet

John 11:1-57. The substance of an address at the Funeral of Miss Eva Phare.

There is great comfort and instruction for us in taking notice of Mary, the sister of Martha, whose habit it was to be at the feet of Jesus. This Scripture, which we have read, is not the first occasion on which she is in the presence of Jesus. She is seen in Luke 10:1-42 sitting at the feet of Jesus, hearing His word; and this, no doubt, accounts for her attitude in John 11:1-57. He had there made known to her His thoughts, and here she seems to have the intelligence of what was becoming to the occasion. It is of great divine import for each one of us to be so near to the Lord as to know His mind and the secrets of His heart. Sitting at Jesus' feet, and hearing His word, is the good part which shall not be taken from us; it is open for all, but only known and enjoyed by those who desire and seek it.

Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary, was sick, and the sisters, knowing the love of the Lord, sent to Him saying, "Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick." Knowing the issue of this sorrow for the family He loved, the Lord can say, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." How blessed it is to be loved by One who knows the end from the beginning; what comfort to the heart to realise that all our sorrows and distresses are known to Him, and that He seeks our greatest good in them. Whoever could have thought that the glory of God and the glory of the Son of God were wrapped up in the sickness of a human being? But such it is! Oh that we realised that God's glory is bound up with all the sorrows through which we are called to pass here.

After remaining two days where He was, the Lord took His steps towards the home of the sorrowing sisters; telling the disciples that Lazarus was asleep, but that He went to awake him out of sleep. At first, the disciples thought He spoke of natural sleep, and on learning that Lazarus had died, Thomas said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him." Poor Thomas had no more idea than Martha of the greatness of the Person of "The Resurrection and the Life." Martha, on hearing of Jesus' coming, went to meet Him, but Mary sat still in the house. Telling Jesus that if He had been with them, her brother would not have died, Martha speaks a blessed word, "But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee." Alas! that beautiful word was really beyond Martha's faith, as is seen, when Jesus tests her. She had faith in the resurrection in the last day; yea, she believed that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world; but it could not rise to accept Jesus as the Resurrection and the Life.

Calling Mary her sister, Martha says, "The Master is come, and calleth for thee." There is no mention of Jesus having called for Mary. Is it that Martha judged that the words spoken by the Lord were for Mary, who, having formerly sat at His feet, could enter into their meaning? Arising quickly, at the bidding of Jesus, Mary comes to where He was, and seeing Him, "She fell down at his feet." The place where she had learned His word, was the place to which she brought the deep

sorrow of her heart; this is where she found the solace and comfort her heart yearned for. She had nothing else to say than Martha had said on first seeing Jesus, but she weeps at the feet of Jesus. Her tears, and those of the Jews with her, cause the Son of God to groan, and trouble Him in spirit. How blessed to know that the Son of God can enter into the grief of the human heart, plumb the depths of its sorrows, and bring there the solace and comfort of His own love. If the failure and sin of man have brought grief and sorrow into the world, the Son of God has come to learn what grief and sorrow are that His love for His own might find expression in a ministry of sympathy and succour. On His way to the tomb "Jesus wept." This powerful expression of the feelings of the heart of God's dear Son speaks more eloquently than words the reality of His Man-hood, the tenderness of His feelings for His loved ones, and grief at the state in which poor man was on account of sin. Mary would never forget those precious tears, as Jesus walked with her towards the place where His glory and power were manifested. And can any true child of God, who has known the presence and companionship of Jesus in days of sorrow and bereavement, forget the sweetness of the sense of His company or the reality of His comfort and grace? Is it not worth while to pass through the sorrow to have Him with us? Like Mary, we can count upon His sympathy and presence, until we reach the scene where His voice of power will be heard in calling His loved ones from the grave.

Flowing out of this sorrowful experience Mary answers to the mind of the Lord, in true affection, in the next chapter. The Lord had ministered to her in teaching her His word, in showing His love and sympathy, and in manifesting His power; now Mary ministers to Him as she anoints His feet with costly ointment, and wipes His feet with her hair. The overflow of a heart that delights in Him, is precious to Him, gratifying His great heart of love. This surely is worship! What a deep joy to learn at Jesus' feet, to bring our grief and tears to Jesus' feet, and to worship at Jesus' feet! May we desire to minister to Jesus, worshipping Him; but, like Mary, this will only come as we learn in His presence, from His own word, and know in all the circumstances of life the companionship of Jesus. J. M.

Vol 01-10 - Contemplating Him.

Contemplating Him. Do you contemplate Him? I have heard people talk of reading some biography, and express themselves with the greatest delight over the lovely life of the person written of. Well, I am studying Christ; I am contemplating His excellency, learning to see Him as God saw Him. But you can never get up to it. No, I cannot; but I can contemplate it, and as I do so be "changed into the same image from glory to glory."

J. B. Stoney.

Vol 01-10 - Development and Revelation.

Development and Revelation.

It is Christ Who is the wisdom of God. In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. All the fulness was pleased to dwell in Him. He sanctified Himself that we might be sanctified through the truth. The Holy Ghost, having taken the things of Christ and revealed them unto the apostles, led them into all truth. Now all things that the Father hath are Christ's: therefore He has said that the Holy Ghost should take of His, and should show it unto them. This being the case, the question of a subsequent development is judged. Is there anything more than the fulness of the Godhead? anything more than "all that the Father hath?" anything clearer than "the true light?" But it is this which is revealed. If one thinks of man whose ideas originate in himself, as a spider spins a web out of its own substance, development may no doubt be spoken of; but if the question is the revelation of Christ, by the gift of the true light already come, Christ does not increase. And, assuredly, we shall find nothing good outside "All that the Father hath given Him." This is what we possess by revelation — the development inherent in the communication of truth to man belongs to his capacity of reception (in this there is progress for each one of us), and to the manifestation of Christ, from the time of John the Baptist unto His full revelation by the Holy Ghost — a revelation which we possess in the New Testament. No tradition can add to the revelation of that which Christ is — no development can give us one new truth with respect to His fulness. But this is everything. It is thus that the lofty pretensions of man are brought to nothing.

J. N. Darby.

Vol 01-10 - Exo_3:4

Exodus 3:4

How wondrous the condescension of God; He comes near, not to crush us, not to consume us, but to talk with us. Shall we not talk with Him about everything, even as He has to do with us in everything? The object God sets before us is Christ in death and resurrection; not only that, but it is God's estimate of Christ's work and worth, which gives us the privilege of coming thus near to Him, and that enables Him to come thus near to us and not consume us.

Moses says, "Who am I?" (Exodus 3:11). He had not done with self; he had a great schooling before he had done with that, and was satisfied after that, to have to do only with God. What makes us fit for service? If we believe in God, we are as fit today as tomorrow. It is Grace, grace, grace. That's all we want from the first day to the last. The oldest can only the best tell the young ones, that we have nothing, are nothing; all is grace. Our power is the eye of faith being fixed by faith on God's object, not on our own faith; some make this sad mistake. Alas, alas, and turn their eyes on their faith, instead of Him Who died and rose again, God's object.

"This the token," (Exodus 3:12) wondrous token, only for faith to apprehend; God cannot meet your own condition, but by His Christ. Obedience brings you into blessing. In Exodus 12:1-51 we get people put under the privileges of the blood — their security perfect — He purposed to redeem, all contingencies provided for; everything concluded and included in Redemption, from the first movement of spiritual life, till we shout Hallelujah in glory. Of Him and to Him and through Him are all things; Hallelujah. See 1 Corinthians 5:7; Christ our Passover." That same night Christ was crucified, the shed blood was the protection of all under its cover — our true shelter this.

Christ's work remains in all its efficacy; but we do not habitually realise this, nor His dwelling in us. Trials, sorrow, sin, what not, overcome us. We must judge ourselves, that we be not judged of the Lord. Power to judge ourselves for evil, is power against it. In His presence we slay it He is near in every time of need — our very present help. Faith in God's word and power is our strength. 'Tis our place to make known our need; 'tis God's to supply our need. How apt are we to forget this. Properly taught in God's word and power, we should only be established by every trial, and so far from thinking it against us, we should see it to be for us. G. V. Wigram.

Vol 01-10 - Faith and Love.

Faith and Love.

Faith and love are as the very life-breath of the saint. We find that they are communicated, as a new moral being, at the outset, as taking the place of the old life of sin, in the antagonism to both God and man of that life. Saul of Tarsus was, as he tells us, "a blasphemer and persecutor and an insolent overbearing man" (1 Timothy 1:13). Towards both God and man he displayed the whole force of the nature he possessed; blaspheming upwards, persecuting outwards, "in ignorance and in unbelief." Then, in the fulness of his energies "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord" (Acts 9:1-43), the blessed, blessed Lord intervened: "The grace of our Lord surpassingly overabounded with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 1:14). Faith and love are communicated, "faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." They spring thence, are one there (the verb is in the singular): "faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." Further, they are never separated from their source, we possess them in Him. The whole man, thus, in his moral being, in the in-breathings of his soul, and the outgoings of the same, and in his whole actions, is now characterised by what he has thus derived from Christ in the overabounding grace of the Lord and possesses in Him. Well does he add, "Faithful is the word and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am first." It was a plant which would grow indeed, as he himself traced its development in his epistles to the saints; but it was now planted livingly. This, then, stands at the outset of the christian career, that which he has received in the overabounding grace of the Lord, and it traces its way through that career until the end when faith will be changed to sight and God known as love. In the development of faith and love this is seen in its brightness and freshness with the Thessalonians, in their "work of faith, and labour of love, and enduring constancy of hope of our Lord Jesus Christ, before our God and Father" (1 Thessalonians 1:3). Paul saw in them thus that which assured him of their election: "Knowing," says he "brethren, beloved by God, your election" (verse 4). And if, in his second epistle it is manifest that their "hope" was in somewise wanting, he can yet speak of their faith and love: "Your faith increases exceedingly, and the love of each one of you all towards one another abounds" (2 Thessalonians 1:3); so that he boasted in them (verse 4). But further in 1 Thessalonians 5:8, he would have these very two things put on as armour: "But we," says he, "being of the day, let us be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as helmet the hope of salvation." They are as a robust nature in exercise (for we must remember that while the breastplate is "put on" it is faith and love which are so) to resist attacks upon it, just as a healthy body does the germs which would invade it. What could Satan do in assaulting them as to the tribulations they were witnessing in the apostle and enduring with him if each was characterised by faith, hope and love? But without attempting to trace fully these two precious things, it may be indicated that they stand at the gateway of three great spheres of development of the mature christian. I refer to (1) the glory of Christ, (2) the counsels of God in Christ, and (3) the family of God.

Let us look at them briefly.

First then, if we take the Colossian epistle; and if I speak of the mature christian here, it will be realised that the term is used; bearing also in mind that there was a certain immaturity in evidence in that Assembly, and which the apostle sets himself to correct. But there is a maturity here also which justifies the term. What, then, is the ground of the apostle's thanksgiving when praying for them? It is their "faith in Christ Jesus, and the love which ye have towards all the saints" (Colossians 1:4). He gives thanks, as basing his prayers upon that, "for the hope which is laid up for you in the heavens; of which ye heard before in the word of the truth of the Glad Tidings, etc." So again, faith, hope and love are found also together and the Gospel. Let us hold fast to that. Faith and love then stand at the outset for the development, in doctrine, of the supreme glory of THE SON. It is not to go into this development here, but to note the fact.

Then in the Ephesian epistle, to which indeed we might attach the term of maturity as to the christian state, it is the same thing: these two things — faith and love — are the very basis of his prayer for them in the first chapter. "Wherefore I, also, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which is in you, and the love which ye have to all the saints, do not cease giving thanks for you, making mention of you at my prayers, etc." (Ephesians 1:15, et seq.). Hope, one might say incidentally is not brought in here, because the form of the mystery in this epistle is not as in the Colossian "Christ in you the hope of glory," but in the present communion of the saints in the power of the Spirit.

Finally, in respect of the family of God in John's first epistle, we have, when the christian state is brought to completion so far by the words "He that keeps His commandments abides in Him and He in Him," we have "And this is His commandment, that we believe on the name of His Son, . . . and that we love one another even as He has given us commandment" (1 John 3:23). Then immediately, after a parenthesis as to proving the spirits, in 1 John 4:1-21, we get, "Beloved, let us love one another; because love is of God, and every one that loves has been begotten of God and knows God." And then follows the, manifestation of that love in God, in the Son; its perfecting in the saints; and its perfecting as to us as giving "boldness in the day of judgment" because "even as He is, we also are in this world" (1 John 4:17); the whole wealth of love for the family of God. The Lord give us by His present grace to be maintained in faith and love, so that we may breathe and move in our own proper sphere, and enjoy HIM who has communicated the nature that we might so know Him. C. N. Snow.

Vol 01-10 - Friends of God.

Friends of God.

It is surely the fervent wish of every true child of God to be marked by the features and comportment that publicly manifest the friends of God. Some one might ask, But is a true child of God not a friend of God? One would unhesitatingly reply, Yes! In the counsels of God's sovereign grace and mercy every true believer is constituted such, and as being partaker of the divine nature he is endowed with those spiritual susceptibilities consistent with this blessed relationship. But I speak of what is characteristic of us in our public life, our responsible life here upon earth, rather than the place we occupy before God, graced in the Beloved One. Even in natural things "Rank imposes obligations;" how true this is of the Christian! What we are before God is to be wrought out livingly, in the power of the Spirit, in our ways and conduct before men. The life of Abraham, so fruitful in results for God, provides us with most interesting and deeply instructive material for our contemplation and imitation. This life of "the father of all them that believe" exemplifies in a most beautiful way the truth of the words, that the essential characteristic of the life of faith is strangership, but this founded upon citizenship elsewhere. Stephen, in his defence (Acts 7:1-60) before his accusers, declared that the God of glory appeared into Abraham, and it was this glory that threw into the shade all the glory of the world around. To us, the Father of glory has been made known in His blessed Son, the One who has given being to a whole system of divine glory; and a voice from the unseen calls us to the enjoyment of faith's portion even now. As beloved Mr Darby expresses it so beautifully:

What powerful, mighty Voice, so near, Calls me from earth apart —

Reaches with tones so still, so clear, From th'unseen world my heart?

Abraham desired no place in this world, but with his tent and his altar he waited for the city which has foundations, of which God is the Artificer and Constructor: his tent marking him out as a pilgrim and sojourner before men, his altar speaking of him as a worshipper before God. Our tent and altar must go together. If pilgrim ways and character are not maintained down here, we cannot expect to be in a priestly state to exercise priestly functions before God in the heavenly sanctuary. Moreover, Abraham pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west and Hai on the east (Genesis 12:8). Hai means "a heap of ruins," no doubt typifying the ruin of the old creation; and thus, between a judged world and Bethel, "The house of God," Abraham's tent is pitched in view of both; and there he builds an altar, and calls upon Jehovah's Name. Do these things not speak to us with powerful voice, beloved saints of God? We too stand between a doomed world and that scene of cloudless joy, where "God in His own Rest is fully known."

What is our attitude to this world? Do we take account of it in its true moral condition as lying in the wicked one? the whole system in all its ramifications entirely antagonistic to God and His Christ; its moral features, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Do we desire to settle down, or have a position, in a world, which, were it not for the restraining mercy of God, would

totter to irrevocable destruction; and this in spite of all man's boastful claims to progress and enlightenment? Let us take our stand for God, with uncompromising resolution, with unflinching courage; and as empowered by the Spirit of God, and fortified by the word of God. Thus shall we be proof against all the seductions and blandishments of a world at enmity with God. Let us give heed to those solemn words in the Epistle of James, "Know ye not that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore is minded to be the friend of the world is constituted enemy of God" (James 4:4). Let these solemn, searching, sifting words sink deeply into our inner consciousness, so that their serious implications for time and eternity may be rightly appraised by us. There are of course those legitimate things, to which we must give due attention, such as our homes, and our business, and things that touch the world in some form and degree; yet even these things ought to be held but lightly, as we lay hold, with purpose of heart, on those things which belong to that scene where "all things are of God," refusing all that would retard our progress, and militate against the realisation of being worthy of that title, which Abraham so richly merited — "FRIEND OF GOD" (James 2:23). A. Shepherd.

All below lies dark and shadowed,
Nothing there to claim my heart,
Save the lonely track of
sorrow, Where of old He walked apart.

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God's Centre of Universal Blessing

(John 12:1-50).

Although the Son of God has been refused His rightful place by the world, the Father has given all things into His hand, and it is His good pleasure to make Him the centre of every circle in the vast universe of bliss: and our hearts rejoice in the Father's good pleasure regarding His beloved Son. When the Son was here, the Father was drawing men to Him, and this great work still goes on; but it is as lifted up that all is drawn to the Son of Man, God's centre of the universe. From John 12:1-50, where we read of the Lord Jesus thus we learn who are drawn to the divine centre, and how they are drawn. The Lord was on His way to the cross to die: only a few days remained until the passover feast at Jerusalem, and Martha, Mary, and Lazarus made Him a supper. This family had known the Lord Jesus; each one was loved by Him, and His love had captivated each of their hearts. But death had entered their circle, and it was through death that they had learned the blessed Lord in a way they had not known Him before. His love had been deeply realised in His sympathy with them in their sorrow, for "Jesus wept;" but His divine power had been felt and known in the resurrection of Lazarus from the dead. He had truly manifested Himself to be the Son of God with power, the Resurrection and the Life.

Here then we find a favoured circle, drawn to the Son of God, as knowing His love and His power. Martha's response to Him is in devoted service, not the service now that is occupied with itself, but which in true affection is lavished upon its object. Martha had formerly believed Him to be "The Christ, the Son of God which should come into the world," but now she knows Him to be the One who has power over death. How blessed indeed for Martha, or for any saint of God to be engaged in service, divine service, which has the Son of God Himself for its only object.

Lazarus is privileged to sit down at the table with Jesus, in sweet and favoured communion with Him who raises and quickens the dead. Does not this beautiful incident teach us that the Son of God acts in mighty power that He might bring us into the circle where our souls can delight in communion with Him? Later on, He tells Peter that His washing of the disciples feet had in view their having part with Him. Our communion with the Lord in the Father's house will be for endless delight and joy, but part with Him now in His own things before the Father is what the Lord would have every saint enjoy.

If Martha is engaged in serving the Lord, and Lazarus is enjoying communion with Him, Mary is occupied in worship; her heart filled with the glory of Christ's Person. The pure nard is of great price, telling that Mary values Him beyond, the most precious thing down here: the Son of God has His true place in her heart, and none other but Himself fills her vision and her thoughts. It is therefore no wonder that the whole company benefits from Mary's precious act: the whole house is filled with the odour of the ointment. No doubt this first circle gives us a little picture of the Christian company, which is even now privileged to serve the Lord, to commune with Him, and to worship

Him, as knowing Him in His glory as Son of God. But in verse 12 we see another circle: a great crowd that comes to the feast; and having heard that Jesus is coming into Jerusalem, they took palm branches, and went out to meet Him, and cried, "Hosanna, blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord, the King of Israel." Is not this a picture of the coming day when Israel will rejoice in celebrating the return of the Lord Jesus as their King? When He first came, He was refused as the Messiah, but Isaiah 25:9 clearly shows that He will yet be received: "And it shall be said in that day, Behold, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is Jehovah, we have waited for Him; we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation." In answer to their Hosannas, the Lord shows Himself to be their promised King, according to the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9, for "when He had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written, Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt." But the prophecy was not fully fulfilled then: it awaits the glorious day, of which we have spoken. In but a few days Israel cried "Away with Him;" and the solemn judgment merited by them has since fallen upon the guilty nation. Nevertheless, all the prophecies of old, which speak of Israel's blessing under the hand of their King, shall find an actual and blessed answer, when the Lord returns to take the kingdom, and bring in peace, prosperity, and joy to His ancient people.

If Zechariah 9:9 foretells Israel's blessing under their King, the following verse gives Him a wider domain: "And He shall speak peace unto the nations; and His dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth." It is no wonder then that the Greeks desire to see Jesus, for the picture of Zechariah 9:1-17 could not be complete without the Gentiles. How refreshing to the soul to look on to the day when the Nations are blessed, "A great crowd, which no one could number, out of every nation and tribes and peoples and tongues, standing . . . before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palm branches in their hands" (Revelation 7:9). If Israel have the palm branches in John 12:1-50, the Gentiles have them in Revelation 7:1-17. These are blessed as having "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." When Andrew and Philip come to tell Jesus of the desire of the Greeks, He speaks of Himself as Son of Man, saying, "The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified." It is as Son of Man that the Lord Jesus will take up the reins of universal government, and bring blessing to the Nations. But before the Christian company can be associated with Him, He must die, for their association with Him is on the risen side of death. Before poor Israel can be blessed, the blood of the New Covenant must be shed. Before the Gentiles can wash their robes and make them white, the blood of the Lamb must be poured out. Death therefore comes before the Lord: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, it abides alone; but if it die, it bears much fruit" So that we see that all is accomplished through His death and resurrection. The thought of the cross brought trouble to the soul of Jesus, but He would not say, "Father, save me from this hour;" His word to the Father was "Father, glorify Thy Name." What a blessed answer came from the Father, "I both have glorified and will glorify it again!" The Father's Name had been glorified in His pathway: it would be glorified in His death. It will be glorified too as a result of the cross: in every company being drawn to the Son, even as He said, "And I, if I be lifted up out of the earth, will draw all to me." The Son will fill every sphere, and His praise will fill every part of the vast universe of bliss.

J. Muckle.

"Praise the Lamb," the chorus waking, All in heaven together throng:

Loud and far each tongue partaking Rolls around the endless song."

God's Righteous Grace.

If a sinner was to be saved for eternity — if the grace of God was to make a righteous basis for justifying the ungodly, Jesus the Son of Man, must be delivered into the hands of man; and then an infinitely fiercer fire must burn — the divine judgment, when God made Him sin for us; for all that man, Satan, even God Himself could do, comes upon Him to the utmost.

W. Kelly. A Prayer.

Lord Jesus Christ, invigorate our poor cold hearts to sound forth the eternal honours of thine adorable Name; and may our lives be more and more the decided evidence of our hearts-love to thee, for "Thou alone art worthy."

C. H. Mackintosh.

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God's Discipline.

I may be called on to pass through pain, and sorrow, and trial, as a part of His discipline; but everything that comes from God, comes from a source and spring in which I have confidence. I look through the circumstances to Him; and nothing can separate from His love. . . . God cannot rest in the corruption of sin. He can only rest in that which is perfectly holy. And because He who thus rests is love and loves us, He makes us understand that He will bring us into His own rest, into His own delight. Now let the soul once know what the rest of God is, let the heart be once set upon it, there will be joy unspeakable in understanding that God's love can rest in nothing short of bringing us into His own delight. There will then also be the full settled consciousness that we cannot find rest elsewhere.

J. N. Darby.

Vol 01-10 - Hold Fast.

Hold Fast.

One of the most interesting and affecting scenes recorded in the Holy Scriptures is that given in Acts 20:17-38. Since the Spirit of God penned these words, the hearts of His people have often been uplifted, as they contemplated therein the zeal and devotion of God's honoured servant Paul, the great Apostle to the Gentiles. Notwithstanding the fact that the Holy Ghost had witnessed that bonds and afflictions awaited him, he triumphantly pursued his course, for none of these things moved him, neither counted he his life dear to him, so that he might finish his course. But a heavy burden lay on his heart, for he knew that "grievous wolves" were awaiting the opportunity, on his departure, to scatter the flock on which he had bestowed so much care and affection. How touchingly he reminds the elders of Ephesus that for three years, night and day, he ceased not to warn every one with tears. Calling upon them to watch and remember, he commends them to God and the word of His grace and finally prays for them all.

Now let us take our thoughts from Paul and those first century Christians, and crossing the intervening centuries of the church's chequered career — fix them on the saints in their present condition. Who will venture to claim that spiritual progress has been a marked feature of her long history? Has the Bride been loyal to her heavenly Bridegroom? Has the church truly manifested to a lost and perishing world her heavenly character in holy separation? Alas! we must hang our heads in shame, and confess that her whole course has been marked by failure. But God has always had His chosen witnesses, who, like beacons, have illumined the darkness in their own day and generation, and it is even so today, while the professing church approaches that solemn hour when, Christ, whom she professes to serve and honour, will spue her out of His mouth (Revelation 3:16).

Many Christians await, with daily expectation, their Lord's return, anxiously waiting to hear their heavenly Bridegroom say, "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away" (Song of Solomon 2:10). Not a doubt have they that they are in the "perilous times" of the last days, predicted by Paul. They are "perilous times" because iniquity abounds under a fair Christian show, a form of godliness with the denial of its power: "perilous" too, because "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12). But their hearts beat high in anticipation of the soon-coming compensation, "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him" (2 Timothy 2:12); a rallying call that must have cheered the persecuted saints in that distant day. Great would be our loss if we regarded the apostle's exhortations as having no message for us today; and may the Lord preserve us from turning a deaf ear to them. A favourite exhortation of Paul's was "Hold fast." In 1 Thessalonians 5:21 he calls upon the saints to "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." How much sorrowful strife and division would have been avoided if saints had heeded this brief word of exhortation. In Acts 20:30 we have this warning to the Elders of Ephesus, "Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." Often has the need of this warning been evident. How often, in a time crisis, have leaders, on some plausible pretext,

persuaded whole companies of Christians to follow them in a path not according to the truth of God. But the blame lies not only with the leaders, but also with those who give blind submission to them, and who thus shirk their responsibility to judge matters for themselves in the Lord's presence, as the Bereans of old, who searched the Scriptures daily whether these things were so (Acts 17:11).

Never was there a day when the messengers of Satan were more active, pouring out from pulpit and platform their evil teachings in the form of "good words and fair speeches" to deceive the hearts of the simple. What need for the solemn warning of the Lord in Matthew 7:15, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." Such men seek to impress their hearers by their scholarship and knowledge, but under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the youngest believer can prove all things, and hold fast that which is good. Let us value the truth, and hold it at all costs. A second "Hold fast" is in Paul's second epistle to the Thessalonians, "So then, brethren, stand firm, and hold fast the instructions which ye have been taught" (2 Thessalonians 2:15). Those conversant with the two epistles to the Thessalonians will have noticed a marked difference between them. The first rings with a joyful note. Paul commends them for their work of faith, their labour of love, and their patience of hope. Although suffering terrible persecution, their joy was in the Lord and in the glad expectation of His coming; and the heart of the apostle was filled with delight, so that he speaks of them as his glory and joy. Turning to the second letter, we are conscious that evil has been working among them. Like some blight that settles on a beautiful flower garden, the emissaries of Satan had cast their blight of unbelief on this fair garden of the Lord. Paul again commends, as in his first letter, their faith and love, but makes no mention of their patience of hope or their joy in the Holy Ghost. Evidently their hope of the Lord's coming had become dimmed, and consequently their joy had waned, so well had these false teachers done their deceitful work. The apostle had taught them that the Lord Himself was coming, and that they would be caught up to be for ever with Him; but the false teachers had persuaded them that the day of the Lord had already come, and that the trials and tribulations through which they were passing were the proof of it. No wonder they were troubled and shaken in mind. Assuring them of the error, Paul seems to say, Do you not know that Christ is coming for you, and the first object and effect of His coming will be to gather you together to meet Him in the air? In view of this working of error, it is not surprising that the apostle, in his second letter, as in his first, exhorts the saints to "hold fast." His second appeal appears to be even more emphatic than the first, "Stand firm, and hold fast the instructions which ye have been taught" (2 Thessalonians 2:15). May this firmness and tenacity be more characteristic of all true believers in these last days!

Turning now to 2 Timothy 1:13 we find another of Paul's hold fasts: "Hold fast the form of sound words." On reading Paul's two letters to his beloved Timothy, one is struck with his frequent references to what is the opposite of sound words. Timothy was not to give heed to fables and endless genealogies; some had turned aside to vain jangling, understanding not what they said. Timothy was to refuse profane and old wives' fables, and withdraw himself from men occupied with questions and disputes of words. But these false guides are not alone in guilt, as the apostle shows; "The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Timothy 4:3-4). No enlightened saint would deny the

fulfilment of this solemn prophecy in this our day. It is because there are itching ears that the insidious poison is imbibed. But while many are being carried away by the torrent of evil teaching, the grace of God has provided a sure "hold fast," and a firm foundation for all who desire them.

Just as Timothy was exhorted to "Hold fast the form of sound words," so it is the inestimable privilege of every man to plant his foot firmly on, what one of Britain's most famous Prime Ministers called, "The impregnable rock of Holy Scripture." Oh that men would realize that in their search for light and life they are entirely dependent on the living word of the living God. In Isaiah's day men had lost the knowledge of God, and were seeking light by resorting to familiar spirits. This sorely distressed the great Evangelical prophet, and caused him to utter that pleading cry, "Shall not a people seek unto their God? Will they go for the living unto the dead? To the law and the testimony! If they speak not according to this word, for them there is no daybreak." "No daybreak!" unspeakably solemn words! They remind us of Peter's reference to the false teachers, in which he designates them as "wells without water . . . to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever" (2 Peter 2:17).

"My power and might are thine faint heart:

Say, why art thou cast down?

Stand, holding fast what grace thou hast, That no man take thy crown."

Hold Fast.No. 2.

We read in the Epistle to the Hebrews 3:6, "But Christ, as Son over His house, whose house are we, if indeed we hold fast the boldness and the boast of hope firm to the end." Students of Holy Scripture need not to be reminded that one of the objects of this most important Epistle was, to detach the hearts and minds of the Hebrew Christians from an earthly system of religion that was temporary, and to direct them to what was heavenly in origin and character, and eternal in duration. A close study of the writer's statements, wherein he sought to accomplish his purpose, would afford a rich spiritual feast to all who undertook the soul-edifying task.

It is evident that the epistle is addressed to converted Jews who were passing through a period of trial and persecution. They would be thoroughly conversant with the Jewish religion; and all the prominent personages, places and practices pertaining to the earthly system would be well known to them; and the fact that the system was instituted by God Himself would undoubtedly ensure its veneration by them. But the whole system had been set aside by God, for it had not been able to procure blessing for men; and in it God had been dishonoured by the wickedness of Israel.

Many Scriptures could be quoted to show the solemnity of the people's failure in the holy things of God. Read Isaiah 1:10-15, wherein God says, "Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting." Another prophet states that the priests had polluted God's sanctuary (Zephaniah 3:4); and the last prophet of the Old Testament presents things at a very low ebb. Malachi reveals that the people had no heart for God and His things; although there was the outward show of religion, there was no reality. They brought the lame and the blind for sacrifice to God, thus despising His holy Name. Coming to the New Testament there is no evidence of recovery on the part of the people. Their beautiful Temple which our Lord had at the beginning of

His public ministry acknowledged as His Father's house, He afterwards speaks of as "Your house," left desolate, for God had forsaken it (See Matthew 23:38). The condition of things that met God's holy eye could scarcely be worse than it was; but the darkest hour of night is just before the dawn. A new order of things was about to be ushered in; Christ was about to build His assembly of LIVING STONES; but before the church could be brought into being, Christ the Son of the living God must suffer death on the cross and rise again. Blessed indeed is the portion of those who can sing: On Christ salvation rests secure; The Rock of Ages must endure; Nor can that faith be overthrown Which rests upon the "Living Stone." In Him, it is ordained to raise A temple to Jehovah's praise, Composed of all the saints, who own No Saviour but the "Living Stone."

View the vast building, see it rise; The work how great! the plan how wise O wondrous fabric! power unknown! That rears it on the "Living Stone."

These words recall to our memories our Lord's words to His servant Peter in Matthew 16:13-18, "On this rock I will build my assembly, and hades' gates shall not prevail against it." How very solemn and foolish the notion of those who maintain that this rock was Peter, rather than the truth confessed by Peter that Christ was the Son of the living God. Multitudes are seeking rest for their souls in Popery, where this notion is held; in a system which is but a revival of Judaism, a human and formal religion whose approaching end is definitely stated in Revelation 18:1-24. What a contrast to this is the glorious future of the true church, portrayed in Revelation 21:1-27.

Reverting now to the text at the beginning of this paper, we note that the writer finds it necessary to warn the Hebrew believers that their being God's house depended on their HOLDING FAST the confidence and rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end. This shows that the truth of the building in Scripture contemplates on the one hand the sovereign, divine workmanship, where the gates of hades can not prevail; and on the other hand, that aspect where man builds, and where failure and ruin enter. Popery has confused these two, vainly imagining that the powers of evil cannot prevail against that which man builds, be he ever so evil. Of the danger the Hebrews were in another has said, "The Hebrew Christians were in danger — being attracted by their former habits, and by a law and ceremonies which God Himself had established — of forsaking a Christianity, in which Christ was not visible, for things that were visible and palpable. The Christ of Christians, far from being a crown of glory to the people, was only an object for faith, so that if faith failed, He was deprived of all importance to them." (J. N. Darby.)

How very solemn and yet lamentably true are these soul-stirring words. How many there are in this day who revere the things that are "visible and palpable," be they beautiful buildings of finest architecture, charming and impressive music, or earthly priests clad in richest vestments: things that appeal to man after the flesh. Others, though not attracted by such things may get their eyes fixed on men rather than on Christ, and be affected by chosen leaders, companions, or friends with whom they have enjoyed Christian fellowship. God will have us occupied with Christ in the glory, not with visible things down here, be they naturally attractive or appealing to the emotions. May these words not apply to us. "Faith has failed, Christ is deprived of all importance to him." Oh! let us ever "HOLD FAST the precious truth that belongs to God's House, over which Christ is SON; let us "hold fast the boldness and the boast of hope firm to the end." As called with a heavenly calling the saints do not belong to this scene, they belong to heaven whither they are bound, for heaven is their glorious destiny. The church does not belong to the earth; Israel is an

earthly company, but the church belongs to heaven. If the church does not hold fast its true character and hope it entirely falsifies what it is as the House of God, hence the exhortation to hold fast the boldness and the boast of our heavenly hope. Anything that tends to weaken in the soul our true heavenly character tends to give a false impression of the God Who has called us to be for Him in testimony in the present moment. May we not become feeble or cowardly; may it be constantly the joy and boast of our hearts that we belong to heaven and are going to heaven, so that our feet may tread the heavenly way that leads to where our fore-runner has gone, within the veil. Till that blessed hope is realised in the coming of the Lord, may the prayer of our hearts ever be "O, keep us, love divine, near Thee. That we our nothingness may know, And ever to Thy glory be Walking in faith while here below."

Hold Fast.No. 3. In a previous paper we were reminded of the precious truth that all true believers in our Lord Jesus Christ constitute the house of God. Confirmation of this wonderful fact is found in 1 Peter 2:4-5, where we read of the saints being built up "A spiritual house;" and in Ephesians 2:20-22, where they are spoken of as "Built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit." It is well to note the prominence given to Jesus Christ in these important Scriptures. Truly His glory far outshines that of Moses, who was faithful as a "servant" in the house of God; but Christ as "Builder" of the house, and as "Son" over it, has been counted worthy of greater glory (Hebrews 3:3).

What visions of glory do these precious Scriptures reveal to us! In presence of the greatness of the light they afford, we do well to search our hearts. Do we, as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, realize or appreciate, as we ought, the dignity that God places upon us, in calling us to be living stones in the formation of His house? Psalms 29:9, referring to an earthly temple, says "Every whit of it uttereth glory" (margin); and another Psalms 96:6, says that strength and beauty are in His sanctuary. Knowing that these features characterized God's earthly house, we conclude that it must be His desire that these same features, in a spiritual way, should be manifested in His house at the present time. May it ever be, dear fellow believer, our desire and prayer for grace to enable us, in this world of darkness and unbelief, to show forth, as living stones, some rays of the glory, some manifestation of the strength, and some traits of the beauty, of the church's living Head. Thus shall we give pleasure to the heart of our God. In this same chapter, Hebrews 3:14, there is another exhortation, to HOLD STEADFAST. Here we are reminded that believers are become companions of the Christ, if indeed they hold the beginning of the assurance firm to the end. In using the word "partakers" instead of "companions" in this verse, the authorised version has missed the true meaning; it is not our blessing in Christ but rather our place with Christ that is spoken of. It is the same word as "fellows" in Hebrews 1:9, where we read of Christ being anointed with the oil of gladness above His companions. Companions of Christ! Companions of Him, whose glories are unsearchable, whose power is illimitable, and whose love is unfathomable! The question may well be asked, "Who are these highly favoured ones, whose privilege it is to enjoy such intimacy with the mighty Son of God?" Are they a select company of glorious angelic beings? Are they chosen from the records of the patriarchs, prophets and kings in the Old Testament? Are their names emblazoned on the renowned pages of this world's history? No! none of these! They are those to whom our Lord referred when, on the morning of resurrection, He said to Mary, "Go to my brethren. and say unto them, I ascend to my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." They are those referred to in Hebrews 2:11, "For both he that sanctifies and they who are

sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." Yes! they are those found on earth today, who, as true believers, are not ashamed to confess Jesus as their Saviour and Lord. They may suffer scorn and rejection by the world, but as companions of their rejected Lord they pursue their happy way to the longed-for goal: To be with Him in life's eternal home, Where sin, nor want, nor woe, nor death can come.

Having spoken briefly on these two wonderful truths in Hebrews 3:1-19; firstly that believers form the house of God, secondly, that they are become companions of the Christ; our earnest attention must be drawn to the fact that the possession and enjoyment of these great blessings are rendered conditional by the word "if." "Whose house are we if we hold fast" (Hebrews 3:6); "Companions of Christ if we hold . . . steadfast" (Hebrews 3:14). These ifs are intended to produce soul exercise, and we will thank God for them if this happy result is achieved. They are certainly not there on account of any change in God's attitude of grace, nor any withdrawal of His purposes of blessing for men. They were introduced because some of the Hebrews were only professors. When they heard the glorious message of salvation, "the word of the report did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard" (Hebrews 4:2). They were like the stony-ground hearers, there was no root in them, and when tribulation and persecution came, they were offended, (Matthew 13:21). Some also longed for the material things pertaining to an earthly religious system, things which aforesaid they had given up. It is remarkable that after each of these conditional promises, a most solemn warning is given by the devoted writer of the epistle (See verses, 7, 8; 15). He knew the irreparable and eternal loss which the Hebrews would suffer if they left the path of faith for the weak and beggarly elements of Judaism. How earnestly he reminds them of the deplorable conduct of their forefathers in their wilderness wanderings; their continual murmurings, notwithstanding God's goodness and mercy; their crying for bread, and God sending the manna: their crying for water, and God's bountiful supply from the smitten rock; their crying for meat, and God sending the quails. God, in pity, delivered them from Egypt's dread bondage, saying, "I bare you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself;" His mighty works, watchful care, and invincible power they had known and proved for forty years; yet they tempted Him by saying "Is the Lord among us or not?" (Exodus 17:7). Could there be worse ingratitude? Could there be greater sin?

Solemnly indeed do the warning appeals of Hebrews 3:1-19; Hebrews 4:1-16 sound in our ears, "Today, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." But alas! we know the warnings were unheeded, the evil heart of unbelief prevailed, the dire result being their departure from the living God and the perishing of that mighty host in the wilderness, with the exception of two invincible men of faith, Caleb and Joshua.

Most probably these timely and solemn warnings, given to the Hebrews in the first century of the Christian era, produced in many of them that state of soul exercise which resulted in their eternal salvation. But we are living in the twentieth century. Have these warnings any voice for us? Does the solemn responsibility rest on us to take heed, lest there be in any of us an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God? There are many false teachers who would seek to persuade us that we are quite free from such responsibility because the warnings in Hebrews were for Jews only. We would be well advised to turn a deaf ear to such, knowing that God will deal in judgment with those who corrupt His word. No! we can claim no exemption, nor do we wish to do so. These solemn heart-searching, God-given warnings are meant for every twentieth century believer, and

woe betide us if we neglect them.

We are in the midst of a Christendom whose heart is one of unbelief. Departure from God, as a consequence, marks its sad and downward course; and its predicted doom is rapidly drawing near. Let us, dear fellow-believer, hold fast to the precious truths we have been considering, for we can only prove that we are God's house, and companions of the Christ by holding fast our assurance of hope firm to the end.

R. B. Wilson.

Vol 01-10 - Individual Blessing.

Individual Blessing. The least of all saints can never be overlooked by Him, or distinguished from others, either in time or eternity. We are loved as individuals, saved and glorified as individuals. The truth is clearly taught in Luke 15:1-32, and John also speaks much of our individual blessing, the family of God being his principal theme, as the church of God is Paul's, and the wilderness journey Peter's; yet it is Paul who says, "Who loved me, and gave Himself for me." Paul here speaks as if he were the only one that Christ loved and died for. Faith appropriates what grace reveals. It is only in this way that the heart enjoys the revelations of grace. Understandest thou this O my soul? It is all important. This is the province of faith alone. It makes the blessing, however great, personal. No matter what grace reveals in Christ, as the children's portion, faith is sure to say, "It is mine."

A. Miller.

Vol 01-10 - Intimacy with Christ.

Intimacy with Christ.

"Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." It is not any particular truth He brings in; He brings in Himself. He says: I will make you know Me in the intimacies of daily life; I will come and sup with you, and then you shall learn what it is to sup with Me. I will throw myself into all your circumstances, and then you will come to mine. J. B. Stoney.

Vol 01-10 - Introduction

Introduction In his second epistle to Timothy, the apostle Paul enjoined his beloved child to "have , " and to "keep by the Holy Spirit which dwells in us, the good deposit entrusted." This injunction, in the holy Scriptures, comes to us that we might know how to hold fast the truth of God in these last days, when it is being given up on every hand, and when its heavenly power over the hearts of God's dear saints is being lost, with consequent departure from the path of God's will. We do well to realise that the truth cannot be maintained unless the doctrine encompassed in the outline of sound words is held intelligently and tenaciously, or without the spiritual condition, consonant with the doctrine, produced in the heart by the Holy Spirit. With the true knowledge of the doctrine, and with hearts answering to it by the working of the Spirit, there will be the manifestation of the truth in the lives of God's dear saints, where indeed, it is to be held according to the mind of God.

If the Lord will, we hope to send out this little magazine occasionally; desiring and praying that the Head of the body, the assembly, our Lord Jesus Christ, will furnish it with ministry that will help His beloved saints in the apprehension of the precious truth of God, and encourage their exercises towards its manifestation in their lives.

William C. Reid. (Editor) Quotations of Scripture are from the Authorised Version, or from the New Translation of J. N. Darby.

Vol 01-10 - Keeping Rank.

Keeping Rank. In the wisdom of God our lot has been cast in the last days, of which the Apostle Paul speaks as "perilous times" in 2 Timothy 3:1; and it behoves us to recognise the true character of the days in which we live, so that we might seek the Lord's mercy to preserve us, and His grace to maintain us, until He comes to rapture us home to His Father and our Father. It must be evident to every spiritual eye that the enemy is doing his utmost to rob the saints of every bit of truth, and to mar their testimony to it; but God is able to keep His own from the withering, evil influences that are all around, and to enable them to manifest their true character as strangers and pilgrims here (1 Peter 2:11). When David, God's anointed, was in rejection and hunted by Saul, there were faithful men who jeopardized their lives for him. Observe what the Spirit of God says of these men in 1 Chronicles 12:1-40. They came to David (1 Chronicles 12:1), they were mighty men (1 Chronicles 12:1), they were armed (1 Chronicles 12:2), they could use both hands in conflict (1 Chronicles 12:2). Such are the men God desires today; those drawn to Christ in true affection, who are strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, who wear the whole armour of God, and who have the arms of righteousness on the right hand and on the left. Among David's warriors were the men of Issachar, "Who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do" (1 Chronicles 12:32), and men who could keep rank, who had a perfect heart (1 Chronicles 12:38). Do we understand the times in which we live? Have we the mind of the Lord regarding these difficult days? And with these things are we seeking to go on together according to the mind of God, with perfect heart, seeking only to be for His pleasure in the conflict of these last days? How many things can turn us aside from doing the will of God, turn us away from the ranks where the truth is being kept for the glory of the Lord. The features of faithful men are also given to us in Exodus 18:20-21. They were to be taught in the word of God, they had to know how to walk, and how to work: they must needs be able men, fearing God, men of truth, hating covetousness; men who could bring peace to the people by righteous judgments. Surely there is a word for us in this Scripture, which has been written for our instruction and encouragement. These are the traits we should covet, so that we might be for God's pleasure in these last days. The way we have been called to is a narrow way, even as the Lord said "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way . . . and few there be that find it." The path is not easy, but His grace suffices; there are many trials and exercises, both in the individual walk and in the assembly, but the resources of Christ are unailing. Paul knew these temptations and exercises in a special way. After enumerating many of his trials he spoke of "the care of all the churches."

Then in 2 Timothy 2:1-26 we get what should be true of the Christian — the features of the man of God. He is to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 2:1), he is to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ (2 Timothy 2:3), he is not to get entangled with the affairs of this life (2 Timothy 2:4), he is to strive lawfully (2 Timothy 2:5), he is to be a labourer in God's service (2 Timothy 2:6), and he is to consider the word sent from God, so that the Lord might give him understanding in all things. Remembering that Jesus Christ is raised from the dead, according to Paul's Gospel, the man of God will not seek to waste his strength on the things here

that are to perish, but will direct all in view of the resurrection side of death. God's man is a separate man (2 Timothy 2:21), separate from all that is inconsistent with the truth and holiness of God; and his associations will be with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart (2 Timothy 2:22). How very important these Scriptures are, when the inspiration and truth of the Scriptures are being denied on every hand; and when even true believers are careless regarding what is due to the Lord in His assembly, and to God in His house. Scripture is to be our guide; it is God's infallible Word. Even Peter had to be withstood; so that we must not rest in God's servants, but in His living, unerring Word.

What resources and blessing God has given us for these last days! In 2 Timothy 1:1-18 God has given us the promise of the life that is in Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 1:1); He has saved us and called us, and this according to His own purpose and grace, given us in Christ Jesus before the world began (2 Timothy 1:9). If the church has grievously failed, God abides faithful; and it is on God that Paul relies in view of the last days; and he shows us that everything remains in Christ Jesus. Nothing can revoke God's purpose, or overturn God's foundation; His word is our sure guide until the end, and His work can never be destroyed. If we see the great mass of the Christian profession giving up the truth; and many who once valued the truth, no longer walking in the power of it, we can, like Paul, fall back on God and His faithfulness, realising that all is safe in Christ Jesus. With such resources and encouragement we can surely seek the Lord's grace to keep us going on until the end. At the close of his pathway, the Apostle could say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7). Did he say this when all was bright and prosperous in the church? No! the very opposite was true, because all in Asia had turned away from him, and this would include the saints of Ephesus and Colosse. But he had the comfort of the few faithful ones, and above all, the help and comfort of the Lord, who stood with him when all deserted him. May we all seek to be faithful, like Paul, of whom it could be truly said that he KEPT RANK.

J. Muckle.

Vol 01-10 - King and Priest upon His Throne.

King and Priest upon His Throne.

It is a matter for solemn and sober reflection that the world of which men are so proud is torn and riven by the terrifying and revolting happenings of a devastating and catastrophic war. Munitions of war, the product of man's genius, skill, and ingenuity, have rained death and destruction in merciless and pitiless fury upon defenceless men, women and children. According to the reckoning of men, the world has not yet reached the glorious climax of its achievements, it has not yet attained the apex of its culture and civilization. It is an age-long proverb that "Hope springs eternal in the human breast," and so men, their hearts filled with fear and perplexity, hope against hope that out of the welter, ruin, and convulsions of war, some commanding personality will arise to lead them through the glorious portals of some earthly Utopia; like the fabulous bird, Phoenix, which arose from its own ashes to begin life afresh. With a distinct sense of relief the child of God turns from all this fantasy of futile imaginings to the Word of God, which speaks with the infallibility of the Spirit of God, declaring with divine certitude and authority that His counsel will stand, and that He will do all His pleasure. As its pellucid light shines upon the momentous present events, we gather from its sacred pages that there never was a greater period in the history of this poor world than the day in which we live. The portents around us are of the gravest character: man's world is about to pass away, and the day of the LORD will then be ushered in. Man's day is the long period in which man has been allowed to exercise his own will without the public intervention of heaven. The day of the LORD is the coming kingdom of the Lord Jesus, which will be abruptly introduced by desolating judgments. He will smash to pieces the whole fabric of man's godless civilization, and upon the ruins thereof He will establish an order of things that will perfectly suit the eye and heart of God. The supremacy of God will be displayed in the securing for His glory and pleasure all that He has purposed for the blessing of this poor world. As Job exclaims, "I know that Thou canst do everything, and that Thou canst be hindered in no thought of Thine" (Job 42:2 N.Tr.). At the dawn of this world's history the supremacy of God is set forth in grand and majestic language, "In the beginning Elohim created the heavens and the earth." This word Elohim speaks of God as Supreme — it is Deity, God in the absolute! Creation speaks with eloquent voice of the supremacy of its Creator; "For from the world's creation the invisible things of Him are perceived, being apprehended by the mind through the things that are made, both His eternal power and divinity" (Romans 1:20 N.Tr.). But while creation thus speaks of its wonderful Creator, its distinctive glory lies in this, that it is the arena in which will be displayed the regal glories of that Blessed One Who shall sit as Priest upon His throne — God's King set upon Zion, the hill of His holiness; when, in the language of Psalms 2:1-12 He shall ask, and shall be given, the nations for an inheritance, and the ends of the earth for a possession. But the setting up of this kingdom, which is an everlasting kingdom, is conditional upon the subjugation of all His enemies, when He shall break them with a sceptre of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. He shall smite through kings in the day of His anger, and smite through the head over a great country (Psalms 110:5-6). Then, in the wake of the retreating storm of devouring judgment, will the Sun of

Righteousness arise with healing in His wings; to heal the deep wounds of earth, and to hush the groans and sighs of a travailing creation. Loud acclamations of praise and unrestrained joy will then fill the redeemed creation, manifesting that the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever (see Isaiah 32:17-18). It need hardly be remarked, beloved, that these things, relatively important in themselves, relate exclusively to earth.

What of the present? What are the resources of God for His people who are heavenly in origin and destiny? What provision has He made for those who shall reign over the earth with their Glorious Lord in the time of display but who for the present have part in the time of His patience? Let us turn to Psalms 110:1-7, where we find that all God's resources for us are invested in the Son of God, a Priest forever after the order of Melchizedec. This blessed portion of the Word of God gives us the official inauguration of Messiah, the Son of God, as Priest after the Melchizedec order. Now while the preceding and following verses are future, verse 4 indicates what is present and perpetual; "Thou art a Priest forever, after the order of Melchizedec." The references to verse 1 in the New Testament show His present session at God's right hand is consequent upon His rejection by the heads of the nation; but the earth rejected One is the heaven accepted One, exalted to the Throne of God, which is seen in Revelation as the Throne of God and of the Lamb; and there He sits until His enemies are made His footstool. From that place of supreme power upon God's throne He administers power, for that is one of His functions as Priest: He also ministers blessing to His people. In Genesis 14:1-24 Melchizedec blesses Abraham of the Most High God, and also blesses God who had delivered his enemies into his hands. Psalms 110:7 also bears upon this Priesthood, "He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall He lift up the head." He came into this world in lowliness and dependence, the Man of Sorrows, the Man of Gethsemane and Calvary, in all His dependence upon God drinking of the brook, even as Elijah did. In the days of His flesh He offered up both supplications and entreaties to Him who was able to save Him out of death, and He was heard because of His piety; and though He were Son, yet learned He obedience from the things that He suffered. Thus is He able to sympathise with and succour those who tread the desert path, for He not only exercises the functions of the Melchizedec Priesthood, but also those typified in the Aaronic, though the order of His Priesthood is that of Melchizedec. How eminently suited is this Priest for such a people! At one moment in our experience we tread the wilderness pathway, at the next we enter the heavenly Sanctuary with hands filled in worship to God the Father. We need both a Wilderness Priest and a Sanctuary Priest, and both are combined in Him, in the Son, perfected for evermore. This is the Priest who becomes us in our mixed condition. May I suggest, in a simple way, what the chief functions of the Aaronic Priesthood are. Firstly, atonement; secondly, intercession, with all its resultant succour and sympathy for a weak people. All is to be found in this blessed One who exercises all these priestly functions for us in a heavenly way. In Leviticus 9:22-24 we have presented to us in type this Melchizedec blessing, heavenly as well as earthly. After the sacrifices for sin for Aaron and for the people had been slain, the blood put upon the Altar, and the bodies burnt outside the camp, then the Burnt Offerings and Thank Offerings are slain, and their parts with the Meal Offering are laid in order on the Altar. At this point Aaron, before going into the Tabernacle with the blood, lifts up His hands and blesses the people. This is before the acceptance of the sacrifices is manifested openly but based upon it. Afterwards, Moses and Aaron both go into the Tent of Meeting, and coming out, the sacrifices having been accepted, both lift up their hands in blessing, then the glory of the LORD appears to all the people, and fire

went out before Him and consumed the burnt Offerings and the fat, which were upon the Altar. All then saw their acceptance in the acceptance of the sacrifices. The blessing of Aaron sets forth in figure that which our Melchizedec pronounces upon His people now, before the public manifestation of His accepted sacrifice. This blessing is to be known today. The Lord being raised from the dead, and Himself knowing the acceptance of His sacrifice, lifts up His hands in blessing (see Luke 24:50-53): He enters heaven in this very act. From thence He sends down the Holy Spirit, that we might know the acceptance of this great Sacrifice and enter into all the wealth of priestly blessing. On the other hand, the blessing of Moses (King in Jeshurun) and Aaron, when coming out from the Tabernacle sets forth that blessed One who shall sit as King and Priest upon His Throne, His people willing in the day of His power receiving blessing untold from His priestly hand. In closing, let me quote the words of another: — "Blessed Son of God, invested with a double Kingly glory, combined with all the holy halo that surrounds the Priest — what glories radiate from Thy Person there in heaven! All the attributes of God are seen to blend in Thee and constitute Thy glory. Thyself on high in peace upon the basis of Thy work in righteousness, Thou stoopest to the lowly! Thou supportest those who tread the desert path, relieving them of their burdens! Thou empowerest them to overcome their foes t Thou meetest the weary world conquerors with the bread of peace, the wine of joy! Thou blessest them with heavenly blessings from God! Thou leadest them into the Holy Places! Thou presentest the resultant praise to that same God, an acceptable gift from such hands in all the savour of Thine own glorious Person and work!" A .Shepherd.

Vol 01-10 - Life Indeed.

Life Indeed.

Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you" (John 6:53). In this verse of Scripture the act of eating is mentioned. There is nothing imaginary or mystical about eating, and when we eat a definite action is performed; we have taken something in, and in taking it we possess it in the truest sense of the word; we appropriate the thing eaten in the fullest measure, so that it becomes part and parcel of ourselves. Moreover, eating is a very individual matter, as one cannot eat for another: each must do it for himself if nourishment is to be derived.

There is an oft recurring phrase in our conversation: — "There is an exception to every rule." In this beautiful verse of Scripture, spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ we have a rule and an exception. The RULE is that as ordinary men and women, poor sinful mortals, we have no life in us. Here are the words of the Son of God, "Verily, verily I say unto you . . . ye have no life in you." Ponder these very solemn words, dear Reader. This rule includes each one of us, for every child born into the world, starts out on life's journey without divine life. Listen again to the words of Jesus, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you." Here is the EXCEPTION: those who have eaten the flesh of the Son of Man drunk His blood no longer remain in their hopeless state of moral and spiritual death, away from God, but have His life in them.

Eating and drinking are the strongest terms of APPROPRIATION, so that in eating Christ's flesh and drinking His blood we appropriate His death for ourselves, by living faith, a faith that brings what belongs to that death into the deep recesses of the heart. Look at Ephesians 3:17, "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith," and again in 1 Peter 3:15, "Set apart Christ as Lord in your hearts" (R.V.). As we lay hold on Christ by faith, whether in death or in life (for He is risen from the dead) we take Him into our hearts, making Him our very own, so that He becomes part of ourselves.

What are we to learn from "The flesh of the Son of Man," and from "His blood?" The Holy Spirit, in chapter 1 speaks thus of Him, "In the beginning was the Word . . . and the Word was made flesh." Before angels, before worlds, before time, before men, the Son was in the eternal beginning, but in one act, the Son of God has taken a mighty stoop from Godhead glory into Manhood. Here then, His flesh speaks of His humanity, His down-stooping grace. His blood as apart from His flesh surely speaks of His death; and it was with death in view He became flesh; an absolute necessity if God was to be glorified in relation to sin.

We discern in His flesh and His blood that which meets the intrinsic holiness of God, and that which meets our state and our guilt as dead and guilty before Him; and feeding thus upon His death we partake of LIFE, eternal life, and enter into the wonderful love made manifest in that wondrous death.

Andrew Duncanson.

Power from on High.

Christianity subsists in the power of God. The greatest man upon earth can communicate nothing. No man however great ever brought to Christ any natural quality that could be used in the service of Christ . . . Power from on high is the only power that can accomplish anything for God.

J. B.

Vol 01-10 - Love and Obedience.

Love and Obedience.

(John 14:1-31) Notes of Bible Reading with J. A. Trench.

(John 14:1-3). We can estimate but imperfectly what it was to have the Father's house presented to the disciples for the first time — for nowhere else is it spoken of. Jewish hopes looked for the manifestation of Christ on earth, but now, instead of that, it is the full revelation of the Father's house to which the Lord directs their hearts. They had believed in God without a manifestation of God; now they were to have Him as the direct object of their faith. Then He says, "I go to prepare a place for you." Redemption having settled every question of our sins — and thus prepared us for the place — His presence there prepares the place for us. He is coming again to receive us to Himself, but, between His going and His coming, He has sent the Holy Ghost that in heart and spirit we may know the Father's house before we get there. The coming is dropped in the rest of the chapter which is the unfolding, all through, of the power of the Spirit.

(John 14:4-7). "Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." It is as if He had said, "Ye know the Father's house." Thomas said, "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest; and how can we know the way?" Jesus immediately says, "I am the way" — the way to the Father's house, and the way to the Father. We have come to the Father, and thus to all the deepest blessedness of the Father's house. It is the Father's presence that makes the Father's house. Christ is the revealer of the Father: to receive Jesus as the Sent One of God is to have the Father revealed in the fullest sense. "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee (the Father) the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent" (John 17:3). Is the Father's house for others besides the Church?

What John presents is only for this dispensation. The Father's house will not be revealed to saints in the Millennium. But we have entrance, by the Spirit, to where He is gone. Hence while it is no question of corporate blessing, only those who compose the Church know this blessedness now. Not that Abraham, and such, will not know the Father in the future, but they never knew it on earth.

(John 14:8-11). Philip seizes the thought of the Father, and so he says, "Show us the Father," proving how little he had grasped the glory of the Person of the Lord. In reply, the Lord says, "Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me?" His "words" and "works" were a full manifestation of the Father, in whose bosom He dwelt that life of communion, that life of relationship, into which He was then introducing us. Thus we have the path of Jesus in His words and works; then the work of redemption to set us there, and then His coming again to bring us there actually.

(John 14:12-14). The works that He had done, they would do also, and more wonderful works, from the greater nearness to the Father as Man which He was to take. A poor sinner who receives His words now is brought into greater nearness than could be while He was on earth. "If ye shall ask anything in my Name, I will do it." That is the new blessing into which we are introduced.

(John 14:15-24). Now comes the path by which we can enjoy it unhindered. Love leads into the path, and then there need be no check to the enjoyment of all the Lord leads us into. "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me." Then the power of it — the Comforter, the Spirit of truth shall abide with you for ever, whom the world cannot receive. The Spirit is here because the Lord is not here." I will come to you," is a present thing, come for you is a future thing. The revelation of the Father was here, but the enjoyment of that revelation could only be in His going away. In touching words He almost reproaches them for not having discerned Him.

What are the commandments? The commandments and words are very like each other. They differ essentially from the law. All that manifested His life here is given to us to form that life in us. The commandment is the direction of the Lord in certain things; but His words are connected with a higher spiritual intelligence that leads to the obedience to the word, when an actual command might not be found. What I see true of Him is now given me. The commandments have to do with certain details, but the word expresses the whole life, all that is seen true of Him is seen now as a commandment for me. Does it need more communion to keep His word?

"If a man love Me, he will keep my word." One walking in nearness to the Lord will not wait for a command, but seeing the life of the Lord — what is in Christ — the Holy Ghost produces it in me. As the Apostle could say, "By the meekness and gentleness of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:1). I am formed by that life, in occupation with it. "I will come to you" is the result of the Spirit's presence — the opened eye to see Him Who has withdrawn from the world. "Because I live ye shall live also," is not merely security, but it takes in all His present service for us, that we may hang upon Him moment by moment.

"That day" is the Holy Ghost's day. Then "Ye shall know." This leads to the development of the words "I in you." The having the commandments is the proof of love. A careless child forgets the commandments, but an obedient, intelligent, child is glad to get his Father's words and treasures them in his heart.

(John 14:25-26). What a comfort to them that the Lord speaks of the One He would send from the Father, bringing back to their remembrance all that He had said to them, and would teach them, so lighting up the path of the Lord Jesus as to bring them into the intelligence of it, and this He does for us too.

(John 14:27-28). "Peace I leave with you." What a legacy! The peace in which He had ever walked down here, bringing us into association with Himself — not giving away. He was leading them into an unknown path. "If ye loved Me ye would rejoice because I go unto the Father." He had taken the subordinate place on earth as Man, but was now going back as Man to the place of nearness.

(John 14:29-31). The chapter does not close until the perfection of the path He had trodden is brought out — love and obedience. The love, the spring of obedience — doing His will instead of our own. This would lighten up the loneliest path of each one, that every act may be in obedience to that blessed One.

Vol 01-10 - More than Conquerors.

More than Conquerors.

There is a difference between the conflict referred to in Ephesians 6:1-24 and that in Romans 8:1-39, conformably with the doctrine of each epistle. In Ephesians — if also one speaks with a necessary diffidence — it is that the saint might stand in the truth, power and communion; testimony to the authorities in the heavenlies of his heavenly standing in Christ, in a walk consistent therewith. In Romans 8:1-39 it is different. The question is whether, the saint is to languish under the distresses which characterize this desert scene, through which he passes, under the shadow of him who once held the might of death, or whether in the bright shining of the power and victory, and above all, the love of Him Who passed through everything in that love to secure us; and the love of Him to whom everything and every one is creature. In what triumph, in the light of Christ, do those words come, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us." So, accusations met by Christ's intercession on high, and the light of this two-fold expression of love in the valley below, with what sweetness of embrace do the words meet us, "The love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Yes, beloved, we are no longer in Adam, with its entail of sin and death, but we are in Christ for life, righteousness, Christian standing: a new circle in which we are made to feel at home, with the immensity potentially of that wondrous term "In Christ" before us; but at home there with God, who has so acted towards us, as developed throughout in the doctrine of the epistle. Death has proved to be our liberator on the one hand, and the exposition of the mighty all-prevailing love of God, on the other.

Psalms 44:1-26, from which verse 36 of our chapter is a quotation, could hardly go as far as this in an as yet unaccomplished redemption. Yet the faithful remnant there find themselves the companions of the KING in Psalms 45:1-17 (our position, too, through grace: Hebrews 1:9; Hebrews 3:14); and in Psalms 46:1-11 find the covenant Name of Jehovah restored to them. But what a God is ours, and how truly is it "The Gospel of God . . . concerning His SON, Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 1:1; Romans 1:3).

C. N. Snow.

We triumph in Thy triumphs, Lord;

Thy joys our deepest joys afford. The fruit of love divine.

Vol 01-10 - Moses' Love for Israel.

Moses' Love for Israel.

It is very interesting to see how deeply attached Moses was to God's earthly people. As their chosen leader, it was given to him to lead them out of Egypt towards the land that God had promised to their fathers. Spite of Israel's rebellious ways and ingratitude, his love for them remained the same: he had the marks of a true servant of God. In the Epistle to the Corinthians we find the Apostle Paul tested in the same way; yet his love remained unchanged towards the saints of God, even as he said, "And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved." During the time Moses was on the mount with God, receiving the commandments for the people, poor Israel was speaking against God's chosen leader, saying, "As for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him." Instead of tracing all the way that God in mercy had led them, and recalling the divine power that had delivered them from Egypt and Pharaoh's bondage, and thinking of all God's care and provision during their journey; they forget God, speak against His servant, turn to idolatry, and give themselves up to the gratification of the flesh. How little had they entered into God's purpose for them, or appreciated all He had done for them! How grievous was Aaron's failure, in stripping the people of their ornaments, to make a calf for the people to worship, as turning their backs on God! Had Aaron been in the full light of God's purpose, he would have maintained the people for God during the absence of Moses. Is not this where many have made shipwreck? God's purpose must be kept ever before us, maintained in spiritual energy and divine affections, in communion with God, Christ dwelling in the heart by faith.

God communicated to Moses Israel's departure from Him, even before he left His presence on the mount; and spoke of His intention of consuming the people. This was a great trial for Moses, yet he manifested his great love for Israel in speaking to God of His purpose respecting them; and how He had brought them forth from Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand; and recalls the promise God had made to their fathers. God delights in intercession, and repents of the evil He thought to do unto the people.

Descending from the mount with the two tables of stone in his hands, containing God's commandments, Moses hears the noise of singing; and drawing near to the camp, he saw the calf and the dancing. His holy, righteous anger waxed hot; and with divinely given wisdom he cast the tables out of his hands and brake them beneath the mount. It was indeed great wisdom, and mercy, too; but for that act, the whole of the people must have perished there in the righteous judgment of God. Although God's thought for His people is blessing, He cannot overlook their failure. There must needs be great heart-searching and self-judgment. Israel's fleshly merriment soon brings their greatest sorrow. The calf is ground to powder, and they must needs drink the fruit of their sin; and shorn of their adornment they must stand exposed before their God. These things have been written for our learning, and it behoves each one of us to walk softly and in humility of mind before our God. Here lies our true safety, for only as we walk before God in self-judgment,

and with chastened spirit, can we be maintained in the light of His purpose.

Moses, dear man of God, bows in contrition of spirit before Him, pleading that Israel belonged to God, and that He alone is capable of bringing them into the land of promise. There are many lessons to be learnt from Moses, to encourage us in this evil day. May we therefore endeavour to maintain that which God has so graciously given to us with the same fidelity and affection manifested in Moses! R. Duncanson.

What is Heaven? This is not the place for rest, but for watchfulness — watchfulness over every thought. But what is heaven? It is where I can let my heart flow out. That is an immense comfort! But here I must have my loins girded — my heart and every affection kept in order by the word of God. J. N. Darby.

Vol 01-10 - Nearness to Christ.

Nearness to Christ. When we get hold of a glorified Christ (and the Holy Ghost has come down to tell us of Him) one does not know how, but things drop off, like old leaves pushed off by new. One gets clear of things almost unconsciously. Natural things lose their attraction and interest. A careful historian of his own soul knows his different besetments, and he does not know how to get free from them. But if he gets near Christ, he is set free without knowing how. Not only am I in the closest relationship to Him, but it is a character of union of a wondrous order; He is the source of all my supplies; I have no head but Christ; I have Christ's part; I have Christ's mind; I have Christ's wisdom; and nothing else will suit me but His place.

J. B. Stoney.

Vol 01-10 - Notes of an address on 2Pe_1:1-11.

Notes of an address on 2 Peter 1:1-11.

Peter's second epistle, addressed to those who had received precious faith, is written with the judgment of the world in view. Before he closes the letter, he presents the dissolution of all down here, but also in God's final triumph, the introduction of new heavens and a new earth wherein righteousness dwells. Already he sees the saints as having escaped the corruption of the world, while he speaks of the swift destruction that shall fall upon those marked by evil teachings and dissolute ways. How solemn the world's condition: how dreadful its impending doom; but how blessed the light that has come to us to direct our steps through the darkness of the present scene.

If we have received precious faith, it is the same faith that Simon Peter had, the bondman and apostle of Jesus Christ: the same faith that belonged to the most gifted servant and to the humblest saint. Faith is not the reward of meritorious service, or the result of any natural process in the soul; it is received from God, a gift in sovereign love (Ephesians 2:1-22). And how precious faith is! What in man can compare with it? It lifts the soul to heights beyond all man's loftiest thoughts into the very presence of God, where Christ is, to lay hold of what is really life, to touch the richest of heavenly blessings, to perceive the glories of the land into which the saints soon shall enter, and to behold what is of God in the world to come and in the eternal scene. This faith is through the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ. In giving this precious faith to us God has acted in perfect consistency with all His attributes: it was right that He should do it, but it is the fruit of His grace. But faith is given that it might lay hold of the wondrous legacy that God has given to us in His divine power; the things that relate to life and godliness. We have been called into things that are in marked contrast to the things of the world from which we have drawn apart. These are the things connected with the knowledge of God, Who has called us by glory and virtue. In this wondrous calling God has given to us exceeding great and precious promises. Truly He is a giving God: giving us faith, giving us what pertains to life and godliness, and giving us these great and precious promises. Thus we come into the practical enjoyment of the things of God, for through these precious promises we have a nature that is divine, which enables us to enter into the things of God's world, as having escaped the corruption that is in man's world. To have the present good of what God has given us in His great grace there must be diligence to have virtue in our faith. Peter well knew the need for virtue, the courage that enables the Christian to stand firm against the opposition of the enemy, and the seductions of the world; that moral excellence in keeping with the virtue by which we have been called, so that we might be here with divine character, enjoying God's bounty and manifesting the features of Christ. In virtue we are to have knowledge, not a knowledge that puffs up, but the knowledge held in love that gives us the reality in the heart of those things pertaining to life and godliness. Ignorance in divine things exposes the saint of God to many dangers, but true knowledge, that procured through the Spirit of God in communion with Christ, not only preserves, but brings the soul into the enjoyment of the life that is ours in faith, and enables us to maintain the godliness belonging to the called of God. Temperance

is then to be in our knowledge. This would keep us from being inflated with the knowledge God has given us, and would permit us to take a sober view of all things, whether the place that God has given us in His love, the matters that arise in the house of God, or what we meet with in passing through this world. How many have been so absorbed with their natural interests that God's interests have been forgotten, with consequent damage to their own souls and to others also. The path tests us all, so that we must needs have patience, or endurance in our temperance. To the Hebrews Paul wrote, "Ye have need of patience, that having done the will of God, ye might receive the promise." We see endurance in its perfection in the Lord, in Him Who endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself, and Who endured the cross with all its judgment. The cross was His own, we cannot have any part in that, saving that our sins were there; but what a blessed example for us in the endurance manifested in His path through this world. And godliness is to be in our endurance, piety that graces every circumstance of the Christian's life, that rises as the savour of Christ for the pleasure of God.

Brotherly love in our piety will bring rich benefits to the saints of God. Godliness is surely for the pleasure of God, and brotherly love will refresh, comfort, and help the people of God. But brotherly love will not lead us away from the path of godliness, although it may lead us to remain apart from brethren who are walking inconsistently with the path of God's will. This danger is safeguarded by having love in brotherly love, for the love of the divine nature rises above all the weaknesses of nature to maintain God's honour and the true blessing of His own. Love cannot tolerate anything inconsistent with itself, anything unholy or unrighteous. This then is the way to bring forth fruit for the pleasure of God, for without these lovely features, found in their fulness and perfection in Jesus, we cannot come out in the grace of His life. As these things exist and abound in us, we shall not be idle or unfruitful regarding the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, for the knowledge of Him lies in these precious traits. Moreover, as being here manifesting Christ's blessed features, we make our calling and election sure, for these things are the evidence that we are called of God; and thus too are we assured of our entrance into the happy portion awaiting us, in the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

J. Muckle. The Dwelling Place of the Truth. The soul is the dwelling place of the truth of God. The ear and the mind are but the gate and the avenue: the soul is its home or dwelling place. The beauty and joy of the truth may have unduly occupied the outposts, filled the avenues, and crowded the gates — but it is only in the soul that its reality can be known. And it is by MEDITATION that the truth takes its journey from the gate along the avenue to its proper dwelling place.

J. G. Bellett.

Vol 01-10 - Overcoming the World.

Overcoming the World. The child of God, as led of the Spirit, and as endowed so richly with the spiritual capacity to understand and appreciate the movements of divine persons, views with ever increasing wonder the sublime movements of the Holy Spirit the Spirit of Truth, as with scrupulous care He chooses the materials best suited to His high and holy purpose of bringing the glories of Christ and revealing them to our adoring hearts. "He (the Spirit of Truth) shall glorify me, for He shall receive of mine and shall announce it to you." As brought into the heavenly sanctuary, fragrant with all the perfections of Christ, we are privileged to contemplate the supreme and surpassing glories of this Blessed One, Who stands without peer in the whole universe of God: incomparably great! Sovereign among all, receiving tribute from all, and shedding the light of His own gracious Person upon all; across the pages of the inspired and infallible Word of the Living God, can be written of Him in words of unfading glory, "That He might have the first place in all things." One marvels at the manner in which God has revealed these heavenly things to us; couched in the most simple language that they might be intelligible to us, and even in the typology of Scripture this comes into evidence. In seeking to interpret the beautiful types of the Old Testament we must always apply this necessary safeguard, "Types are illustrative of truths, not expressive of them." The propriety of this will be seen when we consider how infinitely greater is the substance — Christ, of which they are but shadows. How immeasurably superior is the fulfilment — Christ — to that which is but the figure. How soft and subdued is the light that emanates from those types. It is not yet the noonday splendour of the full revelation of God the Father, as made known in the Son; it is still the starlight of types, symbols and shadows; but the eye of faith can penetrate these shadows and contemplate with ever increasing delight the glorious Substance of whom they speak.

We now address ourselves more particularly to the extremely fascinating type of the Lord Jesus set forth in Genesis 14:18-20. Here in typical language, God would demonstrate the rich provision He has made for us in His Son as set forth in the Melchizedek Priesthood, enabling us to avail ourselves, more intelligently, of our privileges, and thus answer more acceptably to the desires of His heart for us in these darkening days. It is a stringently typical scene which meets the eye, shorn of all extraneous matter unnecessary for the object in view, while that which is necessary to express the mind of God as to the complete and final character of the Kingly Priesthood of the Son is drawn in strong and convincing lines. The prominent thought before me is that of overcoming; the features of which are seen in such a high degree of emphasis and distinction in the deeply instructive life of Abraham, the friend of God. To be an overcomer, due regard must be given to where we live, to our environment. Is it not rather significant that the Spirit of God mentions in Genesis 13:12, that Abraham dwelt in the land of Canaan, and that Lot dwelt in the cities of the plain? Then again, in Genesis 14:12, as though to give point to what He had just recorded concerning the carrying away of Lot into captivity, the Spirit significantly adds, "For he dwelt in Sodom." One cannot dwell in Sodom without being affected by the vitiated atmosphere and polluting influences of a place whose inhabitants were wicked and great sinners before God. Poor

Lot, by his associations, was helpless in the presence of the world. He could not stand; he was involved in Sodom's troubles; he was not walking in the pilgrim and priestly path; hence he was brought into bondage.

Abraham, in marked contrast, dwelt by the oaks of Mamre, which is in Hebron. Mamre means "fatness," or "vigour;" Hebron is "companionship," or "fellowship." These surely suggest that spiritual vitality and energy resulting from the strengthening and encouraging contact with those who have been called into the fellowship of God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. This is further emphasised in the names of Abraham's allies, Mamre the Amorite, Eshcol, and Aner. Worthy confederates, surely, of Abraham the overcomer: Eshcol, "a cluster of grapes;" Aner, "a waterfall." Would not these names speak to us of that spiritual invigoration, joy, and freshness, resulting from being in the good of the Spirit's presence and the enjoyment of Christian fellowship?

Abraham's portion lay outside the whole field of conflict; he had no links with any of the world's confederacies. He was not taking sides with the four kings of the Babylonish empire, or with the five kings of the cities of the plain; he had no need to enter the conflict to defend himself; it was for the express purpose of delivering a brother who had come under the power of the world. This is a great matter beloved saints of God. Are we set for the deliverance of a brother who has succumbed to the blandishments of a patronising world? Are we exercised about the liberation of those who, to make the path easier, would effect a compromise with the world, or who would lower the standard of truth to placate or accommodate the religious world, with its vile caricature of Christ, and its heinous travesty of Christianity.

Lot is delivered by Abraham from the power of an enemy too strong for him, but in the light of subsequent events, he is not really free, for he goes back to Sodom; and were it not for the rich mercy of God he would have perished in the overthrow of those wicked cities of the plain. But Abraham is still the Hebrew, the passenger — one passing through, "As hireling fills his day;" and as he comes to the King's valley, he is met by this unique person, Melchizedek, King of righteousness, King of peace, who brings forth bread and wine for the support and refreshment of the overcomer. But the moment of victory, beloved brethren, is one of peculiar danger! Having overcome the world in its more hostile character, how easy it would be to be ensnared by its patronage, as typified in the king of Sodom. The King's valley is where we meet our true Melchizedek — in the low place, in the spirit of true humility, conscious of our need of the priestly ministrations of our great High Priest. My faith looks up to claim that touch divine, Which robs me of this fatal strength of mine, And leaves me resting wholly, Lord, on Thine.

Strengthened and refreshed by the bread and wine provided by Melchizedek, Abraham is now prepared to meet the king of Sodom, and to refuse any honour at his hand, lest he should say that he had made Abraham rich. This is the spirit and the path of the overcomer, beloved. What of the bread and wine provided by our true Melchizedek — the memorial of those sufferings by which alone we have been eternally enriched; and as those who have tasted it, surely it implies the refusal of a portion here. If Christ could not accept the kingdoms of this world at the hands of Satan, but only from His Father, no more can we accept enrichment at the hands of the world that gave Him but a cross. Do not temporize with the world in its seductive proposals — "that friendly outstretched hand of thine is stained with Jesus' blood." See how beautifully God comes in at the beginning of Genesis 15:1-21, as much as to say, You have refused a portion in this world, "I am

thy shield and exceeding great reward." With the wonderful light brought to us by the Holy Spirit, we can truly say "Thou art my portion, O Lord;" and again, as true Ephraimites, "What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard Him, and observed Him; I am like a green fir tree. From me is Thy fruit found . . . for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them" (Hosea 14:8-9).

A. Shepherd.

Everything Established in the Second Man.

Whatever has been ruined in the first man will be gloriously established in the Second Man. Adam fell and was ruined: Christ is the glory of God. The Law was broken: it shall presently be written on men's hearts. The priests fell: our Great High Priest can never fail. The Kingdom failed: His throne is for ever and ever. It will be a thousand times more glorious than what was lost — infinitely more so. And so with the church — He will have it for His bride, He will be glorified in His saints, and admired in all them that believe in that day. J. N. Darby.

Vol 01-10 - Philadelphia.

Philadelphia.

Revelation 3:7-13. The Church has been left on earth to be a witness for Christ during the time of His absence. This is its great privilege, and this is its responsibility. In the addresses to the Seven Churches, the Lord, with eyes as a flame of fire reviews the whole history of the Church on earth in its responsibility to Himself. From this solemn review we learn: — First, that from the outset the Church, as a whole, has failed in its witness for Christ, and that the failure becomes more pronounced throughout the ages.

Secondly, we learn that in the midst of all the failure there has been throughout the ages, and will be to the end, those of whom the Lord speaks as overcomers, and who answer to His mind, and have His approval.

We learn, moreover, that the root of all the failure in witnessing for Christ, was that the Church left its first love for Christ, and that this will end in putting Christ outside the door. Having put the One for Whom it was to witness outside the door, the Church becomes a witness to itself and says, "I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing." Christ thus becomes intolerable to the professing Church, and the professing Church becomes nauseous to Christ.

Having the mind of Christ revealed to us, it will be possible, in the midst of the confusion, for the one that has ears to hear and a heart that desires to be faithful to the Lord, to refuse that which the Lord rebukes and follow that which He approves. In the measure in which we thus act we shall be able to meet and overcome the difficulties of the day, have the approval of the Lord at the present time, and receive the promised reward in the day to come.

Among the Seven Addresses, that to Philadelphia has a remarkable place, in that the Lord's word to this Church is one of entire approval. It contains, indeed, a word of warning, but no word of rebuke. Surrounded by those who, on the one hand, were in the main marked by the corruptions of Thyatira and the lifeless profession of Sardis, and on the other hand, by the nauseous self-sufficiency of Laodicea, there was a company of saints who had the approval of the Lord. Does not the Lord thus indicate that in the last days of Christendom, marked on the one hand by the corruption of the Papacy and the lifeless profession that characterises Protestantism, and on the other hand by the boastful self-sufficiency of Modernism, there will be found until the end those that will have the approval of the Lord? This being so, if we desire to be of the company of those who answer to the Lord's mind, we may well pay diligent heed to the Lord's words to the angel of the Church in Philadelphia, so that we may learn, and seek to be marked by, the characteristics that He approves, take heed to His warning, and enjoy the support of His encouragement.

1. The Lord's Presentation of Himself. In the addresses to the Churches the Lord generally presents Himself in a judicial character, seeing that there is so much that calls for condemnation. In this Church, where He finds that which He can approve, He presents Himself in His personal and moral perfections as "the Holy" and "the True." The Lord thus indicates the qualities that He

looks for in His people, and which alone can have His approval. If, in the midst of all the corruptions of Christendom, believers are to witness to Christ, they must above all else be morally like Christ.

He is, and ever was, "the Holy." He is "Holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." It follows that all who call upon the Name of the Lord are responsible, not only to depart from iniquity, but to separate from vessels to dishonour, in order to be "sanctified, and meet for the Master's use." As "the True," He is absolutely faithful to God in His witness to the truth. All that He does, and all that He says, is in absolute perfection. He is nothing partially, He is everything perfectly. If He is the Light, He is "the true light;" if He is the Bread come down from heaven, He is the "true bread;" if He is the Vine, He is the "true Vine;" if He is the Witness, He is the "true witness." Does He bear record of Himself? His "record is true;" does He pass judgment? His "judgment is true."

Likeness to Christ as "the Holy" and "the True," will demand separation from the corruptions of Christendom, which find their greatest expression in Thyatira: from the lifeless formalism of Sardis; and the self-sufficiency of Laodicea.

Moreover, to meet the little strength of the Philadelphian Assembly, the Lord presents Himself with all power as having the key of David. He is One "Who opens and no one shall shut, and shuts and no one shall open." In the passage, in the prophet Isaiah, that presents Christ in this blessed way, we learn that government is in "His hand;" the key is on "His shoulder;" and all the glory of Israel as a nation "shall hang upon Him" (Isaiah 22:21-24). The mighty and irresistible power that He will soon exercise on behalf of His earthly people is now used on behalf of a feeble company at Philadelphia to remove every difficulty that would hinder their service for the Lord, and to meet every opposition by which Satan would seek to beguile them into a denial of pure Christianity by adopting a spurious Judaism

It has been pointed out by others that the character in which the Lord presents Himself, and the qualities which He approves in the Philadelphians, were perfectly set forth in Christ, Himself, when on earth. In every step of His path he was "the Holy" and "the True." He, too, was content to pass through this world in circumstances of weakness as the One Who became poor and had not where to lay His head. He was content to be treated as the offscouring of the earth, and to be trampled upon by men, for the sake of His own. Men may thrust Him out of their cities, and the Pharisees and Scribes, the Rulers and Priests, endeavour to shut the door against Him. But, we read, "to Him the porter openeth," and the sheep hear His voice. No power of the enemy can prevent the Lord finding His lost sheep, gathering them around Himself, and leading them home. And no power of the enemy can prevent the Philadelphian from answering to the Lord's mind and carrying out the Lord's word in a day of ruin.

2. The Lord's Word of Approval.

It is, at first sight, remarkable that, in an Assembly in which the Lord finds so much to approve, so little is said as to their works. In other addresses the Lord recounts the works; to this Assembly He simply says, "I know thy works." Of the Assembly at Ephesus the Lord has much to say of their works, but He rebukes them for having left their first love. In Philadelphia there was no great display of works that would bring them into prominence in the religious world, but there was a return to first love which was very precious in the eyes of the Lord. There is always a danger of

setting a high value on works which make something of ourselves before others, and over-looking the moral condition which is of the first consideration in the eyes of the Lord. The Philadelphian saints sought not the approbation of men: they were content with the approval of the Lord. It is enough for them that the Lord had taken account of their works. They rest in the fact that He had said "I know thy works."

If, however, the Lord has nothing to say of their works, He delights to bring before us the moral characteristics that are of such value in His sight. The Assembly at Philadelphia had four outstanding characteristics that drew forth the approval of the Lord:

First, the Lord says, "Thou hast a little strength;

Secondly, "Thou . . . hast kept my word;

Thirdly, "Thou . . . hast not denied my Name;

Fourthly, "Thou hast kept the word of my patience."

If, then, these are the characteristic marks that have the Lord's approval we shall do well to consider His words, seeking to grasp their true import.

(1) "Thou hast a little strength." At the beginning of the history of the Church there was a mighty display of power in public testimony before the world. By the miraculous gift of tongues men heard of the wonderful works of God. "By the hands of the Apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people". (Acts 5:12). A multitude of people brought their sick to the Apostles and, we read, "they were healed every one" (Acts 5:16).

Let us, however, remember that in the day of this mighty display of divine power the sole authority of the Lord was recognised, the presence of the Holy Spirit was practically owned, and those "that believed were of one heart and one soul." All now is changed. Men have set aside the authority of the Lord; the presence of the Holy Spirit is ignored, and the people of God are divided and scattered. Thus the Church has entirely failed as a public and united witness for Christ in the world. As a result of this failure all outward display before the world has ceased. The sign gifts have been withdrawn, the power of healing is no more, speaking with tongues has ended, and the day of miracles has passed.

Let us then face the fact that we live in a day when the Church as a whole has entirely failed in its public witness before the world. In such circumstances to attempt to assume power before the world, the pretence of speaking with tongues, and exercising the gifts of healing, and the performance of miracles, is entirely contrary to the mind of the Lord. Moreover any such pretence entirely ignores the government of God that has withdrawn these sign gifts on account of the failure of the church. The Philadelphians made no such pretence. They did not seek for any place of prominence or distinction in the world. They did not, like those which "say they are Jews and are not," claim to be God's people nationally. They assumed no title to a religious position on earth; they recognised they had but little strength. Nevertheless, the very expression "a little strength" supposes they had some strength. This is more than could be said of Sardis, or Laodicea. The Lord has to say of Sardis "thou art dead." A dead man has no strength. Of Laodicea the Lord says, "thou are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Such an one has no strength. Philadelphia has, indeed, only a little strength, but it is sufficient to rise above the deadness of

Sardis and the self-sufficiency of Laodicea, and so doing, it had the approval of the Lord. Moreover, it is in connection with their little strength that the Lord presents Him-self as the One that has the key, and therefore can command all circumstances in favour of His people. This does not imply any outward display of power before men, but power used on behalf of His people, as He can say, "Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it."

(2) "Thou hast kept my word." The second trait of the Church in Philadelphia, that met with the Lord's approval, was that, in the midst of the surrounding darkness, they kept the Lord's word. If then we desire to have this mark of the Lord's approval we shall do well to enquire into the significance of these words.

We live in a day when on every hand the word of God is being attacked in Christendom; and when professing Christians are denying the inspiration of the Scriptures. There are indeed those who rightly own the verbal inspiration of Scripture, and who stand for the absolute authority of the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible. Nevertheless, keeping Christ's word implies a great deal more than merely maintaining the authority of Scripture. A father might write a letter to two sons instructing them as to his purpose for them, and directing them as to their conduct. One son might raise questions as to the authenticity of the letter, while the other son indignantly repudiates such suggestions, and boldly maintains that from beginning to end the letter is authentic. And yet both sons might miss the Father's counsel contained in the letter, and be indifferent to his instructions. In like manner we may be zealous for the Bible, and nothing but the Bible, and yet be wholly ignorant of, or even indifferent to, the counsel of God contained in the Word. To confine keeping His word to the acknowledgement that the Bible is the inspired word of God would be to deprive the passage of its true meaning. Truly one could not keep His word without holding the inspiration of Scripture; but to keep His word is more than this. The word of God is the mind of God revealed to us. Christ's word is the whole mind of God as to Christianity, whether given directly from the Lord, as He can say, "I have given them thy words," or through the mouth of the Apostle Paul, to whom it was given "to complete the word of God" by unfolding the truth of Christ and the Church (Colossians 1:25-27). When the true meaning of Christ's word is apprehended we shall be stirred up and exercised, not simply to maintain the canon of Scripture, but, that we may know the mind of God for Christ and the Church; and, knowing His mind, that we may seek at all cost to answer to it.

It has been truly said, that, "God has given His mind in every age and time, and His people have been preserved and delivered from every difficulty in proportion as they have walked according to the revelation; while they have suffered as they have in any way departed from it."

Three conclusions may be safely drawn as to those who keep Christ's word. First, it would prove that such were a company who loved the Lord, for the Lord said to His disciples, "If a man love me, he will keep my words" (John 14:23). Secondly, it would imply they were a company cleansed from the defiling influences of the world, for, again, the Lord can say of His disciples, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you" (John 15:3). Thirdly, it would suggest that they were a company set apart from the world and devoted to Christ, for the Lord prayed, "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." We may thus conclude from the blessed fact that they kept Christ's word, that they were a company that loved the Lord, that they were separate from evil, and devoted to Christ.

(3) "Thou . . . hast not denied My Name." The third mark in the Church at Philadelphia that had the Lord's approval was that they had not denied His Name. In a day when the Person of the Lord is being attacked, and the truths of His deity and incarnation are being denied it is of the first importance to unflinchingly maintain every truth of His glorious Person. Yet, not to deny His Name involves more than firmly asserting the truth of His Person.

We read, "There is none other Name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). To admit the possibility of salvation through any other would therefore be a denial of His Name.

Again, it is written, "Through His Name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins (Acts 10:43). Then to proclaim the forgiveness of sins through the absolution of a priest, or by any other means, would be a denial of His Name.

Moreover, it is written, " whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My Name He will give it you" (John 16:23-26). We are thus exhorted to pray in His Name; therefore any prayer offered up in the name of Mary, or any other saint, would be a denial of His Name.

Further, the Lord tells us that, "Where two or three are gathered together in My Name there am I in the midst" (Matthew 18:20). The Name of Christ then is the alone gathering centre for His people. To gather together in the Name of any man, ecclesiastical or political, who assumes an official hereditary position, or is appointed by men, as a leader among God's people, is to deny His Name.

Then we are instructed to exercise the discipline that maintains the holiness of God's house, "In the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 5:4). To refuse to exercise such discipline would be indifference to holiness and a denial of His Name.

Finally, in view of the corruptions of Christendom, we read, "Let every one that nameth the Name of Christ depart from iniquity" (2 Timothy 2:19). His Name demands separation from iniquity. For a believer to be knowingly linked up with iniquity is the denial of His Name.

Thus not to deny His Name implies, not only that we maintain the truth of His Person, but, that we refuse to substitute any other name for salvation, for forgiveness, for prayer, for gathering together, for the exercise of discipline, and for separation from iniquity. If then we desire to have the mark of the Lord's approval we must walk apart from everything that, in these different ways, is a denial of His Name.

(4) "Thou hast kept the word of My patience." As foretold by the Lord in the parable of the ten virgins, the blessed hope which characterised the Church at the beginning has been long lost by the professing church. But for the last century the hope has been revived, and the cry has gone forth, "Behold the Bridegroom cometh" To the Church at Philadelphia the Lord can say, "Behold, I come quickly." This blessed truth is very generally held and taught by evangelical Christians, but to keep the word of Christ's patience involves more than holding the truth of the Second Advent, and looking for the return of the Lord. As the Lord passed through this world His enemies charged Him with having a devil, with being mad, with being a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber. They heaped every insult upon Him, spat in His face, crowned Him with a crown of thorns, and nailed Him to a cross. All these insults only brought out the perfect patience of Christ in the presence of His enemies. He submitted without complaint, and to all men's insults He answered never a word.

The patience of Christ in the presence of His enemies, that was so perfectly expressed in His pathway through this world, is still the patience that marks Christ now that He is in the glory. He is not indifferent to the hard speeches which ungodly sinners speak against Him; He is not unmindful of the persecutions, afflictions, insults, and martyrdoms that His people may be called to endure, but, in patience, He bears with it all during this time when God is dealing in grace towards a guilty world. The whole of this present period, in which Christ is seated at the right hand of God, is the time of His patience. God's word to Christ is "sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool" (Psalms 110:1). The time is coming when the Lord will deal in judgment with all His enemies, put down all evil and reign in righteousness. Today He is gathering His friends out of the world; in the day that is so soon coming He will deal with His foes in the world. When on earth, Christ witnessed a bold confession to the truth; He exhibited the character and maintained the glory of the Father; but, in the presence of opposition and insults, "He opened not His mouth." When He was reviled, He reviled not again. He suffered in patient silence. If Christ acted in patience, and if Christ is still waiting in patience, it is our part to wait also in patience. We are called to follow His steps. So doing, we shall boldly witness for the truth, seek to honour the Name of Christ by exhibiting the character of Christ; but, in the presence of persecution and insults we shall be silent, not seeking to revenge ourselves, but waiting in patience until Christ, at His coming, will recompense tribulation to those that trouble His people (2 Thessalonians 1:6). So the Apostle James exhorts, "Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord" (James 5:7). Again, the Apostle Paul can say, in the presence of all the "reproaches and afflictions" that the saints may be called upon to face, "Ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry" (Hebrews 10:36-37).

Keeping the word of His patience, we shall not only look for the coming of Christ but, in the presence of reproaches, afflictions and insults, come from what quarter they may, we shall exhibit the character of Christ by meeting all in the patience of Christ.

These, then, are the great characteristics that, in a day of ruin and confusion have the approval of Christ. All around there is the assumption of power, ecclesiastical and temporal, but no strength to rise above the corruptions of Christendom and enable the great profession to keep His word and not deny His Name. In Philadelphia there was no assumption of outward power, but there was a little strength that enabled them to escape the corruptions around, to keep Christ's word, not deny His Name. and to keep the word of His patience.

3. The Word of Warning and Encouragement.

Those who seek to keep the word of Christ and not deny His Name will find that the greatest opposition will come from those "which say they are Jews and are not." This surely represents those who, instead of having Christ before them as "the Holy" and "the True," set up a system of religion after the Jewish order. Such systems are marked by tradition, ordinances, and ceremonies, that can be carried out by the flesh, without any personal faith in Christ. They accredit the flesh but leave the heart far from God, and the conscience untouched.

Such systems loom largely before the world, while the Philadelphians, with their little strength, are hardly noticed, or if noticed only to be despised. Nevertheless, the day is coming when all will be reversed; when those who have been highly approved by the world will have to learn that the

people whom they despised and opposed, are approved and loved by the Lord. In the presence of this opposition, the Lord's word of approval is followed by the Lord's words of warning and encouragement. The need for the warning indicates, that in the presence of opposition there is the danger of letting go the things that the Lord approves. We may be sure that what the Lord approves, the devil will oppose. If the Lord says, "Hold fast," the devil will tempt to let go. The Lord had said to this Assembly, "Thou hast a little strength;" "Thou . . . hast kept my word;" "Thou hast not denied My Name;" and "Thou hast kept the word of my patience." Now He says, "Hold fast that which thou hast" "My word," "My Name," and "the word of My patience." The characteristic traits that the Lord approves in the Church at Philadelphia are the very things that professing Christendom has failed to maintain. To hold fast that which the mass has let go will entail conflict and opposition. Under the strain of this continual conflict that keeping Christ's word, and not denying His Name, will entail, and to escape the reproach and obscurity of a little strength, there is the ever present temptation to turn aside to a wider and more popular sphere, and an easier path. There, indeed, we may escape conflict and reproach, but we may also lose our crown. In the presence of this temptation we have not only the Lord's warning against giving up, but also His encouragement to hold fast. First, He encourages us by saying, "Behold I come quickly." If we are warned to "hold fast," and if holding fast entails conflict, let us remember it will not be for long. He is coming quickly.

Secondly, the Lord tells us there is a crown for the one that holds fast. We may have opposition to face, conflicts to endure, reproaches and insults to meet, but the crowning day is coming by and by.

Thirdly, the Lord unrolls before us the glorious future and thus gives us a glimpse of the coming day with its bright rewards. The one who has been content with a little strength in the time of Christ's rejection will be displayed as a pillar of strength in the day of His glory. The one who has kept His word as to the Church, in the day when the great profession utterly ignored the truth, will be displayed as belonging to the Church in the day when the Church descends from heaven resplendent in all the glory of the New Jerusalem. The Name of God and the name of the city of God will be written upon that one. Those who have not denied Christ's Name, when the professing mass dishonoured that Name, will come forth with His New Name upon their brow, for "they shall see His face; and His Name shall be in their foreheads."

It has been pointed out how frequently the little word "My" is used in this address. It very blessedly indicates the identification of these saints with Christ in time and eternity. Christ can say of those who in the day of His rejection are linked up with "My Name" and "My word," and the word of "My patience," that they will be identified with the temple of "My God," the Name of "My God" the city of "My God," and "My new Name."

Such then are the Lord's words of approval, warning and encouragement, and, as we heed His words we shall find definite direction and guidance in the midst of all the corruption of Christendom, and the confusion amongst His true people. By His word of approval we know what meets His heart in these difficult days; with His word of warning we know where our danger lies; and with His word of encouragement we know the glory that is before the one that overcomes by holding fast in the presence of all the opposition of men and all the power of the devil.

H. Smith.

Vol 01-10 - Purpose of Heart.

Purpose of Heart. In the closing days of this dispensation. what is the condition of soul most usually met with in the greater number of Christian assemblies? Is it not almost uniformly laxity and lukewarmness, with very little heart for Christ? Yet what our blessed Lord most craves for, (I write with all reverence) is surely the heart affection of His beloved saints. There may be much scriptural knowledge, combined with great zeal for work; but nothing can take the place of deep heart affection; "My son, give Me thine heart" (Proverbs 23:26). In these last days the enemy is using his utmost endeavour to draw away the hearts of Christians by earthly things. Where he succeeds, the heart grows cold and careless as in the last of the seven letters to the churches (Revelation 2:1-29; Revelation 3:1-22), the Lord is seen outside, in tender grace knocking and inviting individuals to open the door, that He may come in, and they may sup together. These lines are written especially for those who may be conscious of such failure and lack of love. Perhaps the Spirit has brought home to you your sad condition, and given you the desire to return to your "first love." You realise your utter weakness, but hardly know which way to turn. Let us search the Scriptures, and see if we cannot find help. Turn to Ezra 7:10, "For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it." Then, again, Daniel 1:8, "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, etc." There are other similar Scriptures, but these will suffice. Both Ezra and Daniel had determined in their hearts that they would be true to the God of Israel, whatever others might do, and whatever it might cost them. Their hearts were set on this one thing, and their God did not pass it by unnoticed.

Now let us turn to Acts 11:22-23, where we read that Barnabas was sent to Antioch, in which town many had believed, and on coming he exhorted them all "that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord." This is what we so greatly need, Purpose of heart. Christ must occupy the first place in our hearts. Read what the beloved apostle Paul wrote to the Philippians in chap. 3 "This one thing I do, forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Christ in glory had appeared to him, and from that moment all earthly objects ceased to have any value for his heart; indeed, he counted all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord. His heart had been captured by the Lord of glory. You may perhaps think or say, "Ah, but no such glorious vision has been vouchsafed to me;" true indeed, but on the other hand you have learnt by faith to know Him as your Saviour. The trouble is that through carelessness of walk you have grieved the Holy Spirit, and in consequence there has been no growth in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Some one once said: "You may have just as much of Christ as you want." I believe this is perfectly true; the great point is, "What is your heart set on?" If you desire to know more of Christ, and to enjoy His fellowship and love, you must cleave to Him with purpose of heart. The reward offered for following such a pathway is wonderful, past all description: "If a man love Me, he will keep My words, and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him." Notice that this promise is entirely individual, and thus it is made to you personally. Many years ago one wrote: "To my mind

nothing is more exquisitely beautiful than the thought that God should covet to be the object of the affections of this poor little heart of mine. He might have called me and left me to die at the eleventh hour, but oh! what grace that He should say, 'You must choose Me as I have chosen you: you must live to Me as My Son lived.' It is touching grace. Shall my answer be that I cannot do it? If God is working in me is it difficult? "Maybe you are much discouraged, having often tried and failed over and over again. Do you know the reason? You have tried to fight in your own strength, and have forgotten that the Lord tells you that "Without Me ye can do nothing." Even such a veteran as the Apostle Paul needed to be reminded "My grace is sufficient for thee." The Lord grant that these few words may encourage some sorrowful souls to start afresh, looking unto Jesus, and relying on His strength to enable them to cleave unto Him with purpose of heart.

G. F. Barlee.

Vol 01-10 - Remnant Features.

Remnant Features. In these last days it surely behoves us to cling tenaciously to the word of God, and to search therein for the divine principles that will carry us on to the end in the path of the will of God. At the end of every dispensation there is departure from God's will, and human wisdom displaces the commandments of God. The book of Malachi reveals a remnant, seeking to maintain in moral suitability that which is of God. While bringing home to them their grave departure, God assures the people of His love for them, saying, "I have loved you." Malachi 1:2. When they return answer to God, "Wherein hast Thou loved us?" He reminds them of what He had done to Esau, the man after the flesh.

Such was the condition of the priests that the Lord charges them with despising His Name, by offering polluted bread upon His altar, by saying "The table of the Lord is contemptible;" Malachi 1:7 and in offering the blind, the lame, and the sick in sacrifice. None would close the doors of the Lord's house, or kindle the fire upon His altar, for naught; so that it is not to be wondered at that He declared that He found no pleasure in them. Spite of all this God will honour His Name, and there is coming a day when from the rising until the setting of the sun, His Name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place, incense and a pure offering shall be offered to His Name.

Yet in Israel there was a remnant that loved the Lord and feared Him. The remnant possessed the features which so pleased the Lord, and which He recalls as having formerly marked Levi. How beautiful the language used by the Lord to bespeak His delight in the piety once marking His chosen priests! "My covenant was with him of life and peace . . . the law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity and did turn many away from iniquity." Such are the moral characteristics of those who walk in love and in communion with God.

Judah was united to the world in an unholy alliance; and the people wearied the Lord with their words, saying that the Lord delighted in those practising evil; and doubting the concern of the God of judgment. God was robbed of His tithes and offerings; the words of the people were stout against the Lord; the proud were called happy, and evildoers were exalted. It was in the midst of such gross departure from the path of God's will that the little remnant was found. This remnant was marked by the fear of the Lord, and by speaking one to another, as thinking upon His Name. The Name upon which the remnant thought was the Name the priests despised; the Name that will yet be great among the Gentiles. That Name has indeed covered itself with glory; every moral beauty shines forth in it; and its glory shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. Of the company concerned with His Name, the Lord says, "They shall be mine . . . in that day when I make up my jewels." Jewels are precious, and each shines forth with its own peculiar reflection of the glory of the sun. What a day that shall be, when the saints display the brightness of the glory of Christ, each in the heavenly lustre which praises the workmanship of God.

Another dark day was that recorded in Luke 1:1-80, when few were found in the fear of the Lord. Yet there were some in whom the work of God was manifest; to whom the word of God was

precious; and who waited patiently and faithfully for the coming of the Lord. To such the revelation of God was given. Although the house of David was evidently in poor circumstances, there were hearts like Mary's ready to respond to the divine communications. Mary had found favour with God, and the angel communicated to her the wonderful tidings that she was the vessel, chosen of God, to conceive and bring forth the child Jesus, Who was to be great, and to be called the Son of the Highest, the Son of God. To these amazing unfoldings, Mary, in the pious simplicity of faith says, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to Thy word." In Luke 2:1-52 the work of God in the hearts of Simeon and Anna is revealed, even as it had been in the hearts of Zacharias and Elizabeth a little while before. Of Zacharias and his wife it is recorded, "They were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." Simeon is marked as "just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Ghost was upon him;" while Anna is a prophetess, "which departed not from the temple, hut served God with fastings and prayers night and day." These beautiful features are similar to those marking the remnant in the days of Malachi. The simple obedience to the commandments of God found in the parents of John the Baptist; the simplicity of faith displayed by Mary; the devotion and patience seen in Simeon; and the prayerfulness and intelligent conversation of Anna, are features that mark the company walking in the fear of the Lord for His pleasure. Simeon's heart is filled with satisfaction at the sight of Jesus, and his lips pour forth a rich tribute of praise in the power of the Spirit of God by Whom he had come into the temple. Seeing in the child the salvation of God, he is ready to depart; as he rests in Him Who will assuredly give effect to the purpose and counsel of God, and bring everything back to God for His eternal joy and pleasure. Anna is attracted and attached to the house of God; she was interested only in the interests of God; so that when the King suddenly comes to His temple, she finds Him there; and is therefore able to speak of Him to all who looked for redemption in Israel. Do we really admire and covet the beautiful features seen in this devoted little remnant? If these are the traits that give pleasure to God, we do well to seek them! The close of the greatest dispensation fast approaches; the dispensation in which there has been unfolded all the counsel of God. The truth of the Headship of Christ and all connected with it, the circle of the Father's affections, and other precious revelations have been given to us; and we have the presence and indwelling of the Holy Spirit to enjoy in power these wonderful things. But it is a day of declension and ruin, when the knowledge of these great truths is being lost. If we desire to be for God in the midst of the ruin, we shall find His instructions for us in His word. The Philadelphians in Revelation 3:8-10, show us the features of the company which has Christ's approval. They have a little strength, keep His word, and do not deny His Name. A little strength surely tells that they have not a great public place before the eye of the world, but on the contrary they walk in obscurity under the eye of The Holy and The True. Keeping His word, they walk in simple obedience to His commandments, valuing all the great truths given to the saints in this dispensation, and ordering their walk and ways in the light of them. They do not deny the Name of the Holy and the True, but seek to maintain all His interests in moral suitability to it; allowing nothing unholy and nothing untrue to attach itself to what belongs to Him. Moreover, they keep the word of His patience; suffering with Him in the place of reproach and dishonour, awaiting the day when He shall come, to have their happiness and part along with Him.

Beloved reader, these precious traits, gathered from the remnants of God's devoted saints, are surely written for our instruction and encouragement, that we might with them order our lives in these last days for the pleasure and glory of God. Robert Duncanson.

Vol 01-10 - Rev_1:1-20.

Revelation 1:1-20.

Notes of an address by G. V. Wigram. In connection with glories, we get three parts: First — The glories of the Person; Second — Glories in connection with relationships; Third — Those connected with offices. From this glorious Person I have eternal life, and am made a channel through which the stream of living water flows down, and the Lord Jesus will remove whatever makes an impediment. He is the fountain of eternal life, and takes the responsibility of looking after His people. The way of learning truth is by looking at it in all its different aspects, and taking it up in all its different parts. We will look shortly at the different titles by which the Lord introduces Himself in this chapter in their connection with the churches; The Son of Man holding the seven stars, walking in the midst of the seven Candlesticks (Revelation 2:1) in connection with the church of Ephesus. "The first and the last, He that liveth and was dead;" Revelation 2:8, Smyrna. Out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword; (Revelation 2:12) Pergamos. "His eyes as a flame of fire and His feet as fine brass;" Revelation 2:18, Thyatira. He that hath the seven Spirits and the seven stars; (Revelation 3:1) Sardis. In Philadelphia we get a whole cluster of glories, He that is holy, He that is true, that hath the key of David; He that openeth and no man shutteth and shutteth and no man openeth (Revelation 3:7). In Laodicea, "The Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God." (Revelation 3:14.)

Returning to Ephesus, remark, there are two expressions: First — Holding in His right hand the seven stars (Revelation 2:1): Second — Had in His right hand (Revelation 1:16). Nothing in that address goes beyond the thought of the blessed Lord as sustainer of the testimony set up at the day of Pentecost. The Ephesians were a body He could take notice of, they had an immense deal of energy and doing; but Christ was very jealous for God; He was near them in connection with the light. Who planted the church; Who is the holder and ruler of light in connection with the church; where is Christ now? Is He not near at hand? None could say, I stand on earth in responsible witness, the bearer of light, save the Lord Jesus Christ. The thought of light is beautifully in harmony with Christ; in connection with the church, the light could not be lost. We may say Christ cannot be walking where there are no candlesticks. But we must begin with this, His being set up as the faithful and true witness, and He has never left us. The leading thought in this address is that of Christ carrying on this responsibility before God. The address to Smyrna is quite different; "These things says the first and the last, He that liveth and was dead." A very different state was that of the Smyrneses to the Ephesians. All had come down as if God had let the wave of death and resurrection break over them; all had come to a close. The expression "First and last" is different from "The beginning of the creation of God;" that is of the new creation. I get in "First and last" something in which my soul realises the whole of eternity. Man cannot get hold of that thought — Eternity; but it is sweetly realised to one that a Man is there, God manifest in the flesh. When we get to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, there is no beginning there; but God has revealed His Son to us as Man, and we are in Him and He in God. The Smyrneses have realised their weakness and the power of Satan; the wave of death rolled over everything, and that second title "Which was

dead and is alive" brings Him out fully as the resurrection and the life. One could not possibly confound this second address with the first: the state of mind in the one did not mark the other; both bring out the glories in Christ that each stand especially in need of. In the next address to Pergamos things having got thoroughly into the hands of Satan, it was "He that hath the sharp sword with two edges." I do not suppose this is merely judgment where the power of Satan is put forth; but the champion of the Lord showing forth the virtue and power of the word of Christ. What will this title be in the glory? Christ will be there, and in turning to Him in the glory and seeing Him scanning each one there, is a man, His friend. One of the sweetest thoughts our hearts will have will be the thought of His being the eternal fulness of truth. What will the sword be then? There will be no enemy to fight against, no hands of Satan to cut, but that which is the irresistible power of the sword will be Christ still; and all will stand in His power. How often is it that when the knees are weak and the hands hang down as though the difficulties around were insurmountable, it is because of this sword being forgotten. The irresistible power of Christ where Satan is, is more than a match against all that he can do. How little our hearts love things because of their nearness to Christ; how little thought we have of the preciousness of Christians because they are dear to Him. We ought to love things for Christ's sake, not only for the dew that distills from them for our refreshment. If you had lost a beloved relative and could enter the room she had left, you would not want to go in perfume to some other room in the house, even if it contained a perfect museum of objects of art and curiosity. Things would be only precious to your heart as they were connected with her; and you would linger there because the object loved had been there. Oh! how short we come! how little we know what it is to have no desire to go to any place, nor to do anything unconnected with the Lord so dear to us.

Next, the word to Thyatira; The flame of fire and the feet of fine brass. If I turn to what the Romish church was before the Reformation, I get Christ bringing His word to hew out everything there not connected with it. I have the eye as a flame of fire expressing divine intelligence, searching everything. At the time of the Reformation everything was searched to see how it could bear the light, and if it could do so it was reserved, the fine brass bringing everything to the test of Christ's ways. This title is connected with Christ's ways. Christ has certain ways of His own as Son of God, and as One who has His eye right down, reading everything in every heart. If one single corner of my heart were covered from Him, I should lose all confidence. It is a solemn thought that the Lord does know everything, but all rest of soul is in it. He is never taken by surprise by what He finds in me: He knew what Peter was. Religion is made such a conventional thing; subscribing to certain charities, going to different places. You find everywhere certain things counted as religion, but what can I count on in myself. Are my ways like Christ's ways? Would I like to change His ways because they are not like mine? to close His eyes? No! let Him be the Son of God, let Him search my heart; I can follow Him in perfect peace. Ah! if you and I knew a little more about Christ's ways we should get a great deal more communion when we came together. If we more felt what our fellowship is in Christ, we might, when we meet, speak more of those things we have got in Christ as our portion. The next address, Sardis, shows a state of things, where one sees an effort on the part of the Spirit of God, different from anything before. That which is remarkable here is a testimony back to church order, by the nonconformists after the Reformation. If those people, who were ordering churches, had really got hold of this word, they would have found a great deal applicable to themselves. "These things saith He that hath the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars." All spiritual energy has its rise in Christ, the seven Spirits and the seven stars are held by

Him in reference to testimony. If it is the question of any position now, where are the seven churches? If I look on to the end I see the Bride of Christ rising up to meet her Lord, and the professing church on earth spued out of His mouth. There is nothing to glory in these. I do not think glorying in churches ever could meet Christ's praise. Directly the attempt is made to set up former things, Christ is not there; but I never get near Christ as an individual without the consciousness that the Holy Ghost is mine. So also I never get near Christ without the consciousness of having power to do what He wants. He has power; whatever little testimony I have for Him, I have just to go forward with Him, and I shall never fail. If I want to look out for the help of saints or the sympathy of friends, I shall always find weakness. All power is His, and whatever service He calls for me to do, I shall have power from him to do it. In all states of the church Christ says, I have all power, and I am with you; but mind how you walk. In Smyrna they are caught in a wave and brought right down, and the question is of being brought up again. The question in Philadelphia is of trust in Christ, and Christ throwing His bright mantle over to let His glories shine out: an uncovering of Himself to break the mist. If I say, All is weak and vain, and all I can do is to sit down with Lot in Sodom, why, I shall not get Christ uncovering His glory there; but if I say, This state of things won't do, I must be holy, I must separate from all that is not in character with Christ. Well! says Christ, that is just like me; if you are not going to forget the Holy One, I won't forget you. If the Key of David is in His hands, I say, Well! the Lord is going to open the Kingdom of Israel; and if so, it is quite right to think things are coming to a close, and the bright and morning star is coming. "I have set before thee an open door"; no one can shut it, not all the angels, nor all the spirits, nor man can close when Christ says, I have left the door ajar. One cannot say these are the same titles of glory in the other addresses as in this. We see here none spoken of but Christ in connection with a few weak ones keeping His Word. What an unspeakable comfort that there is a glory of Christ's connected with individuals. He might lock the door and put you aside: would you find no sweetness in being able to say, "Christ has shut the door." Which is best, the door being shut by Christ or opened by man? In a thousand ways Christ may shut the door; we must not struggle like a naughty child because He has shut it. He sees He cannot deal in full blessing till the soul He is dealing with can say, "Thy will and not mine be done." If it be His will to shut the door, and it is my will to have it shut, then He opens it and says, "My child come forth." If I say, I will sit down quietly because He would have me sit down, then He says. "Rise up and go out." Whether you sit down or go out you act as the expression of His will.

I see now man's church, and a mighty energy working: I see it all around. We hear of the poor man's church; what would Paul have said to that? There is an energy of man at work to set up the church, and it will come out as here. When I find the Lord using "Amen," I like to see what Amen is said to; and here the Laodicean state is brought out. "Take care, I know thy works, and that thou art trusting because of being great and increased with goods, take care of self." "That is not like me. When I was in the world I went about never seeking mine own, but testing everything as the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God." There is such a thing as the flesh, and man's will. The basis of the Reformation was human will (Henry VIII putting aside the Pope). The human will has not been judged, and when Christ takes up the church, the human will will be judged, and all that is unlike Christ will be left behind.

Deliverance.

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.

J. N. Darby.

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Simple Reflections on Paul's Letter to the Galatians.

Galatians 1:1-24.

It is at once interesting and instructive to remark that secular historians, in their racial analysis of the various nations, have described the Galatians as a quick, warm, impulsive, and exceedingly changeable race; and the character ascribed to them by the beloved apostle, in the body of his letter, seems to bear out the truth of this description. The pliable disposition of these saints offered the enemies of the glad tidings of God and of Christianity extremely fertile soil, in which would flourish the seeds of those wicked heresies of evil men, which, in their essence, were destructive of the heavenly character of Christianity, and subversive of the grand, sublime truths of the glad tidings. How necessary it is to exercise constant and unrelaxing vigilance, lest the enemy within — that which is of nature and of the flesh — at the instigation of the arch-enemy, opens wide the gates so that he can take possession of the stronghold. Only as we take our stand behind the mighty bulwarks of divine truth, those towering ramparts of divine revelation, can we hope to withstand the onslaughts of ever relentless foes and put them to flight by the sword of the Spirit.

One of the keystones of Christianity is "The righteousness of God," which is developed doctrinally in Paul's letter to the saints at Rome. Through the persistent efforts of false, Judaizing teachers, the warm-hearted, but fickle saints of the region of Galatia were in grave danger of departing from the glad tidings of God's grace, and were in great measure alienated from the great apostle. The recovery to them of the truth developed in Romans is the great point in the Epistle to the Galatians; both epistles treating of the same precious subject — the way of a sinner's justification before God. But there is a marked difference between the two epistles: in Romans, the apostle brings out what the gospel really is, "The power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; . . . for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith "; but in the letter to the Galatians he has to do with those who had received the grace of God, and were attempting to add to it the works of the law, thereby nullifying the wonderful gospel made known to them by the apostle.

Here was a deliberate and systematic attempt on the part of the enemy to bring about an admixture of Christianity and Judaism to the detriment of the former, so as to obscure its heavenly character, and pervert the precious truths of the gospel. With so much at stake, should we be surprised at the severity of tone adopted by the apostle in his scathing denunciation of those who sought to overthrow the true character of Christianity? So keen was the discernment of this devoted servant of the Lord, so sensitive to anything that would besmirch the true greatness and glory of Christ, that he detected in those Judaizing philosophers the pernicious and reprobate machinations of the enemy himself. It cannot be too strongly emphasized that the divine authority of the apostle was ever linked with the heavenly character of Christianity. The enemy attempted to set aside the peculiar administration and authority of Paul, and to mix Judaism with Christianity, so as to neutralize Christianity's heavenly character. These two systems can never coalesce, save to

the ruin of souls; and although both agree in setting before men a very high standard of conduct, they are otherwise diametrically opposed. Judaism is the religion of man in the flesh, which supposes him capable of keeping the law; a supposition that received its death-blow in the cross. The beloved apostle shows that the glad tidings he preached to them were unique in source and power. With great joy and thankfulness the Galatian saints had received these glad tidings which they now seemed to be surrendering, little realising what they were doing. In adding the law to the gospel they were surrendering the truth of the gospel. A sense of urgency and deep emotion can be detected throughout the whole epistle; the apostle writing with his characteristic earnestness, but with a sharpness that was not usual. No one is saluted in the letter, and he starts immediately with his theme, wishing them indeed, grace and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ. He stands, as he says, in doubt of them; having to travail in birth again, until Christ be formed in them. Their doctrinal wandering he treats more seriously than the moral evil of Corinth, which men naturally think of a far worse character. Another has said. "Without the gospel morality cannot maintain itself, and in the doctrine of Christ is the root of all morality."

Paul begins by declaring the unique ministry committed to him; insisting upon the special character of his apostleship; affirming in solemn and unequivocal terms his entire independence of man in it, declaring that his commission was received not from men, nor through men, but "Through Jesus Christ, and God the Father." Unlike the twelve, he received his commission from the risen Christ direct from heaven, after Jesus had finished His work; a commission to which he refers in Acts 20:1-38 "That I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus." He saw the Lord in glory, and it was the glorified Christ who sent him. Note too how the apostle valued the fellowship of the brethren in the gospel, associating them with him, as having their sympathy and concurrence in what he states here; and as showing that the Galatians were in danger of departing from the faith held by all the brethren with Paul.

Now we come to the core of the matter, "Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father." What has law to do with those for whom Jesus gave Himself to deliver them out of this present evil age? This "age" is marked by implacable opposition to God, and is led by Satan, the god of this age. For believers to have recourse to law is to go back into the world, out of which to deliver them, Christ gave Himself. This is of immense practical importance, for it is the Father's will for us.

How deep and real the emotion of this devoted servant of the Lord, as out of a full heart he expresses his wonderment that they were so quickly changing from Him, who had called them in Christ's grace, unto a different gospel, "which is not another." How arduous were the labours of the apostle, how sore his trials, how intense and perilous his combats in seeking to maintain, and preserve in its purity, the truth of the gospel. By the Holy Spirit he saw the truth of God imperilled, where others could see no harm; peril, not from without, but rising up in the very bosom of the assembly. (Acts 15:1-41 may well be called the Christian's Magna Carta). And now from this custodian of divine truth comes these solemn words, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed;" and to show that this was no ill-considered outburst, spoken rashly, he reiterates these solemn words. Beloved brethren, have we this appreciation of the gospel? What is our assessment of its inherent greatness as being the truth of God? Such faithfulness will not call forth the plaudits of men; but may we be preserved from the desire to conciliate men in these things.

"For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ." The apostle then goes on to show how he had learned the gospel: he neither received it from men, nor was he taught it, but by revelation of Jesus Christ. This revelation had transformed him from a persecutor and injurious person into an ardent, faithful, uncompromising witness for Christ. He now speaks of the circumstances of his wonderful conversion, of the good pleasure of God who set him apart, even from his mother's womb, and called him by His grace. He knew all about this Judaism the Galatians were embracing, for did he not say that as touching the law he was a Pharisee; as to zeal, persecuting the church; as to the righteousness which is in the law, he was found blameless? But God had something far better for him: He revealed His Son in him; not merely to Him, but in him. The call of God was accompanied by an inward revelation of the Son of God to his soul; and from henceforth this was the abiding power and reality that enabled him to count all things loss for Christ.

How touching is the close of this first chapter; "He which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed; and they glorified God in me" What an amazing transformation the sight of Jesus in the glory of God had wrought! In misguided zeal he once thought he ought to do many things contrary to the Name of Jesus; but now he can say, "For me to live is Christ! Little wonder that the dear saints, in that day, glorified God in him.

Galatians 2:1-21. The Spirit's elaborate vindication of Paul's apostolate is truly remarkable, as is also its distinctness from that of the twelve, who, as Paul says "were apostles before me." Here we also have the Spirit's refutation of the specious fallacy of apostolic succession, so dear to the human heart. The one who held with unwavering tenacity to the traditions of men, whose fanatical zeal for Judaism was unmatched among his contemporaries, was lifted completely out of that environment, set free from the restrictive and binding influences of legalism, so that he might proclaim the divine and heavenly character of Christianity. With such a commission entrusted to him from the Lord Himself how entirely irrelevant to confer with flesh and blood concerning these heavenly communications.

Having therefore received this revelation he went off into Arabia, into the desert, to return from the same school as Moses, who was raised up of God to lead His people out of the land of bondage. How significant that Paul too was raised up of God to lead His people out of a bondage greater far than Egypt's, into the glorious liberty of the sons of God — wherewith Christ makes us free.

After fourteen years had elapsed, Paul goes up to Jerusalem accompanied by Barnabas and Titus, the occasion of this visit coinciding with the raising at Antioch of questions which affected the character of the Gospel preached among the Gentiles; the history of this we have in Acts 15:1-41. Paul and Barnabas, as we find there, went with the full concurrence of the brethren at Antioch to have this momentous issue, which was causing considerable distress and agitation among the assemblies, settled and put beyond dispute. "It seemed good to us . . . to send chosen men unto you, with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have given up their lives for the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ." But let it again be remarked that, in going up to Jerusalem, he did not do so as yielding to the solicitation of others, but by express revelation from God. The time was now opportune for such a visit to Jerusalem. Had Paul gone at the time of his conversion it might have been argued that he went to receive authority from those who were apostles before him. Because he went under direct divine sanction, Paul had divinely given confidence at Jerusalem.

The time had in fact arrived when, if there was not to be an open breach, there must be the manifestation of unity among the recognised leaders at Jerusalem, the very stronghold of Judaism, and those who preached the Gospel given by the Lord to Paul. And so this devoted, courageous herald of Christianity placed before them the Gospel that he preached, first of all "privately to those who were of reputation," lest the outbreak of legalism, which was carrying the multitude, should work disaster among those who had been gathered out from among the Gentiles. This was no superficial matter; the opposition was strong, determined and formidable; there must be no yielding to the enemy, who was behind it all, in the slightest degree. Titus was with him, a Greek in fullest Christian fellowship and without being circumcised. This was not a chance circumstance; he was there under divine guidance to furnish convincing proof that nothing must be added to faith in Christ Jesus in order to salvation. The apostle resisted the circumcision of Titus, yet allowed the circumcision of Timothy (Acts 16:1-3). "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision has any force, nor uncircumcision; but the moment an attempt is made to enforce it, unyielding resistance must be made, lest the liberty of the Gospel be infringed or conscience towards God be wounded. For the sake of avoiding needless offence to the Jews Paul circumcised Timothy, but to preserve the liberty of the Gospel he sternly resisted the efforts of false brethren to have Titus circumcised. The apostle makes special mention of false brethren who had been brought in unawares, and who were seeking to bring into bondage Christ's free men. Christianity, in fact, at Jerusalem, was so little more than a Jewish sect, that one can readily understand how open would be the door for men of such a class to flock into; but the apostle withstands them, not giving place, as he says, "for an hour." It might seem a small matter to others, that for which he was contending, but with him it involved the whole truth of the Gospel. How gratifying to see the measure of agreement reached between those dear servants of the Lord, men who rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His Name. The right hand of fellowship is given to Paul and Barnabas by James, Peter and John, when they perceived the grace given to Paul. How regrettable to find Paul having to withstand Peter, because he was to be condemned. The element of Judaism was deeply ingrained in Peter and the others who had been eating with the Gentiles in unrestricted Christian liberty until certain came from James, when they withdrew in fear of those who opposed the truth of Christianity. The power of God to resist this opposition was with Paul, and Paul alone. And so he reasons with them in strong contrastive language concerning Christianity and Judaism, demonstrating, as another has said that, "the passing, transient glory of Judaism is but as tinsel compared with the supine and perennial glory of Christianity." They had professed to give up the one for the other. They had believed in Christ to be justified by faith: it was the faith of Christ that justified them, not the deeds of the law: "because on the principle of works of law no flesh shall be justified." How solemn the language of the apostle here: "Now if in seeking to be justified in Christ we also have been found sinners, then is Christ minister of sin." We shudder at the thought dear brethren; yet what are we doing if we build again the very things we have thrown down? we are constituting ourselves transgressors! The apostle now turns from "we" to "I" as he does in Romans 7:1-25. In the death of that blessed One, who had died under the solemn curse of a broken law, he had died; and in that death he had died to law, to the intent that he might live unto God. "I am crucified with Christ;" Saul, the Pharisee, with all his religious accomplishments as well as with all his sins, has come to an end judicially in the cross of Christ, and a new man is risen up in his stead. "Not, I, but Christ liveth in me;" a life communicated from the risen Jesus, a life that death cannot touch. As this life has its source in heaven, its tendencies

are to things in heaven. It is spiritual life in contrast to natural life, and so the apostle adds, "The life which I now live in the flesh;" it is lived in the flesh now, in a poor, groaning, earthly tabernacle; but it will not always be so; we await our house from heaven, a body perfectly suited to its heavenly environment. "I live by the faith of the Son of God." Soon we shall be manifested with Christ in glory, but meantime, before we see Him as He is, we live by the faith of the Son of God. He is "the object bright and fair, to fill and satisfy the heart." With what feelings of unspeakable joy and delight do we utter these precious words "Who loved me, and gave Himself for me." By so reasoning the beloved apostle did not set aside or disregard the grace of God, "for if righteousness is by law, then Christ has died for nothing;" but praise God this is not so; for it is only by that one act of accomplished righteousness we have been set in a "state of accomplished subsisting righteousness before God (J.N.D.). Christ is indeed the end (or object) of the law for righteousness to every one that believes.

Galatians 3:1-29. The controversial character of the apostle's letter has no doubt been noted by the careful reader. It manifests a conflict from which there is no discharge, where the divine ground must be held in the face of formidable and determined opposition. Galatians is in character a controversy! It is a buttress to the grand foundation truths presented in Romans, yet carries further the truth of Christian position. In Romans we are dead to sin and dead to the law; in Galatians we have one crucified to the world and in the light of new creation. New creation is not unfolded in Romans, though doubtless implied in the later chapters; but in Galatians this great truth is stated in that most expressive and comprehensive utterance, "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but new creation." Earlier we had a history of the apostle's own ministry, in which he reiterates that he received his ministry from the Lord directly, owing nothing to those who were apostles before him; nor will he allow anything inconsistent with it, not even in Peter, so that the doctrine which was now to be unfolded should be established on a sure and infallible foundation. In this chapter we come to the doctrinal part of the epistle. From verses 1-13 the inspired writer contrasts law and faith as entirely opposite principles, and demonstrates in a masterly and convincing manner the utter impossibility of obtaining blessing on the principle of works of law: on that principle there is nothing but a curse. From verse 14 to the end of the chapter the contrast is between law and promise; "showing their entire distinctness, not only in date and circumstances, but also in principle, character and purpose." This is a portion of special interest and instruction as showing the peculiar fascination of the law for true believers. It was as though the law had set its eyes on them, like the snake on its victims, so that they were powerless to get away from it. One form of the corruption of the Glad Tidings of the grace of God is the reducing it to a system of ordinances. This tendency displayed itself very prominently in the Galatian assemblies, and the correction of this forms the subject of this part of the epistle. So grave was the departure that the apostle is moved to exclaim with feelings of deep emotion, "O senseless Galatians, who has bewitched you?" How great was their folly in turning to the law for righteousness after having known the grace of the gospel. It seemed as if a bewitching power was drawing them away from divine grace. In which the doctrine of the Cross of Christ had been conspicuously presented to them; desiring to add their own supposed righteousness to the justification procured on the principle of faith; or having recourse to a system of ordinances to make up for their defect in righteousness. In both cases it is the fascination of law preventing them from looking to the Lord Jesus Christ in whom alone righteousness can be found. Observe how strong is the expression. "before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified

among you." The publicity and prominence which the apostle gave to the doctrine of the cross was that of a proclamation set forth by authority in the most frequented part of the city. The doctrine of the cross strikes at the deeply imbedded roots of all man's pretensions to wisdom, righteousness and strength: and it is this that still makes this doctrine offensive to them: but how acceptable it is to those who know that through the cross, God was "making an end of sin, and bringing in everlasting righteousness."

Then the apostle asks, Did you receive the Spirit by keeping the law or by believing the testimony of the finished work of Christ? The Spirit is God's seal on those who believe the gospel, who have come under the efficacy of Jesus' blood; a work to which the flesh can add nothing. God had given them His Spirit that all might be wrought in the Spirit and not in the flesh. Moreover they had been sufferers: was it because of their attempts to keep the law, or because of their confession of Christ? How easy the answer to such questions.

Paul now turns their attention to Abraham, the pattern man of faith, "the father of them that believe;" whose history is given in great detail in the Scriptures as God's portrait of a believer. The features of faith in the believer now are the same as were manifest in Abraham for "They which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham;" and they therefore share the divine blessing, "So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful (or believing) Abraham." The beloved apostle in the pursuance of his emancipating doctrine pens one of the most solemn passages in the word of God, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." The curse of the law rests on every one under it, for none have kept it, even as we read, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all the things which are written in the book of the law to do them." God's righteous requirements of man are set forth in the law; and whosoever contravened one point was guilty of all, and came under the law's penal sanction. Law knows nothing of mercy, and must take its course. With what reverential feelings does the heart contemplate this fact of immense import, that Christ magnified the law and made it honourable; and nowhere was this so richly exemplified as when on the cross He died under the solemn curse of a broken law. "Christ has redeemed us out of the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, Cursed is every one hanged upon a tree.)" This has opened the way for the outflow of God's rich grace to sinners of the Gentiles: He is not now demanding righteousness from men, but setting forth Christ in the gospel, "a propitiatory through faith in His blood."

If a man makes a will, bequeathing certain things absolutely, no one would allow an executor to alter this in the slightest degree or impose conditions of any kind. God's covenant with Abraham was one of unconditional promise, which God Himself undertook to carry out. "For if the inheritance be on the principle of law, it is no longer on the principle of promise, but God gave it in grace to Abraham by promise." The question very naturally rises, "Why then the law?" It was added for the sake of transgressions; that is to make manifest to man the character of sin, which God knew to be in man; and to demonstrate that if man had not a faithful Promiser, One who had the ability to fulfil all He had promised, he could not attain to blessing. The law was added till the seed should come to whom the promise was made. In this way the law, instead of invalidating or superseding, only served to confirm the way of promise made known to Abraham, as the only means of obtaining blessing for man. The law was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator: there were two parties to the law, hence the mediator, Moses standing between God and the people. "Now a mediator is not of one, but God is one," for now there are not two parties; it is not a

people undertaking to answer the requirements of God, but God making known His grace in the death and resurrection of His Son. Yes, indeed, God is one, and there can be no failure. Is the law then against the promises of God? By no means! Righteousness and life are inseparably linked together both in the law and in the gospel. The law said, "This do and thou shalt live;" but it could not give righteousness nor life. Such was the condition of man that the holy, just and good law could only bring condemnation and death to him. It was neither a minister of righteousness nor a minister of life to the sinner. The fault was not in the law, but in man.

Now the apostle changes the figure: he had been referring to the law as a jailor, holding men in bondage and captivity: now he refers to it as a schoolmaster or confidential servant of the house, who kept his watchful eye on the young members of the household. Under him they had no more liberty than the servants, and it was so until they reached manhood's estate. This place the law had until Christ came. What a change when the Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost, the witness of a glorified Christ and of the acceptance of the blood of His cross; bringing the saints into the liberty of sons. They were now grown up: they had reached maturity and man's estate, and could enter into the enjoyment of their rich inheritance.

Now the believer in Christ is regarded by God as having died with Christ, as having been buried with Christ, as raised up with Christ, and to have put on Christ. Surely if we have put on Christ we neither need works or service to commend us to God. We stand before Him arrayed in all the beauty of Christ, Christ our righteousness before the face of God. All the differences and distinctions that existed in the human family are lost in Christ Jesus; difference of nation, Jew and Gentile; difference of social condition, bond and free difference of sex, male and female; "all one in Christ Jesus." How comforting for sinners of the Gentiles, like ourselves, to know that through believing in Christ, the true seed, it is said of us "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

Galatians 4:1-31.

Continuing our brief study of this epistle we come to the chapter in which is contrasted the legal condition of the saints under the dispensation of law with that of the saints brought into the sweet liberty of grace, where Christ the Son makes us free indeed. How this blessed truth of adoption stands out in strong relief against the dark background of the law with all its legalizing propensities. The law brought distance; but here is nearness of a most intimate and endearing character. Under law there was a yoke of bondage, of which Peter could say, "which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear;" a bondage characterising the children of law, the seed according to the flesh. How great the contrast with the portion of those who are children of the free woman.

Having mentioned heirs "according to promise," the apostle proceeds to contrast that condition with that of the heirs under law. The heir under law is like a child under guardians; though in title he possesses all the estate, he cannot act even on his own property without the permission of the guardians. How elucidating the conclusions of Paul in giving this to illustrate the condition of the heirs under law. The elements of the world — their much vaunted ritual and ordinances — all that was so gratifying to the flesh, kept the Old Testament heirs in a state of pupilage and bondage until God's due time came for sending forth His Son, the promised seed of the woman (Genesis 3:15). To Him the eye of faith had ever been directed, from the moment of the fall; but He came under law "to redeem them that were under the law."

"The fulness of the time" is a remarkable expression. All God's dealings with man, prior to this wonderful event, were of a probationary character; which served to show how incurably evil man was, and how great his need for divine intervention with a redemption in which he could stand before God. Redemption was ever in God's mind for man's blessing: and here we are brought to that auspicious moment when God sent forth His Son. How the heart lingers over these precious words, charmed by the kindness and pity of our Saviour God (Titus 3:4). As come under the law He magnified it by His unswerving and implicit obedience: yea, He magnified the law in a more profound degree by bearing its solemn curse, and thus redeeming from under it the heirs, that they might come into the place, proper to them as sons, which they could not do so long as they were under the law. The apostle then contrasts the state of the Gentile believer, standing in the full liberty of the Glad Tidings, with that of the saint of old under the law; pointing out the folly of the Gentile putting himself under law, from which the godly Jew required to be redeemed by the work of Christ on the cross. They were sons, not servants — heirs who had attained maturity, and who had liberty of access unto the Father with all confidence. How striking Paul's argument: how clear his distinctions: "that we might receive the adoption of sons" (5: 5), and "because ye are sons" (5: 6). The Spirit of adoption or sonship was not the portion of the saints of old; it is the blessed fruit of accomplished redemption, for which even the disciples of the Lord had to wait till after His ascension (Acts 1:4-8). How sad to reflect that, because of a low state of soul, we may not realise the blessedness and power of having the Spirit of sonship that enables us to cry "Abba, Father." The Father's Name Thou hast declared, The Father's love with Thee is shared.

How the vigilant eye of the beloved apostle discerned the elements of retrogression in the conduct of the Galatian saints. Things which others might have passed as harmless and of no moment, the faithful servant of the Lord detects as deflection from the truth that would bring devastating results. With loving appeal he writes to them, "But now after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God." What an appeal! to turn from their knowledge of God to His knowledge of them. At best our knowledge of God is very imperfect, but He has taken us up in the perfect knowledge of all that we were and all that we would be, and has justified us freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. How sad to see those who have been so richly blessed and favoured of God turning again to the weak and beggarly elements of the world. These things of Judaism were all right in their time and place as shadows of the good things to come, but how weak and beggarly in the presence of the blessed Son of God, in whom the shadows found their substance. Alas, men still think that God is to be served by men's hands as though He needed something. They know Him not in His blessed character as Giver, and so do not come to Him to receive. How distressing to see those who once enjoyed the truth of the Gospel bowed down under a system of ordinances, observing days and months and years; thus obscuring for themselves the one great object that God would bring before them, even His own blessed Son, in the glory of His humiliation and in the greatness of His exaltation.

Again, as at the beginning, the apostle argues from his own case, "I am as ye are:" I take no ground of superiority over you because I was an Israelite, "as touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." No, I come down from my legal standing, and take the same ground as a poor sinner of the Gentiles. Peter, too, takes the same ground: "We (Jews) believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved even as they (the Gentiles)." There is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. It is not for the Gentile however

to take Jewish ground, but for the Jew to take Christian ground where there is "no difference." The physical infirmity of the beloved apostle had not deterred their reception of the Glad Tidings: yea, it had only served to evoke their deep affection for him, to the extent that, if it had been possible, they would have plucked out their own eyes to give to him. They had received him as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. But now the cold, chilling, blighting wind of legality had blasted the tender shoots of grace, and the apostle stands in doubt of them. The only antidote to legality is to have Christ formed in us. This is the work of the Spirit of truth who, disengaging the mind from the law, engages us with Christ who is the end (or object) of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth.

Paul then shows how that the principle of the law disturbed the family of Abraham, and how that there was no rest until the legal element was cast out. The failure of the believer comes through lack of simple reliance on God. Abraham and Sarah became impatient and thought to get by their own wisdom and strength the blessing that God had promised. Hagar is given to Abraham by Sarah in the attempt to procure the divine blessing by fleshly means, which immediately results in Sarah being despised by Hagar. The Pharisees, monumental in their legality and so proud of their righteousness, despised Him by whom came grace and truth. The inspired writer proceeds to demonstrate in allegorical language the unbridgeable gulf between these two principles, law and grace — the two covenants; the one from Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, Hagar: the other, Jerusalem above, our Mother, which is free. We are come to Mount Zion, and to the heavenly Jerusalem; and as there we have the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.

Contemplating all the blessedness of what is connected with the true Isaac, the apostle breaks forth in praise, using the words of the prophet of salvation, Isaiah, "Rejoice, thou barren (Sarah, not Hagar) that barest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband." How blessedly does this follow immediately on the details of Christ's suffering for us, in the previous chapter of the prophet. Laughter, joy is connected with Isaac the son of Sarah, not with the son of Hagar. "Now we brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise:" born of the Spirit, children of God, born of incorruptible seed, of the word of God, by the word of truth. The bondwoman and her son must go, for Isaac and Ishmael cannot go on peaceably together. In the day that Isaac was weaned, Ishmael mocks; he regards Isaac as insignificant and despicable; no doubt mocking too at the old age of Sarah as compared with the vigour and comeliness of Hagar. There is nothing man more instinctively dislikes than grace. The oft-repeated story of religious persecution is but the story of Isaac and Ishmael here pointed out by the apostle; and this mocking of Isaac is characteristic of the day in which we live. But let us rejoice in this that we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free; privileged to stand in the liberty wherewith Christ makes us free. Free from the entangling yoke of bondage we can rejoice in the Lord always: like Paul. "as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing." "Rejoice in the Lord O ye righteous; for praise is comely for the upright."

Galatians 5:1-26. The recovery of the truth taught in the Epistle to the Romans is the great point in this letter to the Galatians. Here we have the religion of man and the religion of the Spirit contrasted — the bondage of souls under the law with the liberty of saints under Christ and grace. The hopelessness of attaining righteousness or blessing under law is amply demonstrated. In this chapter the flesh and the Spirit are strongly contrasted, as are also the moral fruits produced by those under the sway of these respective principles. The first verse of this chapter marks the close

of the exhortation begun in the previous chapter. It is into the liberty of sons that Christ has brought us, and although we wait for the full blessedness belonging to sonship when we shall be manifested with Christ the Son in glory, yet even now it is in wondrous liberty we have access with confidence into the presence of God the Father. Instead of having a yoke of bondage imposed on us by those who would tempt God (Acts 15:1-41), we have the Spirit of sonship, whereby we cry Abba, Father. What marvellous liberty is this wherewith Christ has made us free: it is the liberty of the truth (John 8:32). What liberty to be delivered from the vain attempt to find some ground of confidence in ourselves towards God: what liberty to see in Christ, our righteousness before God — "Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness" (1 Corinthians 1:30). How trenchant the call therefore, Stand fast in the liberty of Christ — freedom from all condemnation, freedom of nearness to God, freedom of holiness, freedom of service. Bring in law and all this freedom is gone, and in its place a heavy yoke is placed upon us. The stern language of the apostle is very arresting: any dependence on legal righteousness, moral or ceremonial, renders Christ profitless unto us. It is extremely misleading to say, "I know that I can do nothing by myself," for this only puts Christ in the place of a helper, and the thousands who are relying on Christ as a helper for righteousness will never find the salvation of God. The ten lepers were alike helped by Christ, but only one had faith to throw himself at Jesus' feet; and he alone received the words, "Thy faith hath made thee whole." The nine were content to remain as Jews in Judaism, and knew not the blessedness of giving glory to God at the feet of Jesus. Many thousands bear the name of Christ, but what profit is He to them? If you are looking only partly to Christ and partly to yourself "Christ shall profit you nothing." Christ was everything to Paul: once he had profited in the Jews' religion above many," but he had given up every natural and acquired advantage for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord, and could well instruct others regarding the profit to be found in Christ.

Well might Paul reiterate the testimony, "He that is circumcised is debtor to do the whole law." The holy majesty of the law, the rich grace of the Gospel, and the glory of Christ, alike forbid the vain and senseless attempt to make our own partial obedience, together with Christ, the ground of our salvation. To do so is to virtually disown the work of Christ as Gods means of justifying the sinner, and to think lightly of the sacrifice of the Christ of God. Those who think themselves justified by their own efforts in any way are fallen from grace. It is a very solemn and grievous thing for a Christian to fall into sin, but for such an one there is the rich and effectual provision of God; "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the propitiation for our sins." But to fall from grace is to reassert confidence in the flesh, and to displace Christ, with all the injurious consequences, not the least of which is the abandoning of the truth of the Gospel as to present justification before God by faith in Christ. There is also the surrendering of the true Christian hope, by making the attainment of righteousness the hope, instead of making present righteousness, through faith, the sure warrant for expecting glory. "We," says the apostle in the name of all believers, "wait" (not for righteousness, but for) "the hope of righteousness by faith" — the hope to which righteousness is entitled. If we tamper with the truth of present acceptance in the Beloved we undermine the blessed hope for which, through the Spirit, we are entitled to wait, even glory. With unflinching and unwavering insistence it has been stated that all distinctions in the flesh are of no account where there is faith in Christ. Circumcision, the badge in the flesh of God's earthly people, availeth no more than uncircumcision. Faith alone is needed, a faith that is wrought in the heart by the Spirit of God, and that works by love. The law could give

neither life nor righteousness; it might command love to God and man, but it had no power to produce what it enacted; but faith worketh by love to God and to man.

Now the apostle speaks of his confidence in them through the Lord, knowing that the truth set forth would find a response in the hearts of those who had been quickened by the grace of God, even if for the moment that truth had been overlaid by legalism. How much in these days of great leavening do we need to be reminded earnestly and constantly "to continue in the grace of God" (Acts 13:43). But the inspired writer is unsparing in his condemnation of those who were troubling the saints of God. The apostles, in their united testimony, in their one memorable council recorded in the Acts, declared, "Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law." So here, the apostle speaks of the legal teacher as "he that troubleth you."

Paul then goes on to show how liberty according to the Spirit would express itself. Liberty according to man is every man doing that which is right in his own eyes, the free expression of his own will, every restraint removed that would fetter his unbridled self-will, a liberty that results in lawlessness. But we are called to quite another kind of liberty, not for the activity of the flesh, but in which we can serve one another according to the will of God. "His service perfect freedom is." The Gospel brings a law of love — love with its constraining power, not the restraining power of a law which gendereth to bondage.

How important it is to have God's thoughts with respect to the Spirit as contrasted with the flesh. The judgment of God has been passed on the flesh in the cross of Christ, where God made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." In consequence of this, life in the Spirit flows forth from the risen and glorified Jesus. The new man is a new order of man, coming forth after death and judgment have passed on the old man. It is therefore according to the new order of man that we should walk. The Spirit makes us alive to new thoughts, desires, affections and interests; "If therefore ye have been raised with the Christ, seek the things which are above, where the Christ is sitting at the right hand of God." Our thoughts are to be on Christ in heaven, and down here we are to walk in the Spirit. Beloved J.N.D. says that "walk" refers to the general manner of life: the Spirit is to be the characteristic of the life and walk, the instrument and power of every activity.

Verses 17 and 18 bring before us a great truth, namely that the Spirit and the flesh are contrary one to the other. There is hardly a Christian who has not attempted in practice to contradict this assertion; but the flesh, even in the believer, is unchangeably the same. The flesh is enmity against God, is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. It is the presence of the Spirit in us which enables us to know the evil of the flesh. The Spirit and the flesh are ever opposed to each other. Here we impinge very decidedly on the doctrine of the 7th of Romans: — "For I know that in me, that is in my flesh, good does not dwell, for to will is there with me. . . I find then the law upon me who wills to practise what is right, that with me evil is there." There is that which is born of the flesh and that which is born of the Spirit. But true Christians have come under the leadership of the Spirit, and as such are not under the law. The verses which follow (Galatians 5:19-21) give us a very dark catalogue of the works of the flesh, which are manifest. There are other workings of the flesh which are not open and palpable, which can only be discerned by those who are spiritual. There is the mind of the flesh (Colossians 2:18); and the flesh in its religious aspect, in which Paul

could have no confidence (Php 3:3-4). But even in the manifest works of the flesh, while some are morally offensive to us, others are not so; but they are all offensive to God "for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God" (Luke 16:15). In this epistle, whilst the beloved apostle presents us with a rich exposition of the grace of God, he deals unsparingly with the flesh, its lusts, its affections, and its works. How happy the contrast to the works of the flesh is the fruit of the Spirit. This precious fruit is produced by the Spirit as we abide in Christ. "In Me is thy fruit found;" and again, The branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me. . . . He that abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit" (John 15:4-5). Compared with the dark catalogue of the works of the flesh, the fruit of the Spirit is a cluster of beautiful variety, fragrant with the perfections of Christ. Let us repeat the words of the apostle, "Against such there is no law! How searching is the closing exhortation! "If we live by the Spirit, let us walk also by the Spirit. Let us not become vain-glorious, provoking one another, envying one another." If we were ever walking in the Spirit, we should be "unknown, yet well-known;" passing as pilgrims and strangers through the world, without joining in its restless interests. The words of the Lord would then assume a deeper significance for us, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."

Galatians 6:1-18.

We now come to the closing chapter of this wonderful epistle of emancipation. The heavenly character of Christianity has been convincingly demonstrated: the perverters of the Glad Tidings of the glory of the blessed God, the devotees of Judaism with all its ritualistic and legalising influences, stand dishonoured and confounded in the presence of a light that shines from heaven itself. At this juncture it would no doubt be helpful to go back a little over the ground we have covered. To sum up Galatians 5:1-26, the Spirit is shown to be the power for sanctification. It is by the Spirit that holiness is produced. The apostle does not allow the law, either as a means of righteousness or sanctification. As justification is by faith in the blood of Jesus, so also sanctification, or holiness, is from the new nature in the energy of the Spirit of God. In all this, the apostle will not, under any pretext whatever, allow the law any standing. The law is not allowed any part in the Christian economy; it is an element of the world, and as such has gone in the cross of Christ. That wondrous cross has swept away all that belongs to this world; every vestige has gone for God and for faith. The beloved apostle, in his own inimitable way, takes up the elements one by one, and demonstrates that the Christian is delivered from them by the death of Christ. We are God's workmanship; we have received the divine nature; and it is unthinkable that anything of the old economy can have part in this.

Viewing ourselves as still in the body, we have the two principles within us, but the old is not allowed; only the new is recognised. In Galatians 2:20, Paul says, "I am crucified with Christ;" and in Galatians 5:24, "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." In this latter portion the truth is applied to every Christian but it is another thing for the individual Christian to apply it to himself: to know the power of the truth experimentally in the experience of the soul from day to day. The practical application of the death of Christ is of immense importance, and it may help us to consider some Scriptures where it is brought before us. First let us consider Colossians 3:3. "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." Here the truth is stated positively from God's standpoint. We have died in regard to the old order of things, and we have a hidden, divine life with Christ above. How appropriate then the exhortation, "Seek the things which

are above." In Romans 6:11 we have the exhortation, "So also ye, reckon yourselves, dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus." God accounts us to be dead with Christ; we are therefore to reckon ourselves dead (see verses 2 and 8). Faith always acts with God, as we also see in the Scripture, "We thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again." In the power of the new life, by faith in Christ Jesus, we see ourselves as dead in His death, but as living in His life for His pleasure. If we turn now to 2 Corinthians 4:10 we shall find how Paul applied this truth to himself. "Always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body." Paul was in practice holding himself as dead to everything here, passing in an experimental way through the sufferings and afflictions that kept him in truth altogether apart from things here, God helping him in this, even as he says, "We who live are always delivered unto death on account of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh." Who delivered him unto death? God did! In what way? Read verses 8 and 9; "Every way afflicted, but not straitened," and so on. Why was the apostle allowed to pass through persecution, to be cast down, perplexed and troubled? It was because he desired to bear about in his body the putting to death of Jesus; and God says I will help you to do it. It was like the breaking of the pitchers of Gideon's three hundred men; it let the light shine out. Beloved saints of God, let us take account of this in days of adversity and distress. This is the way God helps us to reckon ourselves dead to all that is around, so that we might live unto Him. It is evident that the death and the life go together. I have dwelt at length on this particular line of truth, convinced of the necessity of knowing these things as power in our lives, so that we can stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.

We shall now address ourselves briefly to the chapter before us. At the close of Galatians 5:1-26, the apostle warns the saints of what necessarily results from the cultivation of the legal spirit, vainglory, provoking one another, and envy. In the beginning of Galatians 6:1-18 we have another kind of spirit, the spirit of grace, "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." This is what we need to do, not to glory over each other, but to help each other; ever seeking the profit and advancement of our brethren. In appealing to those who are spiritual, the apostle does not desire us to be testing ourselves to discover our degree of spirituality. The spiritual man lives too near to God to think anything of himself; and the spirit of meekness is the antithesis of the spirit of fancied spirituality. Those who are spiritual know that the restoration of the erring one is bound up with the glory of God. It was said of the Pharisees that they bound upon men's shoulders, burdens grievous to be borne; but they would not touch them themselves with one of their little fingers. This was the spirit that was creeping in among the Galatians; the direct result of turning to the law as a rule of life.

Since they had a fondness for law, the Galatians are directed to a law of a different character; "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." In effect, the apostle says, If you will have law, here is a law for you; but it is the law of Christ, who was, and is, the great burden bearer: Who not only bore our sicknesses and carried our sorrows, but also bore the mighty burden of our sins in His own body on the tree. Now we have what might be called a Christian paradox. As fulfilling the law of Christ, we are to restore the fallen and bear the burdens one of another but in connection with work, every man shall bear his own burden. The apostle was no

doubt referring to those who were seeking to destroy the foundations that he had laid; and for this they would have to give account to God. The day of appraisal is coming, when every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour. It is salutary to remember that grace never interferes with the exercise of God's government, nor modifies its application.

God's government is brought before us in Galatians 6:7. It requires spiritual discernment to place grace and government in their true and proper setting. Grace makes me a child, and government will chasten me with a rod if I am naughty. The principle, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap," is divine and irrevocable. Our own experience; the experiences of such as Abraham, Lot, David, and the children of Israel, are all examples that confirm the inevitable reaping of what has been sown. How encouraging, in this matter of sowing, are the words which follow, "Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." The harvest has not yet come; we have need of patience; let us then be patient in our sowing to the Spirit, knowing that from the Spirit we shall reap life everlasting; and all the good done in the sowing time will reap its full reward. Let us not forget the white stone with the new name, which no man knoweth but he that receives it. We are sparse sowers enough, but the word reminds us that "He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully" (2 Corinthians 9:6). Then let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith. The saints of God must have a special place in our affections, which is surely in keeping with the word that God is the "preserver of all men, specially of those that believe."

One discerns throughout this epistle the intensity of feeling, and the earnestness of Paul's desire for the saints to whom he is writing; and the fact that he writes the epistle with his own hand is the crowning proof of his deep concern for them. How solemn and affecting are the words, "But far be it from me to boast save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world." That wondrous cross in all its majestic greatness stood as an impassible barrier between the apostle and all that constituted the world out of which he had been delivered by the death of Christ upon the cross. Christ was entirely outside of this world's system: He was the Head of a new creation, where circumcision or uncircumcision availed nothing. These belonged to the world, not to the new creation. Here was a new rule, a rule which made a man a pilgrim and a stranger on the earth: the rule of belonging to that scene where the glory of Christ shall be displayed. For the things of the new creation he suffered, in faithfulness to Christ, bearing in his body through sufferings, afflictions and trials, the brands of the Lord Jesus, his beloved Master.

A. Shepherd.

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Some Serious Considerations.

It is difficult to conceive of anything more important today, on the negative side, than the thorough acceptance of the fact of the ruin of the Assembly in its responsible course here. One says "Thorough acceptance" though assured of the necessity for divinely given intuition in the matter. The ruin is complete. If it is thought otherwise, it is because the eye has before it something less than the Assembly of God. Such a conception is sectarian and self-condemned, twice ruined in obduracy of heart. In Jeremiah's day, he alone in Jerusalem proclaimed the ruin, weeping, as he did so: complaining at his persecution, not inconsistently with the dispensation of earthly administration in which he did so. A sighing Baruch, or an Ethiopian Ebed-melech may accompany him in his sorrow and affliction, that was all: witnesses indeed to the faithfulness of God in their tears. It is to him, Jeremiah, that "hidden" or "unattainable" things were revealed (Jeremiah 33:1-26). But so far did the truth of the ruin penetrate at long-last even the unrenewed mind, that such say: "The two families that Jehovah had chosen, He hath even cast them off" (Jeremiah 33:24). And there is a similarity between Jeremiah's and Paul's commissions in the radical character of their ministries and reference to the nations; and while Paul's ministry included, exclusively to himself, the "ministry of the Assembly," he has himself to speak of its ruin: "All seek their own things, not the things of Jesus Christ" (Php 2:21). Eternal purpose alone meets his heart where the ruin is thoroughly under his eye with his beloved child Timotheus (2 Timothy 1:9). John has his back towards the Assembly, and turns to view it in a new way in its responsibility, only to find it as having left its "first love" and "fallen" (Revelation 1:1-20; Revelation 2:1-29). And if he would see the heavenly city descending out of heaven from God having the glory of God, it is "one of the seven angels which had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues" which spoke to him saying "Come here, I will show thee the bride the Lamb's wife;" a fact full of moral instruction to our hearts. The various revivals which have taken place down through the centuries, and the good that the all-seeing eye of Him like the Son of man (Revelation 1:1-20) sees, altered nothing of the fact that the Assembly was ruined, fallen and falling still; until the "lukewarm" state in Laodicea crowns the loss of first love in Ephesus and is about to be "spued" out of His mouth. Thenceforth the Assembly is only seen in heaven (Revelation 4:1-11et seq.).

It is the in-wrought sense of these things which is needed by all our poor hearts. Revival, especially such as a hundred or so years ago, awakened evanescent hopes but to be necessarily disappointed: and so it must prove concerning any refreshings which, in the faithfulness of God are vouchsafed. Such were never intended for one moment to remove from the soul the ruin in which the tiny refreshment — taking in in its scope and thought, the whole Assembly of God — was given. Present blessing must never betray us from soberness of mind and watchfulness against Satan in this respect. And this sober judgment in the state it must produce, will lead to the very place of blessing before our good and gracious God. And let it not be forgotten that while Israel, renewed in heart, nationally resurrected, re-united, will be restored under an everlasting covenant in the land, and Jehovah's tabernacle with them and He Himself there —

Jehovah-shammah; the professing Assembly will not be so restored. While the nations of the world, purged by the judgments of God, also individually renewed in heart, will become, or come in under "The kingdom of the world of our Lord and of His Christ," no such regeneration will place the christian Assembly again in the scene of its failure. On the contrary, spued out Christ's mouth, it will become the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth — Babylon, riding the scarlet beast full of names of blasphemy and eventually, fallen, be destroyed by it and the confederated ten kings, overwhelmed, destroyed with judgments from God more terrible than all the rest of the world to which she really, in spite of her profession, belonged: the false bride, never, any more at all, to arise; while the true bride is seen in her own proper place in heaven, the bride of the Lamb, the true light, through Him of the world to which the glory of the nations will be brought. But there is another serious consideration in the subject dimly being traced, viz., the part the individual plays in all this, for the stream of ecclesiastical confusion is formed and fed by individual failure in the watershed of man's ruined nature, if we may so speak. How far have we contributed to the final catastrophe?

Paul's Gospel is radical, and complementary to that new-creation ministry in which the Assembly consists according to God. In this latter he may and does speak of what is administrative, and that also fails; but ever with that which pertains to new creation contained therein. In the Galatian lapse indeed, new creation and as many as walk according to that rule alone meet the case: but in Corinthians, the evil and the good run concurrently for a while here below. How serious then, appropriately to our consideration here, is chapter 3 of the first epistle. What are we, each one, building? Gold, silver, precious stones, wood, grass, straw. But the "day will declare it," the day revealed in fire. The corrupter of the temple of God is destroyed, while the faulty builder will be saved yet so as through the fire. We need to become fools to be wise in this respect of building. And Paul's Gospel underlies this matter. If, in our ministry — and also taken in the widest sense of our whole course here — it is not "Christ speaking in us" (2 Corinthians 13:3), we but reproduce ourselves (" wood, grass, straw" sure enough!) What a thing it is that God has given us Christ's death! Baptised to Him, we have been baptised to it, whether to sin and the law in Romans, or the world in Colossians. Jesus Christ came by water and blood, and the Spirit bears witness (1 John 5:1-21). Not only is our guilt removed, but God has condemned sin in the flesh in Christ's death: and we are also risen with Him so as to be clear altogether from that man and place where he disports himself, not only carnally and secularly, but religiously "to the satisfaction of the flesh" (Colossians 2:23). So that church questions do not merely concern the ecclesiastically-minded, but such in which each Christian is deeply involved.

"But wisdom, where shall it be found? and where is the place of understanding? . . . Destruction and death say, We have heard its report . . . God understandeth the way thereof, and He knoweth its place: . . . and unto man He said, Lo, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom: and to depart from evil is understanding" (Job 28:12-28).

Let us, then, survey the ruin, our ruin; our uprightness of heart is in it. Let us remember that "The Most High dwelleth not in (places) made with hands" (Acts 7:48) that it is written in the prophet, "But to this man will I look: to the afflicted and contrite in spirit, and who trembleth at My word" (Isaiah 66:2). And as we do so, with the Cross upon our spirits (1 Corinthians 1:1-31; 1 Corinthians 2:1-16; 1 Corinthians 3:1-23), we may get a view according to God indeed of that fair new creation, into which sin cannot enter, or man's hand or foot defile. And are not "all the treasures of wisdom

and of knowledge" found in the "Mystery of God?" that vast system of glory including the Assembly's peculiar place in it by virtue of her relationship with Him Who is the glorious Centre of it all, even "the Son of the Father's love." How appropriately can we see here that "destruction and death say, We have heard its report." That — destruction and death — is God's answer to man's way; and as we are with God in spirit; our eyes anointed with the eye-salve obtained alone from Him (Revelation 3:18), our minds and hearts submit to His holy judgment, our walk and our ways, "ecclesiastically" also, become conformed thereto; we cease from our own efforts to "repair" the ruin, we "With-draw from iniquity . . . and pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace, with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart" (2 Timothy 2:19-22). Should not the faith and love of the Assembly in these last solemn moments, be as the unclouded view of a dying man, looking out of his "earthly tabernacle house" to that "building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens?" (2 Corinthians 5:1-2). It is a present, ecclesiastical deliverance, just as the hope that "He that has raised up Christ from among the dead shall quicken your mortal bodies also on account of His Spirit that dwells in you" (Romans 8:11), is the completion of the personal deliverance. But our paths often are, alas, like Jacob's in this respect. He spent twenty odd years outside of the land of promise, with many experiences indeed, as we, but all to break down his planning, plotting mind and way (and have not we had many ecclesiastical expedients? and of what use have they been!!) Abraham and Isaac, the risen man in type, dwelt with God in God's land of promise and were fruitful therein. And this leads to a brief view of Paul's own position and mind and outlook in this connection. No doubt he had (though we speak with the utmost diffidence here also) to feel personal failure in connection with his own work; no doubt such thoughts may have been mixed with his feelings as, after the shipwreck and the brethren from Rome met him, he "thanked God and took courage" (Acts 28:1-31). But the energy, faithfulness of his path and devotedness, so wholly governed by the divine testimonies, left his heart free in his Roman prison also for other thoughts. What does he say as he surveys, beyond the ruin, how "God; Who has saved us, and has called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to (His) own purpose and grace, which (was) given to us in Christ Jesus before (the) ages of time, but has been made manifest now by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, Who has annulled death, and brought to light life and incorruptibility by the Glad tidings?" (2 Timothy 1:8-10). He suffers, but is not ashamed, and he says "For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep for that day the deposit I have entrusted to Him" (2 Timothy 1:12).

He sees Him whom he had believed and "that day." And may not our eyes, beloved, each in his tiny measure, do the same? Paul's greater faithfulness may enable him to so speak, we in our lesser. Further, in the "crown of righteousness" he awaited from the "righteous Judge . . . in that day," he also links "all those who love His appearing with Him" (2 Timothy 4:8). And again, mercy is looked for "in that day," for one, even Onesiphorus who being in Rome had sought him out very diligently and found him (2 Timothy 1:17). And has not this a word for us today? Whilst standing and surveying the ruin which we have brought in, is it not an essential part of faithfulness to, metaphorically speaking, seek Paul out very diligently and find him? And has the real Paul changed, either in doctrine or manner of life, or suffering? Evangelical christendom may think so, but indeed it is not so. The true" Paul "is as rejected today, as then; and this is a solemn consideration for each of us." The testimony of our Lord and of me his prisoner," still stands before our responsibility, even if it do little else than to humble us. No "fragments" are to be "lost" in this the Spirit's day. Nothing will help to keep us apart from acquiescing in the ruin, in the way of

submitting our ways to the general decline, like such a consideration. God does not change, nor does the world, whatever its fashions. As long as the word stands "Till He come" in regard of the Supper, Paul must be thus "sought," however alone in the power of life (2 Timothy 1:1) it may, and must be so. The sovereignty of God will see to it that this "door" will not be "shut" "Till He come," as it is written.

C. N. Snow.

Vol 01-10 - Spiritual Slothfulness.

Spiritual Slothfulness. In these last days there is a very real danger threatening the children of God, most insidious, and therefore more dangerous. This is spiritual slothfulness. In former times when, to confess Christ entailed the loss of all one's possessions, and possibly of life itself, this danger hardly existed. The risk was so real and great that a man had to be in deadly earnest before taking it. But in Christendom generally all that is now past, each man thinks and believes as he likes, and no one takes any notice. And yet, while persecution has virtually ceased, how is it that one meets so few Christians who, like the apostle Paul, are ready to give up everything in order to "win Christ?" So many have commenced their Christian course full of zeal, and most anxious to work for Christ, but little by little the first love has declined, and gradually the spirit of slumber has overcome them, and they are at last content to live, with outwardly blameless lives no doubt, but with no real "heart for Christ." He is no longer the one object of their affections, and it is sometimes difficult to perceive any difference between them (true believers though they may be) and men of the world. May not the cause of this sad decline be found in "spiritual slothfulness?" The Spirit of God has not failed to take account of this grave danger, for in the book of Proverbs alone may be found some 24 verses speaking of slothfulness and its effects, and how often is not the believer, directly or indirectly, urged to be diligent? But let us now see if we cannot find what, in the Christian life, is the first cause, or germ, of this terrible spiritual disease, which saps the very life of the believer, and utterly destroys all true testimony for Christ. I believe that the beginning of all decline is neglect of prayer. In nearly all the epistles we find the Spirit stressing the great importance of prayer in such words as these; "Continuing instant in prayer;" "Praying always with all prayer;" "Continue in prayer and watch;" "Pray without ceasing." We read that our blessed Lord, during the three and a half years of His public ministry, was constantly in prayer, and on one occasion we are told that He continued all night in prayer to God. And on the night of His betrayal, in the mount of Olives, He prayed over and over again, until at last, being in an agony, He prayed more earnestly, and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. If that blessed Man, the sinless One, our great Example, so realised the need of prayer, how great must our need be! The next step on the downward path will be neglect of the Scriptures. When, after the death of Moses, the Lord instructed Joshua as to his course on leading the people into the land, He said, "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night." Further, it was ordered that in the days to come, when the people should desire to set up a king like unto the nations around them, he should only be a man of God's choice, and that when he sat upon the throne of the kingdom he should write him a copy of the law; that it was to be with him, that he might read therein all the days of his life, and so learn to fear the Lord his God. Throughout the law and the prophets there is continual mention of the Word of the Lord, while in the Psalms we are constantly reminded of the blessedness resulting from the study and meditation of God's statutes and testimonies. When our blessed Lord was tempted by the devil He met and vanquished him by the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, alone. When opposed by the scribes and Pharisees, His invariable reply was, "What saith the Scripture? The apostle Paul writes thus to Timothy: "From a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are

able to make thee wise." Peter, in his first epistle, says, "As newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby." And later on, writing to those "that have obtained like precious faith with us," he earnestly warns them of the danger of becoming lax in Christian walk, lest they should become barren and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, and seeks to stir them up by putting them in remembrance of these things. From these few examples we see the paramount importance of reading and meditating on the holy Scriptures, the Word of God; for the neglect of this will gradually lead the slothful soul to the third step of decline, namely, conformity to the world, and the loss of that separation which is so strongly insisted on in Scripture. It were easy to quote many Scriptures to prove this, but hardly necessary.

I would only add a sentence or two from John 17:1-26; "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world;" "Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me." Beloved Brethren, we are now in the very last days, and the words of our blessed Lord ring ever more clearly in our ears; "Surely I come quickly;" let us then pay more earnest heed to what His beloved disciple John says; "And now, little children, abide in Him: that when He shall appear we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming."

G. F. Barlee. The Mind in Christ Jesus.

"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." What was the mind that was also in Jesus? It was always coming down. . . . The more He humbled Himself, the more He was trampled upon. . . . He goes down . . . till He can go no lower, down to the dust of death. . . . Are you content to do this? Are you content to have the mind that was in Christ Jesus, content to be always trampled on?

J. N. Darby.

Vol 01-10 - The Apostle Paul's Warning.

The Apostle Paul's Warning. In Acts 20:17, the apostle Paul called over to Miletus the elders of the church of Ephesus to speak with them, knowing, that he would not meet them on earth again. There is something exceedingly touching about the last spoken words of this great servant of the Lord, to those who had heard his God-given ministry so long. He did not call all the saints over, only the elders, who had the care of the saints, as he had some very salutary words of warning to speak to them regarding the coming days. So that, while these words are for all the saints, it specially becomes those who have the interest of Christ's saints at heart, to heed them. Although there are no appointed elders in the church today, there are still those who, like the house of Stephanus, have addicted themselves to the ministry; who tend what is dear to the heart of Christ. Such should be spiritually minded, so as to be able to exercise spiritual judgment in the affairs of God's assembly.

Paul could speak to them with apostolic authority, but he founds his instructions on what he had been among them at all seasons, "Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations." In Acts 20:18 he speaks of his manner of life; in Acts 20:19 of his service to the Lord; in Acts 20:20 of his service to the saints and in Acts 20:21 of his testimony to all men. Is this order not of special importance in days of wholesale departure from the truth? Nothing can be right if the manner of life is inconsistent with the word ministered; all takes character from this. Then all true service must have the Lord Himself in view; it is from Him and to Him; He must be the source, the motive, and the object of all done in His Name. Next there are the saints to care for; they are to have what is profitable, and to be taught publicly and from house to house. The Gospel has its place too, and it had a very important place with the apostle, who could say, "Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel." So that God's order was, first the Lord, then the saints, then the world.

Going to Jerusalem, he did not have liberty of spirit, not knowing what was before him, saving that the Holy Spirit had forewarned him that bonds and afflictions were to be his. Still, these things did not move him; nor did he count his life dear to him; his great desire was to finish his course, and to fulfil his ministry received from the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God. God granted him this desire; he finished his course, and he testified of God's grace until the end (2 Timothy 4:7; 2 Timothy 4:17). If we are to learn the truth of God, we must first receive the Gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24). Grace having met our deep need, our souls are helped on with the preaching of the kingdom of God (Acts 20:25). We learn that God has marked out our course for us down here under the authority of His dear Son, where, in subjection to the Lord Jesus we are marked in all our ways by righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. This leads us to the knowledge of "the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27), which Paul had not shunned to declare. To the apostle, God had revealed the deep deep secret of His heart, that great masterpiece and crown of all His ways, the truth of the Mystery; and Paul had brought all the truth committed to him before the saints. He was therefore clear of the blood of all; none could charge him righteously with holding back anything that God had given him to declare.

Later on, the apostle unfolds to the saints at Ephesus, in that remarkable epistle, the purpose of God, according to which we are brought into the highest possible blessing; where the truth of the counsels of God, the truth of the mystery, and other great truths are opened out. There, he prays that Christ might dwell by faith in the hearts of the saints, for only thus could they keep by the Holy Spirit the precious legacy of truth committed to them. Alas! this very church is charged in the Revelation with leaving its first love; Christ had lost His place in the hearts of His loved ones. We can therefore understand the solemn words addressed here to the elders of Ephesus. Does not the history of the church at Ephesus show that Satan's special attack was directed at those who held the truths belonging to God's purpose and counsels, and who sought to answer to what had been revealed to them? Will it be any different today? Are not those who have learned the truth of Paul's Gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery, the special object of the adversary's assault?

First of all the elders are told to take heed to themselves. When we realise that many of them must have been included in "All who are in Asia . . . have turned away from me," we can readily understand the need for this solemn warning. They were also to take heed to all the flock, to feed the church of God, which He had purchased at such a cost, "the blood of His own." Two different evils are to be watched against; first, the grievous wolves who would enter in, not sparing the flock; second, the men who would arise from among them, speaking perverse things, to gain disciples. The former are ungodly men who creep into the professing church for personal advantage, caring nothing for the welfare of the sheep of Christ; the latter are believers, but who care more for themselves than for Christ, seeking a place and a name among the saints, even if they dishonour the Name of Christ in doing so. From such as the latter the apostle had his greatest sorrows. He was not prepared to lower the heavenly standard of truth to secure alleviation from persecution, even if it meant being forsaken by those he greatly loved, who had come under the influence of men; who, for an easy path, lowered the divine and heavenly standard. But if men forsook and turned from him, Paul was able to say, "Nevertheless the Lord stood by me." Paul had trouble from those without, but his deepest sorrows, his heart burnings, and his tears, were mostly from those within the professing church.

Continuing his warning, the apostle asks them to remember how he had not ceased to warn each one night and day, for the space of three years, and that with tears. Well did he know the evil days ahead of the church; so he bids the elders "Watch." Having given his solemn warnings and word of exhortation regarding the impending evil, the apostle commends them to God and to the word of His grace. What a resource we can find in God; what supplies of grace in His word. This precious word can indeed build us up, and give us an inheritance among all those set apart in the goodness of God. In closing this remarkable address, Paul gives another personal testimony; he was an ensample for those who looked after the sheep of Christ; he sought nothing from the saints, and indeed ministered without cost, working with his own hands to meet his temporal needs and the needs of those with him. Truth is not only to be ministered, but to be manifested; and in labouring for the needs of others he was fulfilling the words of the Lord Jesus, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

These solemn warnings come to us in this day that we might "Hold fast" that which has been committed to our trust. There are still those who take the lead among the saints, and happy indeed for the saints if it can be said of their leaders as was said of those in Hebrews 13:7, "Who have

spoken to you the word of God; and considering the issue of their conversation, imitate their faith." Well it is for us if the leaders direct us to "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever." In these closing days of the church's history on earth, let us keep our eye on Christ; He is God's resource for His saints. What a blessed opportunity is now ours, it will never come to us again, to be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. May this be the earnest desire of all our hearts, but as David showed in Psalms 23:1-6, "the green pastures ... and still waters" are for our enjoyment, that we might walk "in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake."

J. Muckle.

Vol 01-10 - The Body of Christ.

The Body of Christ. The whole mind and will of God for us is contained in the Scriptures, and if we are to be here for God's pleasure, we must "stand perfect and complete in all the will of God." This will has been revealed regarding our individual path, and also for us as having part in the church of God. If our lives are not influenced by these great truths, we suffer spiritual loss, and there is commensurate lack in our testimony for the Lord. It is not enough to be enlightened by the truth: the truth must be held in love, attracting the heart to Christ, and controlling the life at the centre of the moral being. Should the heart not be affected by divine light, there will be spiritual decline, and the danger of the light within becoming darkness, with resulting opposition to the truth.

"Why persecutest thou me?"

One of the great truths to which we have alluded is that of the church as the body of Christ. Paul received from Christ the ministry of this, which accounts for the truth of the body being found in his writings only. The words uttered by the Lord to Saul, while on the road to Damascus, revealed that the persecuted saints were livingly united to Him in heaven; and this revelation contained the germ of the great truth that the saints on earth form the body of Christ.

Romans 12:1-21. — The epistle to the Romans unfolds the position and the blessings that are ours as individuals; and chapter 12 opens by showing that the great end for which God has blessed us is to have us intelligently serving Him with our bodies presented a living sacrifice. As separate from the world, and as transformed by the renewing of the mind, we are to prove in devoted service the blessed character of God's will. Having learned God's will for us in an individual way, God would teach us our corporate relationship to each other as members of "one body."

"One body in Christ," To understand the meaning of "One body in Christ." we must get hold of the truth of "In Christ" as taught in Romans 8:1-39. As "In Christ" there is no condemnation for the believer, he is not in the flesh; but he has the Spirit of Christ, and Christ is in him as his life. So that the one body is a living organism, formed by God, and composed of those who have been justified, and who have partaken of Christ's life and Spirit. The "one body" is analogous to the human body, inasmuch as there are different members with different offices. Every Christian has his own part and function as a member of the "one body;" and each functions in harmony with all for the benefit of the whole. Whether our office is prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhortation, giving, ruling or showing mercy, it should be done in interdependence on the other members, as being mutual participators of the grace divinely communicated. No Christian who realises that we are "members one of another" would act in self-will or independently of his brethren, under the plea of being only responsible to the Lord in service.

1 Corinthians 12:1-31. — If Romans delineates our individual position as believers, 1st Corinthians gives our collective position and privileges as God's assembly. We have been called into the fellowship of God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, and are the Temple of God. As come together in

assembly, the saints act for the Lord; and have the privilege of partaking of the Lord's Supper. There, the Spirit of God acts in the different members; and through the gifts ministers for the edifying of the church.

"Many Members, yet but one body." The unity of the body is thrice noticed in 5: 12, and is also referred to in vv. 13 and 20. Although there are many members "The body is one," which bespeaks unity in manifold action, and precludes any action by any member that would deny in practice this divine unity. That there is "one body" repudiates the idea of there being more than one Christian company. The church of God is not composed of a number of different religious organisations and independent societies: but is the living organism produced by the baptism of the Spirit, and in which every member has drunk of that Spirit. No other unity than this is recognised by God: therefore any religious company gathered on any other ground than that of the "one body" is not on the divine ground of the church of God. Consonant with this, in writing this epistle, Paul addressed it to "the church of God which is at Corinth," but also to "all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." Because of the unity of the church, the instructions given to the church at Corinth were binding upon all Christians everywhere; and the disciplinary action undertaken there in the name of the Lord, by apostolic instruction, obliged all the gatherings of the saints to act in the light of it. But although the church is one, it is composed of many members; and their manifold function in the manifestation of the Spirit witnesses to the divine unity. Likewise, when the assembly is not convened, the divine unity of the body subsisting in the One Spirit is evinced in the care the members have one for another. Every member is necessary for the well-being of the body; and God has set the different members in their places according to His pleasure; therefore none should say "I am not of the body," because he does not consider his place important or conspicuous. There are also some who say, "I have no need of thee;" which leads to independent action and quenching of the Spirit. Clerisy is the result of some refusing to function in the place in which God has set them; and of others arrogating to themselves the functions of other members.

"No schism in the body." To function intelligently as members of the "one body" we must realise the varied character of the many members, and be content with the part that God, in His wisdom, has given us. Apparent usefulness is not the true valuation of a member's worth. Let the meaning of these words sink into the heart, "Those members of the body which seem to be more feeble are necessary," and "God has given more abundant honour to that part which lacked." Some, who have been lightly esteemed by men, have been of the greatest use to the church. To understand the truth of the body, we must see that it is a divine conception and formation, and that "God hath tempered the body together — that there should be no schism in the body." Although we may have failed to act in the light of the body; we shall gain in the measure we do act upon it. Because of the great ruin of the church very many of the members are not available to us, and consequently we suffer; but if we walk in the light of the body with those who are available we shall prove that "Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it."

"Ye are Christ's body." When God formed the first man and his wife He called their name Adam. Similarly, the church, taken from Christ in death, bears His Name: "So also is the Christ." It takes all the saints on earth to form "The body of Christ;" but the saints in any locality have the character of "Christ's body" (which is the true translation of 5: 27). An illustration of this frequently used,

conveys the meaning: — A detachment of any regiment of soldiers, in any locality, bears the name and character of the regiment; but it takes the sum of all the detachments to complete the regiment. Being Christ's body, the saints have the privilege to manifest in their locality the dignity and character of the name they bear; and are responsible to act in the light of the "one body" towards saints everywhere. It cannot be sufficiently stressed, that no matter how great the church's ruin, two or three gathering to Christ's Name may walk in the light of the Christian position, as set forth here, and get the gain derived from the only unity that is divine. Any other ground of gathering than that of the "one body," is human organisation, which is at variance with the truth of God.

Colossians. — This epistle teaches that Christ is "The Head of the body, the assembly;" and reveals that the church is His body. The Corinthian assembly was Christ's body locally; but this Epistle speaks of the church universally as "His body." The Son of the Father's love, presented in many glories, is the "Head of the body;" and Paul, who valued the church, because of its preciousness to Christ, filled up "that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ" in his service for it. United to the Head, the body partakes of His life, with a view to manifesting the life of the Head in testimony here.

"The increase of God." The growth of the body depends on the nourishment supplied by the Head; and if there is to be divine increase in the assembly, the saints must have the spiritual condition spoken of as "Holding the Head." At Colosse, the brethren were evidently occupied with human philosophy and Judaism; and there was the grave danger of the assembly being governed by the worldly principles of human religion and earthly institutions. Any increase brought to the assembly by such means, is not the "increase of God;" and time shows its hindrance to spiritual prosperity, and the unrest and sorrow that it brings. To hold the Head, we must rely on Christ; drawing upon His supplies in communion with Him: allowing only His mind and will in all the affairs of His assembly. This divine supply is communicated from the Head through those members who facilitate the spiritual exercises of the saints, and who labour in binding them together. In the "one body," God has called us to peace, His own peace, which should rule in all our hearts.

Ephesians. — In Romans the truth of the "one body" gives weight to the exhortations connected with our service: in 1st Corinthians the light of "Christ's body" is to correct the disorder in the assembly: in Colossians, the truth of "His body" was given so that the saints might hold the Head: and in Ephesians the church is viewed as "The fulness of Him that filleth all in all," that the saints might enter into the greatness of their calling in Christ. This last aspect of the church embraces all the saints from Pentecost to the rapture; and brings out the church's place in God's counsels, as the vessel in which God's glory shall be displayed; and in which Christ's mind, will, and glory shall be expressed to the limits of the vast creation.

"Reconciled in one body" As regards God's counsels, the church is destined to be the fulness of Him that fills all in all; but in the ways of God, Jew and Gentile, who were estranged from Him, have been brought into right relations with Him as having part in the one body. God accomplished this reconciliation by the cross, where He made known His infinite love; and by giving those who received the knowledge of His love, this place of nearness in association with Christ. The one body is neither a body of Jews, nor a body of Gentiles; but it is a "joint-body" composed of believers of both Jews and Gentiles; where in new creation they share together, without

distinction, in all the blessings and privileges belonging to this glorious calling.

"Christ is the Head of the body."

"There is one body," heads the sevenfold statement of Christian unity given in ch. 4; which further emphasises the unity of the church brought out so clearly in 1 Corinthians 12:1-31. In order that the truth might be brought to all, the ascended Head of the church gave gifts unto men for "the edifying of the body of Christ." This ministry is to continue "till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." From Christ, the Head, as articulated with Him, there comes through the joints of supply that living nourishment, which through the functioning of each part of the body, produces growth in the divine nature. If we are to answer in a practical way to this truth, it must be held in love; and in result we shall correspond to the features of moral beauty that belong to our heavenly Head.

"We are members of His body." Being Christ's body, the church is part of Him, which makes it suitable to be united to Him. This was before Gods mind in forming Eve from Adam. In the same way, the church is bone of His bone, and flesh of His flesh, and is therefore meet for union with Him. Each saint is a member of Christ's body, being united to Him in life by the Spirit of God, so that we may receive all that is necessary from the Head, for the maintenance of the place of dignity given to us by the grace of God. As having the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Him, we are enabled to enter intelligently into the wonders of God's counsels, which give the church the intimate and blessed place of "The body of Christ."

Wm. C. Reid.

Vol 01-10 - The Bride.

The Bride.

God has been graciously pleased to bring His saints into different relationships with Christ, His own dear Son, relationships which manifest the wonderful favour and blessings lavished upon men, and which unfold distinctive features of the divine grace and glory. The Lord Jesus speaks of His own as "My sheep." "My friends," and "My brethren;" and after His ascension the saints are viewed as His body and His bride. Israel's blessing, in the Millennium, will bring to God the joy of the bridegroom over the bride (Isaiah 62:5); and the nuptial joy of Christ over His earthly people is touchingly and charmingly described in the Song of Songs, but the portion of "The Bride, the Lamb's wife," with its closest intimacy, and deep, heavenly affection, has been reserved for the church.

Eve.

Lovely types of Christ and the church are found in the Old Testament Scriptures, giving some of the beautiful features belonging to Christ's Bride, or the traits distinguishing the saints who compose the Bride, the great prototype, Adam and Eve, being expressly mentioned in Ephesians 5:1-33. This precious picture of the blessed relationship of the church to Christ existed before the entrance of sin into the world, and before death's dark sentence cast its shadow upon fair Eden to mar its joys. Eve was formed to share with Adam the delights of a sinless, deathless paradise, where the man was head and centre, but where all was speedily and irrecoverably ruined by the fall. But the church will share with Christ the unbroken joys of the heavenly Paradise of God, where neither death nor sin can enter, and where, for eternity, she shall be Christ's blest companion, and the vessel in which the glory of God shall be displayed. When God said "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him" (Genesis 2:18). He not only disclosed His providential care for Adam, but let out what was in His mind and counsels for Christ and the church. God desired for His Son, the Man of His counsels, a counterpart, His like, one who could enter into His thoughts and feelings, and respond to His affections. The lower animals, God formed from the ground; but Adam's wife was derived from him: she was part of himself; she was built by God from Adam's rib, taken from him in his deep sleep. Similarly, while Christ slept in death, and during the time of His absence from this world, God has procured from Him and for Him, that which is of Himself, to be His companion. She belongs to Christ, yet is she the workmanship of God; and being bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh, is suitable to be united to Him.

Rebekah and Leah.

Rebekah, the bride of Isaac, and Leah, the bride of Jacob, both belonged to the same country and to the same kindred as their husbands, a very express charge being given in each case that a daughter of Canaan must not be taken as wife (Genesis 24:3; Genesis 28:1). Thus also must the bride of the Lamb belong to His country and His kindred: she is not only heavenly in destiny, but

heavenly in origin — Jerusalem above is our Mother (Galatians 4:26); and we are not of the world, even as He is not of the world. Hebrews 2:11 shows that we are of His kindred.

If Rebekah and Leah have features in common they also have complementary features. Rebekah was united to him who prefigured the risen Christ (Genesis 22:12; Hebrews 11:19), but Leah was bride to one who foreshadowed Christ as a sufferer, who restored that which he took not away, who was consumed in unwearied toil, and who laboured while others slept (see Genesis 31:39-40; Luke 6:12). Rebekah was procured for Isaac, and brought to him to share in all his Father gave to him; but Jacob went for Leah and secured her at the cost of rigorous service, and she first shared with him the days of toil before having part with him in the wealth and glory which he acquired. Like Rebekah, the church leaves all connected with country and father's house here, to share all that the Father has given to the Son in His House and heavenly country: and like Leah, the church is called to share a path of toil and suffering before having her eternal portion with Christ, to share the wealth and glory acquired while absent from His Father's House. (Rachel typifies Israel, Christ's earthly bride. Jacob first sought Rachel, but received Leah: so Christ came first to Israel, but being rejected He first received the church. Leah, like the church, is the fruitful one; and after loved Rachel passes off the scene, like Israel after the Millennium, Leah remains as Jacob's companion in the land of promise.) Asenath and Zipporah. The brides of Joseph and Moses were the daughters of priests, they were both Gentiles, and both were given to their husbands while rejected by their brethren. Those who compose the church belong to a priestly family (1 Peter 2:5), they are "all of one" with Christ, and are therefore suited for His companionship. Although the church is composed of Jews and Gentiles, it is characteristically Gentile, in the sense that it is largely composed of Gentiles: even as we read, "God . . . did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His Name" (Acts 15:14); and again "Christ in you, (Gentiles) the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27). That Christ has the church while rejected by His earthly brethren needs little emphasis. In this connection, it is interesting to observe that Stephen, in Acts 7:1-60, presents Joseph and Moses as types of the rejected Christ.

These brides have also complementary features: Asenath shares with Joseph his exaltation and glory, but Zipporah has part with Moses in his place of strangership and rejection. Moreover, Asenath is united to him who is raised from the lowest to the highest place in Egypt, but Zipporah is the wife of the one who forsook Egypt with its kingdom and glory; who chose the path of suffering and affliction. When on earth, Christ refused the kingdom from the Satan and from men, but He shall have it from the hand of His Father; then shall the church share His kingdom and glory.

Ruth, and Abigail. The brides of Boaz and his descendant David were both widows, women who had known bereavement and sorrow before finding happiness with their royal husbands. They were also women of distinctive grace: Ruth, a lovely character, marked by devotion and fidelity, of whom Boaz said "All the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman" (Ruth 3:11): and of Abigail the Scripture says, "She was a woman of good understanding, and of a beautiful countenance" (1 Samuel 25:3). Abigail's action in preventing David from taking vengeance manifests her wisdom and judgment. Thus the church is composed of those who had a previous history in this world before being livingly united to Christ by the Holy Spirit, a history that came to an end by death, so that we should be married to another, even to Christ. Spite of all the failure of the church, there are manifested in the saints the beautiful features of Christ; and when the church

is seen in her linen garment, pure and bright, there will be set forth all that has given Him pleasure during her earthly sojourn. And it is to Him who is of the royal line that the church is united. Not only is Christ of David's line, according to the flesh, but He is God's King, the King of Kings, and Lord of lords. As to their complementary features; Ruth was a Moabitess, a stranger, whom the law excluded from the congregation of Israel (Deuteronomy 23:3), but in God's sovereign mercy and grace she was brought into divine blessing and favour. But Abigail was of Israel, and probably of the tribe of Judah. So that Ruth tells of those who were afar off but have been brought nigh, while Abigail again shows the bride as belonging to Christ's kindred and country. Ruth, who was poor, left her poverty to share the substance of the "mighty man of wealth;" but Abigail left the house of the man that "was very great" with his "three thousand sheep and a thousand goats," to share the rejection, poverty, and wanderings of David. While the church leaves her poverty in this world to have part in the glorious inheritance possessed "in Christ" (Ephesians 1:11), it is also her privilege to forsake this world with its proffered wealth and glory, so as to share Christ's outside place; not to be rich where He was poor.

"Christ also loved the Church." From the epistle to the Ephesians, which opens out the counsels of God, we learn that the church is to be Christ's companion in the coming ages. To give point and force to the practical exhortations for husbands and wives, the Spirit of God, in Ephesians 5:1-33, presents the relationship of the church to Christ, and His wonderful love for the church. This great love has been measured by the giving of Himself. The man of Matthew 13:1-58 sold all he had to obtain the treasure; and the merchantman impoverished himself to secure the pearl of great price; but Christ not only emptied Himself of the form of God and relinquished all connected with His earthly kingdom, but in love gave Himself. Christ's is a love which passeth knowledge; its measure and character expressed in His death. But Christ gave Himself, not only to procure the church, but to present it to Himself, "glorious, having no spot or wrinkle, or any of such things; but that it might be holy and blameless." In Isaiah 49:5, Christ is "glorious in the eyes of the Lord," and He will have the church like Himself, even as Eve was "the like" of Adam. Nor will there be a trace of wilderness defilement upon the bride, nor mark of age; for Christ is at present engaged in purifying her "by the washing of water by the word." Having claimed her by His death, and prepared her in His present ministry, He will present her to Himself, perfectly suitable for His companionship and for the display of His glory.

"The Marriage of the Lamb."

After all Christ's care and preparation of the church, it is not surprising that the day of His espousals is celebrated with great joy and glory. In Revelation 19:7 it is written, "Let us rejoice and exult, and give Him glory; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife has made herself ready." Revelation 18:1-24 is mainly occupied with the detailed destruction of the great world system: the introductory part of chapter 19 with acclaiming God's vengeance on the corrupt system of religion, which falsified before men the character of the bride of Christ, and arrayed herself in the glory of the world. The false bride seeking a great place in man's world usurped worldly power, which brought her destruction; but the true bride waited in patience for the heavenly acclamation "Hallelujah, for the Lord our God the Almighty has taken to Himself kingly power," and then she finds her place with Christ where He is honoured and glorified. If Christ has been preparing for this day, the church has also been engaged in preparing her garment. Through the long ages of the church's sojourn on earth, the saints have been weaving and ornamenting in

divine grace the shining garment composed of their righteousneses. This garment is not the fruit of brilliant oratory, nor is its texture spun from the fibre of human wisdom; but it is the result of communion with Christ; in acts, mostly hidden from human sight, but wrought in meekness and lowliness under Christ's eye. Much that has been forgotten, by those who have lived for Christ, will be found in that day, in the garment pure and bright.

"The Bride, the Lamb's Wife."

If, in Revelation 19:1-21, the church is viewed at the marriage of the Lamb in the garment of righteousneses; in Revelation 21:1-27 she is displaying the garment of glory that God has given her. Heaven is her home, God is her source, and glory her adorning. Like a heavenly luminary with radiating beams, in the effulgence of God's own glory, she appears like a most precious stone, as a crystal like jasper stone. She is characterised by holiness, for the church is "The holy city, Jerusalem;" and this is emphasised in the "wall, great and high." No evil can enter the divine centre, from which God will govern the world to come, and from which the light of His glory and knowledge will emanate, to enlighten and bless the nations of the earth. The glorious and glistening foundations of the city reveal that the administration of the millennium is founded upon the moral features and principles of God's own nature and character: the pure gold of the street tells that the heavenly saints will walk together in new creation glory, with nothing to impair the outshining of the scene. The gates, with their names, show that Israel has a special place in the world to come in connection with the heavenly administration. God dwells there, without a shrine, for every whit is holy; and its illumination is only from God's glory, which proceeds from Christ as the Lamb. It is the divine centre to which the tribute of the nations is brought: there the throne of God and the Lamb is, from which the river of God flows: and there the tree of life yields its precious fruits, and produces its healing leaves for the nations. In this blissful centre the servants of God serve Him in nearness, bearing His features; Himself beaming upon them, and they reigning for evermore.

"A Bride Adorned for her Husband." When the first heaven and the first earth passes away, a new heaven and a new earth will be brought into being. Then the church is seen as "The holy city, new Jerusalem." Although the church will display God's glory in the eternal day, which has now dawned, her adornment is not presented here as a display for others, but she is viewed in her beauty to the eye of Christ. Indeed, this almost suggests, that the display of the eternal state rather shows to those who have part in it, what the church is to the heart of Christ. She displayed His glory in the millennium to the nations, now she displays what she is to Him. But, in her God dwells with men. During the millennium He dwelt in the city, for it was every whit holy: now that there is a new earth, through the church He can dwell with men. Men are brought into blessed relationship with God, and He Himself shall remove every trace of the sorrow through which they have passed; and in the glorious rest, where God makes all things new, none of the things that have brought distress and sorrow to men will exist any more. To this wonderful inheritance, God has called us; but He has meanwhile left us here to be overcomers, before entering into our full heavenly portion.

Wm. C. Reid.

Vol 01-10 - The Call of Saul of Tarsus.

The Call of Saul of Tarsus.

Stephen, as the first martyr for the Lord Jesus Christ, entered triumphantly into the presence of Him for whom he died; and one of the witnesses of his death was a young man, whose name was Saul, at whose feet the witnesses laid their clothes, and who was consenting to their wicked deed. Not satisfied with the death of Stephen, Saul made havoc of the church, "entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison" (Acts 8:3). No doubt thinking that he was doing God service, Saul, in religious zeal, carried his persecuting work to other parts, obtaining the authority of the high priest to bring in bonds to Jerusalem those who owned allegiance to Jesus, thus fulfilling the words spoken by the Lord to His disciples in John 16:2. How very solemn that zeal for religion should be found persecuting the servants of the One whom he professed to serve, truly manifesting ignorance of the true God, revealed in the Son. As Saul journeys to Damascus he is utterly unaware of what was to befall him, of the wonderful thoughts of God for his salvation and blessing. Little did he think, or any other who had witnessed the death of Stephen, that from among that company the Son of God would take up one to carry on the testimony given by Stephen. Stephen had witnessed to the glory of Jesus at God's right hand, and this testimony was destined to be carried abroad by a vessel chosen and fitted by Christ Himself. No doubt, even his witnessing of Stephen's death was ordered of the Lord in view of Saul's future service. Doubtless the arrow of conviction had entered his heart there, even if he was found still in opposition, kicking against the pricks.

Nearing Damascus there suddenly shone round about him a light from heaven, and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" The light that had enabled Stephen to behold Christ's glory in heaven now shines upon his erstwhile persecutor, and the voice tells him that in persecuting Stephen and the other followers of Jesus, he was persecuting the Lord Himself. What amazement for poor Saul as he receives the revelation that the Lord that he acknowledges in heaven is the Jesus who had been here as the Man of Sorrows. It is not a voice of accusation, but a voice of tender love and grace, that breaks in upon his conscience and reaches the deep recesses of his heart. Thus is Saul stayed on his rebellious course, and secured as a trophy of divine grace, a chosen vessel for the Lord, and to be a companion of the Christ in His glory. As a chosen vessel he would witness to the light of the glory shining in the face of Jesus, and unfold the truth of the saints on earth being united to Christ in the place where Stephen saw Him. After receiving his sight and being brought by the gift of the Spirit into the joys that the Gospel had brought him, Saul is enabled to preach Jesus in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God.

What a wonderful change had taken place in Saul, preaching the Glad Tidings of the faith which formerly he ravaged, preaching that the crucified Nazarene was the SON OF GOD, the One in whom God is revealed in His nature, love; the One in whom all the promises of God are yea and amen. Paul in his Gospel declares Jesus to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit

of holiness, by the resurrection of the dead; as the First-born among many brethren, pre-eminent among the many sons that God has called according to His purpose: as having a kingdom, the Son of the Father's love. In the Acts we can see the progress of the preaching: Peter speaking of Him as Lord and Christ, the One who has authority to command and power to carry it out: then Stephen speaks of Him as Son of Man, who will take up the universe of God where all shall be vocal with His praise; then Saul announces Him as Son of God, bringing out His surpassing moral beauties and the excellencies of His glorious Person, in whose company we shall be for evermore, outpouring our praises to Him who loved us and gave Himself for us.

R. Duncanson.

What powerful, mighty Voice, so near, Calls me from earth apart
Reaches with tones so still, so clear, From th' unseen world my heart?

Vol 01-10 - The Coming of the Spirit.

The Coming of the Spirit. In the second chapter of Acts, the Apostle Peter, through the Holy Spirit, brings before us the witness of the glorification of Jesus; witnessing also that He is in the Father; we in Him; and He in us. What a joy to our hearts to know that we have been brought into the circle of divine affections, where we can be at home with the Father and the Son. How this should produce in us desires and exercises that we might be maintained in moral suitability to the place God has given us, so that we might be able to contemplate Him in the rich enjoyment of that love with which He was ever loved. By the Spirit there has been formed a habitation where God can dwell; the material being prepared for it by the ministry of the Lord Jesus, when here on earth. Although David was not allowed to build God's house, he had the privilege of preparing the material for it, and of instructing Solomon regarding it. David could say, "In my trouble I have prepared for the house of the Lord. . . ." (1 Chronicles 22:14); "I have prepared with all my might for the house of my God" (1 Chronicles 29:2); and "Because I have set my affection to the house of my God. . . . I have prepared for the holy house" (1 Chronicles 29:3). As the true David and the true Solomon, the Lord Jesus both prepares and builds. From the house goes forth God's testimony to man, with the injunction, "Today, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts."

What a powerful testimony sounded forth; all heard, in their own tongues, the wonderful works of God. How great the contrast to Babel, where God confounded the language of men to hinder them from their purpose, so that He might scatter them. Now God meets them with a rich unfolding of His love and grace, so that they might be gathered together in one in the bonds of divine love. And what a contrast to Sinai! There, three thousand perish when the Law is given: here, three thousand are saved when the Spirit is given. We do well to marvel at the rich mercy and love of God, as we see Him, through the testimony that goes forth from His house, securing man for His own pleasure, that He might give effect to His purpose.

Whenever there is a work of God, the enemy is busy endeavouring to undermine it. And so the mockers say, "These men are full of new wine," but Peter tells how this could not be, and then points them to the Scripture which foretold the effects of the coming of the Holy Spirit, "And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy. . . ." "What the mockers saw came within the scope of the prophecy of Joel. But the Holy Spirit came to indwell and to abide with Christ's own for ever.

Peter brings Christ before his hearers, first from Psalms 16:1-11, where His life on earth, His death, and His resurrection are clearly spoken of; then from Psalms 110:1-7, where His glory at God's right hand is foretold, "Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." Concluding, Peter says, "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." As Lord, He has universal authority, and to Him every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess Him Lord to the glory of God the Father. Connected with His title as Lord is the power to give effect to all He has set Himself to do, in securing all for the glory of God. As Christ, He is the Man of God's pleasure, the One brought up

with Him, Who was ever His delight, the centre of His counsels. And as the Christ He will give effect to all that has been spoken of Israel's Messiah, and will fulfil the promises made to Abraham regarding earthly blessing. Of this, one has said, "His Messianic claims, spurned on the part of Israel, founds the glory of God and the blessing of man in His cross. He is raised and seated, crowned with glory and honour. Now our position, portion, glory, and blessing as believers, are found in Israel's rejected King. Christ's new place as risen and glorified determines ours."

R. Duncanson.

Appreciation and Expression of Christ. My appreciation of Christ up there determines my expression of Christ down here.

J. B. Stoney.

Vol 01-10 - The Everlasting Priesthood.

The Everlasting Priesthood.

Hebrews 7:1-28.

Across the pages of this wonderful Epistle can be written, as with the finger of divine truth, "That HE might have the first place in all things." As another has expressed it: "The transient glory of Judaism is but as tinsel compared with the surpassing and perennial glory of Christianity;" and this as presented in a living, glorified Man — Jesus, the Son of God. In His blessed Person every ray of divine glory is gathered up: every attribute and every glory of God shines in His face, graciously tempered to our feeble sight so that we can discern and contemplate them adoringly. Like the facets of some beautiful gem, each having its own peculiar lustre, but all combining to display the deep beauty of the whole stone. The contrastive features in this Epistle are indicated with extreme refinement, as contrasting between what was of divine appointment in an earthly position, and that which is supremely greater as being heavenly. The disparity in the degree of contrast is so great as to be immeasurable: Prophets, Moses, Aaron, Joshua, Levi, Abraham, amongst persons; and the Sanctuary, Veil; Censer, Mercy-seat, and Sacrifices amongst things, pay homage to Jesus, and then stand aside that "Jesus only" might occupy and fill our vision. In this 7th chapter of Hebrews, the heavenly and eternal priesthood of the Son of God is contrasted with the Levitical priesthood. It is evident that the chapter before us, which sets forth the order and character of the priesthood of the Son of God, is a resumption of the subject which was broken off at the 10th verse of chapter 5. All that comes in between is a parenthesis, in which the writer, on account of the Hebrews' indifference and slowness of heart, seeks to awaken their consciences in solemn measured tones, desiring for them the maturity which would enable them to receive what he was about to disclose concerning this heavenly order of priesthood. The chapter opens with a reference to the incident in the life of Abraham, recorded in Genesis 14:1-24. There we have the first mention of Melchisedec, priest of the Most High God, and this in connection with Abraham as here turns victorious from the slaughter of the kings. (Abram the Hebrew, a true son of Eber, the pilgrim, one who was passing through, lived in direct contrast to Lot, who had settled down in the world — in Sodom, let it be remarked, of which God could say, "The cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and . . . their sin is very grievous." Lot, who had settled down in Sodom was thus exposed to all the attacks of the enemy, who attacked that wicked place; and when the King of Elam carried its inhabitants into captivity, Lot was captive too. The only safeguard against being held captive by the world, beloved, is to maintain pilgrim isolation from it. Abraham, who had not settled down in the world, was the instrument in God's hand for the liberation of Lot: just as the spiritual amongst God's people are sometimes enabled to set at liberty those ensnared and led captive by the world.) When Abram returns from the conflict, it is to enjoy the ministrations which come so lavishly from the priestly hands of Melchisedec, partaking of the bread to stay and the wine to cheer the heart of the true pilgrim. With meaningful intent does the Spirit interpret the names of this remarkable personage, who is assimilated to the Son of God. Not only are the names interpreted to give their true meaning, but the order in which they occur is given with precision. He

is first of all "King of Righteousness" — his individual name, then also "King of Salem" — his official place. There is no mention of his ancestors or of his successors, and this in a book where men's ancestry is traced back to Adam, and their succession carefully recorded. In considering the Levitical priesthood, certain, in the Book of Ezra, claimed priestly descent, but when their genealogy could not be found, they were, as defiled, put away from the priesthood. So, for an Israelite, genealogy was essential! But the very opposite is said of Melchisedec, "Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life, but made like unto the Son of God, abideth a priest continually:" The Spirit of God declares that he is like the Son of God in these respects. As to His eternal relationship to God there is no question of His genealogy, He is the Only One, God's only-begotten Son in eternity. And in a very unique and in a very blessed sense, He is God's only Son, even in time. If He brings many sons to glory, it is as being in association with Him, and not in any sense as being in succession to Him. Here then the blessed Lord is typified by this Melchisedec, the Abiding One, One who comes on the scene without ancestry; who, when He leaves the earth leaves no successor, but passes into the presence of God, where "He abideth a Priest forever!

How worthy is this blessed One of those kingly titles King of Righteousness and King of Peace. Was it not at the cross that He acquired the full right to this title of King of Righteousness, where He met the whole question of God's righteousness; where mercy and truth met together, and righteousness and peace kissed each other? And what is the result of that work of righteousness — peace! And the effect of righteousness is quietness and assurance forever!

"Christ of God, our souls confess Thee King and sovereign even now!

We pass on now to that which compares Him with all other priests. The writer tells us to dwell upon the greatness of this man, to whom even the patriarch Abraham, the head of the Hebrew race, gave the tenth of the spoil. The giving of the tenth was the acknowledgment of superiority, for tithes are given to a superior. Levi, as yet unborn (and thus the whole Aaronic priesthood) in Abraham representatively, gave tithes to Melchisedec. How infinitely greater and superior is this heavenly Priest compared with the earthly order of priests, who have paid homage to Him and acknowledged His superiority. He is indeed a glorious Person, whose order of priesthood has superseded and set aside the Aaronic order of priesthood, a priesthood which did not bring in perfection in relation to the conscience. If this order of priesthood could have perfected the conscience, there would have been no need for another order of priesthood. But another Priest has arisen, one who pertaineth to a different tribe, of which no one has been occupied with the service of the altar: and with the change of priesthood, there is of necessity a change of law. Under the Levitical priesthood the people received the law, and the Scripture tells us that by the law is the knowledge of sin. The law was given that the offence — not sin — might abound. Every movement of man's will was shown to be positive transgression. But with the change of priesthood there has been a change in the principle of God's dealing with men. What light this sheds on such a Scripture as that in Romans, "Ye are not under law, but under grace." No more distance, but brought near to God; and sustained by the priestly support of this Great High Priest, who belonged to another tribe, even that of Judah — praise.

He dwells in the midst of His people's praises, and leads the praises of His own to the Father. Truly He is the Priest of praise. His priesthood is also after the power of an endless life. No carnal

commandment made Him priest. His priesthood is not connected with that which vanishes away; and it is as Son He is Priest; His eternal existence as the Son of God bearing witness to the greatness of His priesthood. His order of priesthood was confirmed and established by the oath of God: the oath which emphasises the unchanging character of what God declares. When God established Aaron as priest, He did not swear that he should have an abiding priesthood. It was a temporary institution, being weak and unprofitable it could not abide: but this heavenly order of priesthood, established by a divine oath, which continues eternally, is the priesthood of the Son of God in the power of an endless life. There were many priests under the old order; they were not allowed to continue, for death came in; but here is One who abides a Priest forever; One upon whom death has no claim; yea, rather is He the Destroyer of death. This is the Priest who becomes us — so pre-eminently suited, and qualified, for the office that He fills. "Able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them."

Weary pilgrim, in the midst of many trials and difficulties, it may be with "sorrows surging round," look up and see that Great Priest who graces the Throne of Grace, and from whom flows all the succour and sympathy that is necessary for the pilgrim path. Live constantly in the sense of His priestly grace, strength, and affection, and let these precious words re-echo in your heart from day to day, "He abideth a priest forever!"

A. Shepherd. The Authority of Scripture.

"The Bible, the Bible alone, is the religion of Protestants." We want more than this; we want to be, in all things, absolutely governed by the authority of Scripture — not by our fellow mortals interpretation of Scripture, but by Scripture itself. We want to have the conscience in a condition to yield, at all times, a true response to the teachings of the divine word.

C. H. Mackintosh.

What Trial Accomplishes.

Trial cannot of itself confer grace; but, under God's hand, it can break the will, and detect bidden and unsuspected evils: so that the new life is more fully and largely developed. God has a larger place in the heart, there is more intelligence in His ways, more lowly dependence, more consciousness that the world is nothing, more distrust of flesh and self. The saint is more emptied of self and filled with the Lord. What is eternal and true, because divine, has a much larger place in the soul; what is false is detected and set aside. There is more ripeness in our relationship with God. We dwell more in the eternal scenes into which He has brought our souls. We can look back then, and see the love which has brought us through it all, and bless God with dependent thanksgiving for every trial. Such only purge away the dross, and confirm us in brighter, fuller, clearer hope, and increasing our knowledge of God, and self being proportionately destroyed.

J. N. Darby.

Vol 01-10 - The Fragrance of Christ.

The Fragrance of Christ. A bundle, a little bag, of myrrh, carried in the bosom, scents the garments, and diffuses its fragrance all around, whether at home or abroad, at work, or resting in the sanctuary or the social circle, silently but surely, the fragrance of the perfume, like the air, fills the scene. And even after the person has left, the sweet odour remains, as a testimony to the value of that which lay nearest to her heart. Oh! exquisite emblem! Is this thy faithfulness to Jesus, O my soul? Does He lie embalmed in thine heart, and does the sweet savour of His name go with thee, whithersoever thou goest, and remain when thou art gone? Soul-searching truth "Occupy till I come," were the farewell words of the rejected Jesus to His disciples; and over the memorials of His dying love He has written in wondrous grace, "This do in remembrance of Me." He has not asked us to do some great thing for Him, or to lay on His altar some costly sacrifice: No; but simply to be occupied with Himself as earth's rejected Christ, during His absence, and to give Him a place in our hearts. "Remember Me," was His last request — think of Me — refer everything in your hearts to Me. Have we done so? Have I done so? Do I do so now? Has the affianced bride of the Lamb thus placed Him in her bosom and carried Him there during the long, long dark night of His absence? Alas, alas, the requests of Thy love have been forgotten! Rivals have been admitted and entertained; and sorrowful it is to find Thee outside, in Thine unwearied love, knocking at the door, until in the mystic language of the Song of Songs, Thy head is filled with dew, and Thy locks with the drops of the night. "But the night is far spent, the day is at hand." Yes, the happy day draws near, when through Thy patient grace, the affections of Thy heavenly and earthly people shall perfectly answer to Thine own.

A. Miller.

Vol 01-10 - The Glories of the Son.

The Glories of the Son. In the epistle to the Hebrews, the glories of the Son are brought very forcibly before us. We see the Son in Hebrews 1:1-14 as the established heir of all things. He was the heir of all things before the world began; this lay embedded in the will of God; but it has now been revealed, and we have been brought into the light of it. Everything subsists because of Him, who upholds all by the word of His power. And this is the blessed Person who is to engage our hearts! When we come to Hebrews 2:1-18, another aspect of His glory engages us. We view the same Person, come into Manhood, that He might undergo the sufferings of death; tasting death for everything, and annulling him who had the power of death.' In verse 5 the world to come is introduced, a world where all is to come under man, but that Man, God's own dear Son. In Psalms 8:1-9, we are told that the glory of the Lord has been set above the heavens; which doubtless reveals God's purpose in Man. Here we see Jesus, who has been down into death, raised to the highest heights, and all the glory now shines refulgent in His face. What a sight meets our gaze when by faith we look up to see Him there: the One in whom righteousness, holiness, and glory have found their resting place! The poet has put it:

'Tis that look that melted Peter, 'Tis that face that Stephen saw, 'Tis that heart that wept with Mary,
Can alone from idols draw.

Draw, and win, and fill completely, Till the cup o'erflow the brim;

What have we to do with idols Who have companied with Him?

While we await the moment when He shall fill all in the world to come, we know Him as the Leader of the many sons He is taking on to glory; and for this blessed leadership, He was made perfect through sufferings. What a joy to our hearts to know that we belong to the company that is to be for God's good pleasure! The knowledge of these things should surely affect our thoughts and ways now! R. Duncanson.

Vol 01-10 - The Heavenly Calling.

The Heavenly Calling. The heavenly calling has been before the mind of God from the beginning, the man of the earth, in every age, from the fall of Adam bringing only grief and sorrow to the heart of God; the children of God being sufferers and strangers here. Of old it had been disclosed "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God" (Hebrews 4:9); and from this same epistle we learn that this rest is in heaven (Hebrews 6:20); a blessed rest indeed for the tried, suffering, weary saints of God. When we turn to the 11th chapter of Hebrews, where faith is displayed in all its diversity of action and energy, as seen in the lives of that illustrious "cloud of witnesses," it is recorded of Abraham, "By faith he sojourned as a stranger in the land of promise, as in a foreign country, having dwelt in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise" (Hebrews 11:9). Was his strangership referred to because he had left Ur of the Chaldees? nay, verily! Abraham was a stranger because he had not yet reached the heavenly inheritance. Nothing could cure or close his strangership but possession of the inheritance to which God had called him. "All these died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them from afar off and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and sojourners on the earth . . . they seek their country . . . that is, a heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God; for he has prepared for them a city." Well might the Spirit of God say of such, "of whom the world was not worthy."

Moses and Enoch, too, of patriarchal days are witnesses to this heavenly calling: "Enoch walked with God; and he was not; for God took him" (Genesis 5:24); and Moses, who was not allowed to enter the earthly inheritance, got the Pisgah of God. Elijah among the prophets did not see death, but was translated to heaven as Enoch was. And so the elect of God of the ages we have considered have their part in heaven, in the heavenly country and in the city God prepared for them. But their part is to be distinguished from the part of the saints of this dispensation, from the church which is the body and the Bride of Christ, in the Epistle to the Galatians the Old Testament saints are shown to be heirs, and here in Hebrews to be soon perfected in heaven; but they have no place with those of whom the hymn writer says:

Thou gav'st us, in eternal love, To Him to bring us home to Thee.

These are the men that the Father has given Him out of the world.

If our place of privilege and of blessing is so great, the responsibilities attaching to it are correspondingly great. How do we measure up to this? How miserably we have failed in walking consistently with our heavenly calling and in the light of the heavenly inheritance. The condition of the saints of God today attests only too convincingly to the disruptive and disintegrating agencies that have combined to bring about such a deplorable condition of things. Had the heavenly calling been held in constant remembrance, in all its pristine lustre and perennial freshness, these disruptive elements would have had no place whatever. Another has said, "Declension begins with the surrender of the calling." These are searching words beloved! Those who are more matured in the things of God all agree that a saint always surrenders the highest truth which he has received

when he declines. In this he acts in direct contrast with the man of the world who will, as a rule, sacrifice everything so that he can retain that upon which he has specially set his heart. Yes, it is very sad and solemn, that in every time, declension begins with the surrender of the calling, the glory of the position. The calling is God's, and so the energy of Satan is directed against it, in order to contravene the will of God. The calling gives character to the present testimony, and hence if any one can be diverted from it, the enemy has gained the day. The glory of the Christian calling is that we are associated with the glorified Man in heaven, and every defection, since the day of its inauguration until now, begins with the surrender of the calling. In the light of these things how necessary it is to "have ." A partial Gospel will result in the allowance and sanction of that which beclouds the glory of the heavenly calling, such as earthly prosperity and the things of the world. I believe that the great characteristic of the revival of the truth at the beginning of the nineteenth century was that ours is a heavenly calling. Many joyfully parted with their goods knowing in themselves that in heaven they had "a better and an enduring substance" (Hebrews 10:34). The one commanding thought was that they did not belong to earth, but to heaven; and all their hopes and joys centred in heaven. Professions, prospects, position, and even lawful callings were gladly surrendered, so that there should be a heavenly testimony. Do not say that this is carrying things to extremes. Was it not for this purpose that the blessed Lord gave Himself? "Who gave Himself for our sins, so that He should deliver us out of the present evil world, according to the will of our God and Father; to whom be glory to the ages of ages" (Galatians 1:4-5). By the same mighty work on the cross we are justified; we are brought to joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, "through whom now we have received the reconciliation" (Romans 5:11). Then our old man being crucified with Him, we reckon ourselves dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus; by death we are freed from the man of sin and shame, the man under the judgment of God, and we now belong to the glorified Man in heaven. "He died for all, that they who live should no longer live to themselves, but to him who died for them and has been raised" (2 Corinthians 5:15). As being in Christ there is a new creation; the old things have passed away, all things have become new, and all things are of God; and the blessed One who is the centre of all these things is the object for the undivided attention and affection of our hearts. A great day has dawned upon our souls when we realise that the One whom the Father has set at His own right hand is none other than the Head of the body; my Head. How differently human things and thoughts appear as we contemplate Him thus.

Let us ever seek therefore the things which are above, where Christ sitteth; the things with which the Spirit of God would engage our hearts, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him, the deep things of God. Here we find the things prepared for us in the eternal counsels of His love, revealed now that we may enjoy them. But these things can only be enjoyed in the sphere to which they belong; and so the Spirit would bring us in spirit into those heavenly scenes as the only proper environment, where the new nature develops, expands, and becomes fruitful in us. One of the greatest anomalies in this world is the presence of the saints of God in it; they belong to heaven; and it ought to be our constant exercise that while absent from the place which is truly our home, we should display in heavenly ways and demeanour that we belong morally to that scene "prepared for us by Christ our Head." There are the things of the flesh in which those after the flesh enjoy themselves; but there are the things of the Spirit, the scene and elements for the engagement and enjoyment of those who are after the Spirit; otherwise we should be like fish out of water; that is with a new life, having different affections, tastes, desires, and capacities, and no

sphere of things suited to them. In closing I quote the words of beloved J. A. Trench, "The heavens, with Christ there as the intimate link that connects with all that is there, are the present revealed scene of our home, relationships, objects, hopes, joys, interests, and pursuits, that thus a heavenly people may be formed practically as such by what is heavenly on earth — showing out nothing but what is heavenly." May we so know the Lord's love to us that the least of heavenly things may be incomparably greater than all the things of this scene.

A. Shepherd.

Vol 01-10 - The Knowledge of Christ in Glory.

The Knowledge of Christ in Glory.

Paul says, "that I may know Him," that is as He is now. And I ask, would you not like to know Him as He is now? Do you think it would content a devoted wife or child, to be able to say, I knew my husband or my father ten years ago, but I do not know him now? Why, we never heard of such a thing. Yet that is really the way some think of Christ. They know Him as the Saviour who died here, but they do not know Him as He is now — the glorified Man. But you ask, who is up to it? I go with you there. I know how little I am up to it; but I cannot shrink from Php 3:10 "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings . . . for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."

J. B. Stoney.

Vol 01-10 - The Love of Christ.

The Love of Christ.

"This is my body which is broken for you." The floodgates of the love of Christ are thrown wide open. What Judas was doing at that moment; what Peter would do before the cock crew; what the others would do consequent upon the outrage in Gethsemane, hinders not in the least the outflow of the shoreless and fathomless ocean of love that swelled in the breast of the Saviour, and tore its living and triumphant way through every barrier that rose up against it, until the bitter chalice of divine judgment was to the very dregs exhausted, and the blackness and the darkness and the wrath and the forsaking were over for ever, and in all its solitary grandeur and greatness it swathed Golgotha with a glory that declared salvation for a world of fallen men. J. Boyd. As metal is smelted in the furnace, so when God gives faith, He will surely try it, to the end that, "the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." G. V. Wigram.

Vol 01-10 - The Mind in Divine Things.

The Mind in Divine Things.

It is well for us, as also it is essential for the glory of God in us, that in the acquisition of truth, a bar should be set upon the energy and pride of the mind of man. God has Himself directly to do with us: it is He "with Whom we have to do;" and the heart that knows Him at all and knows itself, could not wish it otherwise. Satan can make sport of the flesh, in whatever way it may present itself: he has a certain title over it as is seen in the case of Peter, in his "demand" that he might have him that he might sift him as wheat (Luke 22:31-34). The intercession of the Saviour supported his faith, for that was there, but the disaster of the denial was not averted, or meant to be by the faithful Lord.

It is not difficult for an active mind to acquire the doctrines of deliverance and even to speak of them to others, but this alone is not enough for the acquiring of the separated "mind:" ("I with the mind serve the law of God; but with the flesh sin's law;") and for liberty from the "law of sin and of death." The "bar" is wretchedness "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of this body of death?" GOD meets the soul in its wretchedness, its impossible struggle after what is right its hopelessness, so that it says not How? but "Who? —" Who shall deliver me out of this body of death? The wretchedness is the fruit of the new nature and of sincerity in the man; but the point to be observed is that it is wretchedness; and turned by Him Who "turneth the shadow of death into the morning" (Amos 5:8). He thanks God for deliverance: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 7:25). Life in liberty and power is now enjoyed. The man is in Christ and Christ is in the man: "There is then now no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and of death" (Romans 8:1-2).

Further, take the crossing of the Jordan in the antitype. It is not difficult for the mind to disport itself in the doctrines of Colossians. Nor would one seek to hinder it, for the truth lays hold of the heart even in spite of the mere mind. But the "mind:" — "set your mind on things above, not on the things on the earth" (Colossians 3:2), is not acquired by such a process. Is there not a divine road, experimentally, which is a check to mere mentality, imagination — religious flesh if it presume so high? Does not the prayer in Colossians 1:1-29 open that road to our hearts? What is its order? Paul says that he does "not cease praying for you, to the end that ye may be filled with the full knowledge of His will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, so as to walk worthily of the Lord unto all well-pleasing, bearing fruit in every good work, and growing by the true knowledge of God; strengthened with all power according to the might of His glory unto all endurance and longsuffering with joy." Now I am not seeking to unfold this prayer, but noting the order of its requests for the saints. Why is this stated first? What does it mean? What is it to be filled with the full knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding? Is it not to have our lives formed and regulated by our heavenly hope, "the hope that is laid up for us in heaven; of which ye heard before in the word of the truth of the glad tidings, etc." (Colossians 1:5, preceding)? And this is a very practical thing; but it is easily possible for the mind to be occupied in the doctrines, while

the path is anything but being determined and regulated by the heavenly hope. Indeed, the active mind that is looking well after itself in the affairs of this lower world, could be the very one that disported itself mentally, if not sentimentally in the doctrines. How are we shaping our lives here below? Is it in the immediateness of the hope that is laid up for us in the heavens? Well, in the order that Scripture presents things for us, this is what is first secured before the soul rises to the next part of the prayer, "Giving thanks to the Father, Who has made us fit for sharing the portion of the saints in light" and into the range of the glories of the Son of His love, He who is the centre of the mystery of God (Colossians 2:2); in Whom is all the fulness of the Godhead (Theotes not Theiotes — Godhead in the absolute sense, not merely divine in character — J.N.D.); and into that fulness which is for us, for our place (Colossians 2:9-10). It is a wilderness cry in Moses when he said to Jehovah, "Show me now Thy way that I may know Thee" (Exodus 33:13). Where did God's way lead? Was it not to that fair land of promise? But all is of grace: the "hope" came to them in the Gospel, was inherent in it. And at conversion often the hope of glory is bright indeed. So Israel on the banks of the Red Sea sang, were truly, for the moment, circumcised to God. And God does not forget this, but on the contrary recalls it through Jeremiah: "I remember for thee the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after Me in the wilderness, in a land not sown. Israel was holiness to the Lord, the first-fruits of His increase: all that devour him are guilty: evil shall come upon them, saith Jehovah" (Jeremiah 2:2-3). How long did the song last at the Red Sea? What was Israel's condition when Jeremiah thus spoke? Are not these lessons which each heart of us must learn? Jehovah will bring Israel to His end and the good He has for them according to their hope, as He is leading us NOW to the realisation of our heavenly one; for deliverance is not under the law, but from it; and crossing Jordan is not "dying and going to Heaven" according to the popular idea; but entering NOW, as dead and risen with Christ, where we can "seek the things that are above, where the Christ is sitting at the right hand of God," and to have our mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are on earth; for ye have died and your life is hid with the Christ in God. But in what is experimental, the lessons of the wilderness must also be learned.

Well, God's grace alone produces these things and we learn both the power and the wisdom of the Word of God in the path that He outlines for faith. There is no royal road to these things. We learn ourselves therein and that is not flattering; but we learn GOD, so indeed the prayer says in Colossians 1:10 — "Growing by the true knowledge of God," as also Moses in the passage quoted, "Show me now, THY way, that I may know THEE."

All this is necessarily a principle of the ways of God with us, as given throughout Scripture. In perfect harmony with it, is that one of the most remarkable prophecies is uttered by one who prefaces it with, "Truly I am more stupid than any one; and I have not a man's intelligence. I have neither learned wisdom, nor have I the knowledge of the Holy" (Proverbs 30:1-4).

C. N. Snow.

Vol 01-10 - The Path of Faith.

The Path of Faith.

God has a path in which His own can walk for His glory, a path which the vulture's eye hath not seen, nor hath the lion's whelp trodden it, the path of faith. Abraham, the father of the faithful, was called into this path, when God appeared unto him and said, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee." In obedience, Abraham went out, not knowing whither he went, deeply conscious that the One who had called him was able to support him in the path of His will. Any failure on Abraham's part but magnified the wisdom and goodness of God, Who was ever ready to order the circumstances to bring about his recovery. All failure results from being occupied with temporal and material things instead of with the end for which God has called us. The path of faith is the path of the just, which is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

Joseph had that path to travel in order to reach that which God had revealed to him in his dreams. For him, it meant deep trials, "Whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron: until the time that his word came: the word of the LORD tried him." His faithfulness and devotedness were manifest in the trying circumstances, and with him, patience had its perfect work. God wrought behind the scenes to fulfil His purpose, so that the moment of his exaltation came, and he was called to be the preserver of life for Egypt and the countries around. In Moses we have a man of faith, who chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. He was trained by God at the backside of the desert for his work, and at the appointed time, he was sent forth as the great leader of Israel, to secure their liberty from Pharaoh's bondage. Faith enabled him to forsake' Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible. Moses' faith is manifest in his keeping the passover, Israel's in passing through the Red Sea.

Many others could be cited to show that only by faith can we be maintained in the path which glorifies God. In these days we have much to encourage us in the path of faithfulness and devotedness, for God, in His great goodness, has given us wonderful light. All the purpose of God has been revealed to us, and the Holy Spirit given to keep us in the power of it. The glory shines in the face of Jesus Christ, Who Himself is the leader and completer of the path of faith. He has reached the right hand of God, where there are pleasures for evermore. The beloved apostle Paul, who followed in fidelity that same path, could say at the close of his earthly journey, "I have fought a good fight, I have kept the faith;" and exhorting his son Timothy said, "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them." Timothy was to walk in the same path for the glory of God. May it be given to each reader, though in dark days and in much feebleness, to have the eye directed to that blessed Man that sits in the glory, Who alone is able to maintain us in the path of faith, till we see Him, face to face.

R. Duncanson.

Vol 01-10 - The Power of the Spirit in the Life of the Believer.

The Power of the Spirit in the Life of the Believer. The Lord Jesus, on the eve of His betrayal, told His beloved disciples that he would shortly be leaving them. As they had truly believed that He was the long-promised Christ, the Messiah, and that He was about to redeem Israel, they were greatly distressed, and sorrow filled their hearts. It seemed to them that all their hopes were to be brought to nothing. But He reassured them, saying that though they would see Him no more, He would not leave them orphans, for He would pray the Father, Who would give them another Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, who would abide with them for ever. This was an entirely new revelation. They knew from their Scriptures that in olden times the Spirit of God had come on men, and filled them, but only for a season; as David said in Psalms 51:1-19 "Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me." Moreover the Lord assured them that it was expedient for them that He should go away, for that if He did not go away, the Comforter would not come to them; but that if He departed, He would send Him to them. [The word "Comforter" (Gr. Parakleetos) means one who carries on the cause of any one and helps him. If "solicitor" were not too common, it just answers the sense.] When this Spirit of Truth was come, He would guide them into all truth; He would glorify the Lord Jesus, and speak to them of Him, and remind them of all He had said to them. He would be a divine power working in them, and for that reason the Lord enjoined them not to leave Jerusalem till He had come to them. The Lord further told them that though He Himself was returning to the Father, He would come again, after He had prepared a place for them, and receive them to Himself, that they might be with Him, and that for ever! — Some fifty days after our blessed Lord had revealed all this to His disciples, the wonderful sacrifice on Calvary having taken place, followed by the triumphant resurrection, and the ascension, the amazing coming of that promised Holy Spirit of Truth took place, and the little waiting company of believers at Jerusalem was baptized with the Spirit. Since that day the building of the Church has been going on, and untold millions have been added to that wonderful structure. In the early days of the Church His personality, dignity, and power were well understood, but little by little the great truths about Him, so clearly put forth in the New Testament, have been almost entirely lost, or forgotten.

Let us now look a little at the ministry of the Spirit in the hearts of believers. First, having heard the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation, and having trusted in Christ, the believer is sealed by that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession (Ephesians 1:1-23). That purchased possession is the Church of God, purchased with the precious blood of Christ, and the promised redemption will take place when Christ Himself will rise up and call all His saints, both those that sleep, together with those that remain unto His coming, to be with Him for ever in glory. In the meanwhile each believer, whose body is now the temple of the Holy Ghost (1 Corinthians 3:16; 1 Corinthians 6:19) is called to walk in the Spirit, seeing that he lives in the Spirit (Galatians 5:25). God, in His infinite love and grace, has made all believers His children, and has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into their hearts, crying, Abba, Father. They have the first fruits of the Spirit now, Who also helps their infirmities. This word, "helps," is of deep and wonderful meaning; it occurs only twice in the New Testament,

in Romans 8:26, and in Luke 10:40. The word in the Greek (sunantilambano) means to take one end of a burden, and share it with the one at the opposite end. This the blessed Spirit of God does with us; the believer on his path finds many burdens too great for him to bear alone, and gets discouraged, even as Martha with her domestic duties. Let us not forget that there is One ready and able to help us. We know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. But the believer, though now a child of God, and having the Holy Spirit of God dwelling in his body, as in a temple, is still burdened with the flesh. This causes a continual warfare, for the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other (Galatians 5:17). In this constant struggle, the believer is exhorted not to give place to the devil, but rather to resist him, as having put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, and as having put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. He is told especially not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God, whereby he is sealed unto the day of redemption. Among other exhortations he is urged to be filled with the Spirit. Many times in the earlier chapters of the Acts we read of this one and that being filled with the Spirit! If only this were our habitual condition, what power would be manifested in the lives of the humblest Christians! But how is the believer to overcome in this never ceasing struggle? The answer in the Word of God is clear and short: "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16). Remark how constantly the Christian is urged to prayer. "Pray without ceasing;" "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit;" "Continuing instant in prayer;" "In everything by prayer and supplication, with thanks-giving, let your requests be made known unto God." As we have already seen, the purpose of the Holy Spirit down here is to glorify the Lord Jesus, and to guide believers into all truth. If His work is not hindered by careless walk on our part, and He consequently grieved, what wondrous revelations of our Lord will He not open to us! Read the last few verses of Ephesians 3:1-21 — "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, . . . that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." And notice that this can only be wrought according to the power that worketh in us, that is, the Holy Spirit. How wonderful is the purpose and grace of our God and Father to us-ward who believe! Truly God is the great Giver, Who, having given His own beloved Son, desires us to take now for our present enjoyment all the wealth showered upon us in Him. As our Lord Jesus said: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you; Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." Does He not in these words present us, as it were, with a signed blank cheque, saying, "Now, fill it in? And what hinders us from doing this, and appropriating what He so freely gives? Nothing but our unbelief. Oh that when God makes us promises we might learn to take them at their face value, remembering that though He is omnipotent, there is still one thing He cannot do; it is impossible for Him to lie! (Hebrews 6:18). As one once wrote: "You will find it the very strength of your soul to go before God and say: This is written in Thy Word, and because Thou canst not lie, I know that I have got that thing." May our Lord Jesus Christ bless these simple meditations for His own glory, and our blessing. G. F. Barlee.

Vol 01-10 - The Prophetic History of Israel.

The Prophetic History of Israel. The history of God's earthly people has very solemn considerations for the saints of this day, for instead of learning from Israel's failures, and avoiding the grave departure that marked that nation, we find the church involved in yet greater ruin, having departed from a more wonderful place than that given to Israel. But it is very comforting to know that God knew all about these departures long before they happened, and in the Scriptures they were faithfully recorded long before they took place. Does not this show the great mercy and grace of our God, who cares for His people, with the full knowledge of what they would prove themselves in their responsible course. He points out their failures most faithfully, recording the details that men would have hidden; but He will not allow others to speak against them. If a Balaam would curse them, he is compelled to bless; if Satan would harm Job, God would speak of him as "My servant Job — none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil; and still holdeth fast his integrity." Again, in Romans 8:1-39 we read of the saints, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect: it is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? Our souls may well rejoice in the grace and love of God, which sets us before His face, accepted in the Beloved, and in the sure knowledge that in the day of presentation we shall be before Him, holy, without blame, and in love. The knowledge of these things should however exercise our hearts to seek to be here for the pleasure of God, to learn His mind, and to seek His glory. When Jacob neared the end of his earthly sojourn, he called his sons together to tell them what should befall them at the end of the days. Here we have recorded through the lips of Jacob, and by the pen of Moses, God's own unfolding, by the Spirit, of the sad history of Israel. Sad history indeed, yet it concludes with blessing from the Lord Himself. They were the sons of JACOB; they took character from their poor father, the supplanter, whose chequered history is so well known; nevertheless Jacob speaks in the conscious dignity that God had given him, as he says, "Hearken unto ISRAEL your father." Jacob's own history portends that of his progeny. At the beginning it was marked by deceit and sorrow; at the end it was graced by dignity and honour. Balaam, speaking the word put by God into his mouth speaks of Israel and his generation thus, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." His early history may be dreadful; but his last end is rich and abiding blessing from the Lord.

Reuben displays the natural strength, excellency, dignity and power of Jacob; which manifest themselves in the instability and corruption of the nation. Do not these moral features stand out prominently at the commencement of Israel's history as a nation? The forty years of the desert proved how unstable they were; yea, they praised on entering the wilderness, and almost immediately fell to murmuring; they were never to be trusted. See too the corruption that brought on God's judgment at the foot of Sinai, and in the matter of Baal-Peor. Nor do these features cease to mark the nation in the progress of its history, but they are the prominent features at the beginning.

Simeon and Levi. — Cruelty, anger, self-will and rage mark these violent sons of Jacob. At the recollection of them Jacob recoils, saying, "O my soul come not into their secret. . . . I will divide

them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel." Do not these features mark the nation in the times of the Judges? The last words of the Book of Judges are "Every man did what was right in his own eyes." It was a time of lawlessness, self-will and lack of restraint. Who could have told that the words of Jacob, which appeared only to curse, would prove for blessing? So it was for Levi! This tribe was scattered in Israel for Levitical blessing, while Simeon was evidently scattered for lack of pasture (see 1 Chronicles 4:39; 1 Chronicles 4:42).

Judah. — A new phase of Israel's history opens with the sceptre coming to the house of Judah, in the person of David; and with this there is the assurance that the sceptre will not depart from Judah until Shiloh come; the Man of Peace, the Messiah. The public corruption and violence, that had hitherto marked the nation, no longer appear; there is restraint with the lawgiver. Israel submits to Judah, for "Thy father's children will bow down to thee;" and "Thy brethren will praise thee." The enemy no longer preys on poor lawless Israel, for Judah's hand is upon his neck; and with the majesty, dignity and strength of the lion, none dares to bestir him. Were not these exactly the prevailing conditions in the days of David and Solomon? But Messiah was in view, who would not only have the obedience of Israel, but also of "Peoples," the Gentiles. We know the result of His first coming: but His rejection by Israel and the Gentiles will not set aside God's purposes for the blessing of both under the Sceptre and hand of Messiah. The binding of his foal to the vine, and his ass's colt to the choice vine, may presage the lowly associations of Messiah with Israel at His first coming; the former speaking of His relations with the nation as a whole, the latter with the remnant, the disciples. The washing of His dress in wine, and His garment in the blood of the grapes. is in harmony with Isaiah 63:1-6, where He comes in judgment. The eyes red with wine seems to foretell the deep satisfaction of His earthly joy, when the judgment is past: and the teeth white with milk, the pleasures that are His in the rest of His kingdom.

Zebulun and Issachar. — The former was to dwell at the shore of the seas and of the ships; surely indicating Israel's relations with the Gentiles, the nations of the world, to which the ships go and from which they come. Perhaps this would mark the period following the removal of the sceptre from the land, and especially from the time of Messiah's rejection. Commerce marks the nation, for his side touches Sidon; but if this brings individual prosperity to some, it does not make the nation fat, for Issachar is a bony ass. Crouching between two burdens, he has come under the servitude of the Gentiles; and here he is content to rest. How clearly this marks the Israel we know in these days!

Dan. — No matter how low the people of God may sink in failure, His purposes will not be set aside: even as the apostle Paul wrote to the saints at Rome. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." Therefore Dan's place in ultimate blessing is assured in the words, "Dan shall judge his people, as one of the tribes of Israel." Jacob is about to tell of Dan's terrible future as an instrument of Satan, but he can find comfort in the sure knowledge that blessing will come for Dan in the end. From Revelation 7:1-17, where Dan is omitted in the sealing from the tribes, it would seem that God has come in in government for the part played by Dan at that time; but in the last chapter of Ezekiel we have confirmation of Jacob's confidence in God, for Dan's portion in the land, in the coming day, is clearly reserved for him. Dan's portion is the first mentioned, chiefly perhaps because he occupies the most northerly part of the land. But if Dan's portion is assured, it is in spite of his part in the dread troubles of Israel, after the church is gone; for this appears to be the part of Israel's history represented by him. Poor Israel has yet to pass through its worst

troubles and distresses, when under Antichrist, the instrument of Satan, the state of things delineated in verse 17 comes to pass. "Dan shall be a serpent in the way, an adder in the path, that bitten the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward." Does not this speak of a diabolical and treacherous part played by the tribe of Dan? Idolatry was connected with Dan very early: when Jeroboam set up his golden calves at Dan and Bethel. Therefore it would appear that Dan prophetically points to the time of the end, when Satan's power is manifest in the land, when the abomination of desolation is set up in the temple, which causes the fierce judgment of God to be poured out upon the apostate people. With the light of this before him, Jacob, in the spirit of the godly remnant of that time says. "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord." That salvation will surely come, even if it means through judgment: "Unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

Gad. — If poor Israel has been overcome and trodden down; through the salvation, for which Jacob waited, he shall overcome at the last. This shall come at the end of the "Tribulation;" even as we read in Isaiah 11:13-14, "Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim. But they shall fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines toward the west; they shall spoil them of the east together: they shall lay their hand upon Edom and Moab; and the children of Ammon shall obey them."

Asher. — Following upon the triumphs foretold in Gad, Asher bespeaks the prosperity that follows. "His bread shall be fat." Israel enters the land with all its blessing from the Lord, to enjoy that which is spoken of in Isaiah 25:1-12 when "Jehovah of hosts makes unto all peoples a, feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow — He will swallow up death in victory. And — will wipe away tears from off all faces... Like Jacob, waiting for God's salvation, Israel will then say, according to this chapter. "Behold, this is our God: we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is Jehovah, we have waited for Him; we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation." Responding to the salvation and blessing of the Lord, Israel provides Him with "Royal dainties." Does not the Lord tell Israel of the royal dainties in which He finds pleasure in Numbers 28:1-31? There He says, "Command the children of Israel and say unto them, My offering, My bread or My sacrifices made by fire, for a sweet savour, unto me." Then follows the daily, weekly, monthly and yearly sacrifices. During the millennium the sacrifices will have their true place, as Ezekiel 45:1-25 points out; not as in former times, when they offered the lame and the sick; or when their ways were so distressing to the Lord; but under the new covenant their hearts and minds will be truly affected by the thoughts of the Lord.

Naphtali. — Liberated from the bondage under which he served the Gentiles, Israel is like a hind let loose; and his free spirit finds expression in the goodly words in which he praises Jehovah. Look at the goodly words of Isaiah 12:1-6. "And in that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. Behold God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid: for the Lord JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; He also is become my salvation." Here he uses the words that were sung by Israel, on the wilderness side of the Red Sea, after God had saved them from the oppression and bondage of Egypt. Israel returns, as it were, to his first love, to the goodly words that marked him at the beginning. It is the same tale in Isaiah 26:1-21 and in many of the Psalms; praises for the Lord, from His redeemed people, in the time of their deliverance from the hand of the enemy.

Joseph. — Now we have the scope and character of the blessings into which Israel are brought in the millennium; and the history of Him through whom the blessing is brought to God's earthly people. Who can fail to see in the opening words of Jacob, concerning his beloved son, the features which marked the Lord Jesus Christ? Down here, in Manhood, the Lord Jesus was indeed the fruitful vine, who gave constant pleasure to His God and Father; but whose branches ran over the wall of Judaism for the blessing of the Gentiles. At Sychar's well, this is most blessedly seen, where divine blessing flows to the poor woman, and also to the Samaritans who recognised in Him the Saviour of the world. And have not His branches gone over all the barriers of the ordinances of Judaism to reach us in this day? And will not His blessing reach the nations of the earth in the coming day? He surely and fully answers to the description given of Joseph in these opening words: He is the true Joseph. But Israel sorely grieved Him: He was a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. How often do we find Him as the mark of their hostility, reviled, persecuted, buffeted and reproached; all the outcome of the bitter hatred of their hearts towards Him and His Father. These deep sorrows brought untold suffering to the rejected Messiah, who was crucified and slain. Not all their hatred and hostility could weaken His purpose and resolve to carry through to the end the work that had been given Him to do and although He was crucified in weakness, He lives in power. He came forth from the great conflict of good and evil with His weapons unweakened in His hands. In resurrection, He is manifestly the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by resurrection of the dead. Thus were the arms of His hands made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; even as we read in Psalms 80:1-19 "Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the Son of Man whom thou hast made strong for thyself."

Having come forth in resurrection, "From thence is the shepherd the stone of Israel." The Lord Jesus was indeed the Good Shepherd while here, to give His life for the sheep; but now as risen from the dead He comes forward as Israel's Shepherd, for their deliverance; even as we further read in Psalms 80:1-19 "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest JOSEPH like a flock; thou that sittest (between) the cherubim, shine forth. Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh, stir up thy strength, and come to our deliverance." The Lord Jesus will indeed manifest Himself in the coming day as Israel's Shepherd, and deliver him from all the power of the enemy. Again, He is the stone of Israel. He was the rejected stone on earth, for which the builders of Judaism had no place in their schemes; but in the church now, God's building, He is the chief corner stone; and in the coming day He will have His true place among His earthly people, as the stone of Israel (see Zechariah 3:9; Zechariah 4:7). Messiah will come forth in all the might and blessing of the God of Israel; yea with the blessing of the Almighty.

Here we have the wide range of blessings that come to Israel through the true Joseph, in the millennium. There are the blessings of the heaven above, which superficially might speak of the sunshine and rain so essential for earthly prosperity. But surely there is something deeper! In Revelation 21:1-27 we are privileged to view the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. "Her shining (was) like a most precious stone, as a crystal-like Jasper stone; having a great and high wall; having twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names inscribed, which are those of the TWELVE TRIBES OF (the) SONS OF ISRAEL." Do we not have here the heavenly light streaming down for the blessing of the sons of Israel? This is truly "The blessings of heaven from above." There are the blessings of the deep that lieth under;

the precious things that come from the bed of the oceans to enrich God's earthly people. The twelve gates of which we have read were "Twelve pearls; each one of the gates, respectively, was of one pearl." From whence come the pearls? Are they included in the blessings of the deep THAT LIETH UNDER? Is there peculiar blessing for God's earthly people as being in touch with heaven through those who have been brought up from such depths to reflect the divine light in that radiant scene? And is there not for the true Joseph Himself the wonderful answer to all His sorrows, in having the church to be the vessel for the reflection of His glory in the coming day? The blessings of the breast and of the womb speak naturally of the increase of Israel as a nation on the earth, and of the increase in prosperity among his cattle and sheep. So that heavenly blessing is coming to Israel in the coming day, but coming to him on the earth; earthly blessing is fully assured; and even the very depths of the sea are made to yield their quota for the blessing of God's dear people, in that day. Well might Jacob say, "The blessings of thy father surpass the blessings of my ancestors, unto the bounds of the everlasting hills." The richest and fullest blessings that can be afforded to men on earth, will yet come to poor distressed Israel, through the Christ they refused and slew; nor shall any nation or evil force be able to remove them from the possession given by God in that day, for the blessing extends to the bounds of the everlasting hills. Right until the end of the millennium will Israel have this favoured place. This is what men have sought to bring in by their own power and wisdom; by setting their own nation at the top and by seeking to subjugate all others; but here we are assured that these things will be brought in by Him, upon whose head all the blessings shall rest; yea they crown the head of Him that was separated from His brethren. The closing words regarding Joseph, and of course of the true Joseph, speak of His moral worth. He was a true Nazarite; separate from His brethren. There was no other like Christ. Every other man had dishonoured God on earth; but how blessedly the Lord Jesus honoured His Father's Name on earth, and brought glory to Him. Therefore all that belongs to Christ in the coming day; and all that comes to His heavenly saints, and to His earthly people, is the result of His rejection, but also because of the moral excellency of the Person of God's beloved Son.

Benjamin. — If universal and abiding blessing is brought in by the true Joseph, it is necessary that there should be power to subjugate all evil. This is set forth in Benjamin. The peace prevailing in the millennium is introduced and maintained by the rod of Messiah's power. Israel's enemies are torn to pieces, never more to rear their heads, as is predicted by Balaam, "There cometh a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and he shall cut in pieces the corners of Moab, and destroy all the sons of tumult." So also will he divide the spoil and devour the prey, for says Balaam, "And Edom shall be a possession, and Seir a possession, — they his enemies; but Israel shall do valiantly. And one out of Jacob shall have dominion and will destroy out of the city what remaineth." The power to destroy all who seek to do evil during the Millennium, belongs to the throne of Jerusalem, so that no evil may intervene to set aside the blessing that has been brought in through the goodness of God.

Wm. C. Reid.

Vol 01-10 - The Returned Remnant.

The Returned Remnant.

Some five hundred years before the Lord came into the world, an opportunity was given, through the providential goodness of God, for His earthly people to escape from the captivity in Babylon, and to return to God's land and build God's House. The mass of God's people chose to remain in the land of their captivity; but a remnant of about forty-two thousand, "whose spirit God had stirred," left Babylon and returned to Jerusalem (Ezra 1:5). Having returned, and set up an altar for worship, at once they were faced with the opposition of those who sought to hinder the special work for which they had been set free from Babylon. For, be it noted, this opposition was, not against the return to the land, but against the building of the house and the walls of the city (Ezra 4:1; Ezra 4:12). Through the weakness of the people this opposition for a time succeeded. But sixteen years after the return, God raised up the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, who aroused the people, under the leadership of Zerubbabel, and Joshua, to complete the building of the house of God.

Having failed to stop the building of the house, the enemy made a second attempt to mar their witness for God by seeking to lower their walk, through leading them into worldly associations. Thus, when Ezra, with a further band of exiles returned to the land, it came to light that many of the people, including some of their leaders, were associating with the people of the adjoining lands and doing according to their abominations (Ezra 9:1). The walk that is worthy of God's house, and the necessary discipline of the house, had not been maintained. Through the ministry of Ezra, the people humbled themselves before God, confessed their sins, and dealt with this evil.

Thirteen years pass, and this remnant that had escaped from captivity, was in great affliction and reproach, Seeing that "the wall of Jerusalem," that speaks of separation, was broken down; and "the gates" that stand for the place of discipline, were burned with fire (Nehemiah 1:2-3). Under the exhortations of Nehemiah, the people were led to build the walls and erect the gates (Nehemiah 3:1-32; Nehemiah 6:15). The result was that once again separation and discipline were maintained.

Alas! in spite of these conflicts and revivals, we find, only a few years later, in the days of Malachi, that, though the house of God had been rebuilt, and the walls and the gates set up, and a regular service of sacrifices and feasts was being conducted, yet the moral state of both leaders and led was at such a thoroughly low ebb that, when rebuked by the Messenger of the LORD, they were blind to their condition and indifferent to the LORD'S warnings.

Four hundred and eighty years later, when the Lord came to the earth, we discover this returned remnant had become divided into several parties — Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians. When brought into the presence of the Lord, the low condition of every party was made manifest. It is true they were no longer associated with Babylonish corruptions; nor were they giving way to idolatry. Moreover, the temple was rebuilt, and the round of religious services was being

performed. But the Lord has to charge them with being hypocrites, seeing that though they honoured God with their lips, their heart was far from Him (Mark 7:6). Furthermore, like the fig tree with its leaves but no fruit, they made a great show of piety before men, but in their lives there was no fruit for God; and the house that they had been set free to build for God's service, they had corrupted for their own ends (Mark 11:12-15).

Thus, in the day of the Lord it is clear that, on the one hand, the great mass of God's earthly people were still dispersed in captivity amidst Babylonish and other corruptions, though, indeed, amongst them were many God-fearing individuals, as we know from the glimpse we have of them in the books of Esther and Daniel. On the other hand, as we have seen, those "whose spirit God had stirred" in the beginning to return to the land and build the house, had in their end become broken up into different parties, marked with much outward piety before men but with little or no fruit before God; with faultless expressions on their lips when they approached God, but with hearts far from Him.

We do well to ask ourselves, Has the solemn history of this returned remnant no warning voice for the people of God today? And, very specially, does it not speak to those who, over one hundred years ago, had their eyes opened to see the truth of the church as the house of God in which the Spirit dwells, and as the body of which Christ is Head? (Ephesians 1:22-23; Ephesians 2:20-22). With their spirits moved by God to answer to this light concerning Christ and the church, a number of God's people, in obedience to His word, separated from the systems of men, and took a place outside the camp order of religion, to gather to Christ as the alone Head of the church, and to seek to walk in the light of the house of God and the body of Christ.

Alas! as of old the returned remnant broke down in responsibility, so again we have to face the sad fact that those who have left the systems of men to gather to Christ have grievously failed. In the presence of this failure, it surely becomes us to look back and ask ourselves, What has been the history of this movement? Then to look round and ask, What is the present condition of those who have professed to return to God's ground for His people?

Looking back, does it not become clear that from the outset, and through the passing years, those who have taken this path in obedience to the word of God, have had to face the constant attacks of the enemy in different forms? As with the returned remnant of old, the first great attack of the enemy was an effort to undermine and set aside the principles of God's house that they were seeking to maintain, by once again setting up a system of clericalism that ignored the presence of the Spirit of God and the Lordship and Headship of Christ. Moreover, through the passing years has it not become plain that, apart from adopting a system that is an actual denial of the house of God, we have failed by neglecting the truth of the house of God? Further, as in the days of Haggai, behind this neglect we have to judge ourselves for the worldliness that has sought our own things rather than the things of God. This neglect of the truth and worldliness have led to the gradual breaking down of the walls of separation, and to laxity in the exercise of a Scriptural discipline.

If, as we look back, we have to confess that this has been our sorrowful history, what, we may ask, is the result as we look round on present conditions? Are we not at once faced with the humbling fact that those, who left the systems of men to give Christ His place as the one Lord, and as the Head, and walk in the unity of the body, have so failed in subjection to the Lord, and in holding the Head, that, like the returned remnant of old, they have become broken and divided? Have we not

to admit, as one has said, that, "The failure of the church is universal; and among all the fragments thereof, nowhere more marked than with Brethren, so-called. If I imagine that, in the wreck, one entire company has alone preserved its integrity, and is right where all else is wrong, it is tantamount to saying that one has not yet discovered the totality of the ruin." (W. H. Westcott.)

Furthermore, have we not to confess that behind this state of division, and the immediate causes of different divisions, there exists a low moral condition. Thus while each company of God's people may still profess to be gathered to the Name of the Lord, with the Lord in the midst, should we not find, if we really got into the presence of the Lord, that while we may draw near to God with faultless expressions of prayer and praise on our lips, too often our hearts may have been far from Him; and that while there may be the outward profession of piety before men, there is too little fruit in our secret lives before God. We may well recall the warning words, written by a servant of the Lord in 1853, when he said, "Saints gathered together in the name of the Lord Jesus, have to do with realities. In His presence everything is exposed, naked and bare before the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do. It is one thing to have got into our place . . . as gathered together in the Name of Jesus, and it is another to learn what is befitting the place; in other words, how to behave in it. Realities, not pretensions, have their answer in God. Now in our day, we have had too little reality, and too much pretension. . . . Believers need to see and acknowledge their nakedness, abandon their folly, and in humility own things as they are. . The presence of the Holy Ghost is a reality, and surely leads to acknowledgement of our real condition" (Present Testimony 4:155). In the presence of this failure we may well ask, What can those do who own the breakdown and desire to answer to the mind of God, as set forth in Scripture, for a day of ruin? We have already seen that the history, and failure of the returned remnant, would seem to foreshadow, in a solemn way, our own breakdown. But, in seeking to learn God's mind in the midst of this breakdown, may we not also turn with profit to another side of the history of the returned remnant which is rich with instruction and encouragement? Let us remember that throughout the history of this remnant, with all its failure, there existed those who feared the LORD, who mourned the low condition, who confessed the failure, and sought to be true to God's house. This remnant within the remnant is clearly seen in the day of Ezra, when a number confessed their failure and "wept very sore" (Ezra 10:1). Again we hear of them in the day of Malachi when we read of those "that feared the LORD, and thought upon His Name." Centuries later, when Christ came to the earth, we find that, amidst the increasing gloom of the passing years, God had preserved a remnant for Himself. Thus, if the presence of the Lord exposed the low condition of the mass, it also brought to light the existence of these godly individuals of whom Zacharias and his wife, Joseph and Mary, Simeon and Anna were shining examples.

Seeing then that this godly remnant had the special approval of the Lord, it will be well to carefully consider their distinguishing trials as recorded by the Spirit of God. Their first, and outstanding characteristic, was that they "feared the LORD" (Malachi 3:16). Does this not imply that they were not content with an outward show of piety before men, or with a round of religious services, or with drawing near to God with correct expressions on their lips, but that their secret lives were lived in the sense of being under the eye of God. They were conscious that their words were heard by God; their acts seen by God, and their thoughts known to God. With the Psalmist, such could say, "He that planteth the ear, shall He not hear? He that formed the eye, shall He not see? . . . He that teacheth man knowledge, shall He not know?" (Psalms 94:9-10). Being right with God, there was

nothing to hinder fellowship with one another. So we read that, they "spake often one to another." This was the second great mark of this godly remnant. Their common fear of the LORD drew them together in a holy happy fellowship of which the LORD was the bond. A third characteristic was that, they not only feared the LORD, but they "thought upon His Name." Does this not imply that they turned from themselves and their fellowmen to delight their souls in the excellencies and glory of the LORD; for "name" in Scripture describes the character of the One bearing the name? But also, it surely suggests, that in all their ways, and walk, and associations, they did not consider what would be for their earthly advantage and ease, but what would be for the glory of the LORD'S great Name they "thought upon His Name." A further distinguishing mark of this godly remnant was that they had before them the coming of Christ, for we read, "Unto you that fear my Name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings." They had no expectation that the surrounding darkness would be dispelled or that the world would grow better, or that any general healing would take place among the people of God "Until the day break, and the shadows flee away," when the Sun of righteousness will arise with healing in His wings.

Such were the outstanding marks of this godly remnant within the remnant. We do not hear that they were marked by great gifts that might have exalted them among the people of God; or great works of charity that would have earned the world's applause; or great numbers that would have brought them into prominence. But, in spite of their outward weakness, and smallness of numbers, they had the LORD'S approval in a day of ruin, and will shine as His jewels in the day of glory. As with this godly remnant, so now, we are living in a day of ruin and breakdown, not only in the government of the world, and in the great Christian profession, but also amongst the true people of God. But as of old, so again we have clear indications in the New Testament, that in spite of all the general breakdown, there has been, and will be to the end, a godly remnant. Furthermore, we learn from the word what are the outstanding marks of those who, in these last difficult days, meet with the LORD'S approval, as well as the path they are called to tread in the midst of the ruin.

First, as with the godly in the midst of the returned remnant, let us own our failure and humble ourselves in the dust before God, judging the low moral condition that has led to confusion and division. As we have seen, Ezra confessed the failure with weeping. The Lord, in His day, wept over the low condition of the returned remnant. The apostle Paul warned the saints "night and day with tears" as he foresaw the ruin coming in amongst the people of God. Timothy, in his day, was a man of tears. Let us challenge ourselves! Have we, with broken hearts ever wept before the Lord over our individual and collective failures?

Secondly, as of old in the presence of their weakness and failure, the godly found relief in turning to the LORD, so, let us remember, that however great our failure, however many our difficulties, and whatever our weakness, we have an unfailing resource in CHRIST, Himself. Of Him we can say, Thou remainest," and "Thou art the Same" (Hebrews 1:11-12). In the divided state of the Lord's people we may seek to escape from false doctrine or evil ways, or relief from looseness and independency, by changing from one company to another. But is this the Lord's way of relief? When the disciples had to face the storm in a ship "tossed with waves," Peter did not seek a way of escape from the danger by leaving one ship to join another ship. His resource was CHRIST. Acting in faith, and attracted by love, he left the ship, and walked on the water, "to go to JESUS," In obedience to the word, we rightly leave the camp order of religion, but, in doing so let our first great object be to "go forth . . . unto HIM without the camp." Unless Christ be our centre of

gathering we shall only end in forming another company after the order of the camp.

Thirdly, as with the godly of old, who "Thought upon His Name," if we have CHRIST before us, we shall refuse all that in principle or practice is a denial of His Lordship and Headship. This will involve that, in obedience to Scripture we take the path of separation; for the word is "Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord withdraw from iniquity." Again, each one is exhorted to purge himself from vessels to dishonour by "separating himself from them" (2 Timothy 2:19-21, N. Tn.). Further, in view of these last difficult days, when professing Christendom becomes a vast system having the form of piety, but denying the power thereof, we are exhorted "to turn away" from such; in other words, we are to "go forth without the camp" (2 Timothy 3:5; Hebrews 13:13). This will involve that we not only separate from corrupt bodies where wrong doctrine and evil practices are unjudged, but that we must come out from every company that by their principles and practices deny the truth of the fellowship into which we are called, and the one body of which we form part.

Fourthly, if we have taken the separate path to give Christ His place as Lord and Head, and walk in the light of the truth, let us each seek to be found walking in a right moral condition in our individual lives before God. As with the godly of Malachi's day, let us walk in the fear of God. It is not enough to separate from that which is false, for as it has been said, "If we carry with us the seeds of the corruption, unheeded and unjudged, the result will be the same again, only worse, by reason of our increased light, responsibility and profession" (Present Testimony 4:352). Let us each take heed to the word that exhorts us to lay "aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speaking" (1 Peter 2:1). Having gone forth "unto Him," let us seek to abide in Him and thus walk in secret communion with Him. It has been well said that "Christ must live in me, if I am to live like Christ or for Christ."

Fifthly, let us each seek to get back to "first love." If that which had the Lord's approval, above all else, at the beginning of the church period, was personal love to Himself, so at the end, when all has been ruined in our hands through the loss of first love, that which the Lord looks for is individual love to Himself. His last appeal to His own, in the midst of the ruin, is to remind us of His love, and seek the response of our love. Thus we hear Him say, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore and repent. Behold I stand at the door, and am knocking: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me" (Revelation 3:19-20). He is not demanding some great sacrifice or service that will make a display before the world, or exalt us in the eyes of men; but He looks for a heart that will respond to His love, and thus be led into communion with Himself. To such an one He may indeed open a door of service, but it will be service flowing from love.

Sixthly, if, as with the godly in the days of Malachi, we seek individually to walk in the fear of the LORD, it will also be our privilege, as in their case, to have fellowship with one another. Of those saints we read that they "spake often one to another." And in this day of breakdown, those who have separated from the corruptions of Christendom are encouraged to "follow righteousness, faith, love, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (2 Timothy 2:22). They may be but a feeble few, but they have the word of the Lord that tells us "where two or three are gathered together unto my Name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20). Such will make no pretension of being the only people on earth with whom the Lord is found, nor will they

seek to form a new fellowship. They will seek in humble obedience to the word to act in the light of the fellowship into which all saints have been called, and of the one body of which all saints form part.

Lastly, as in the days of Malachi, the godly had before them the coming of Christ, and realised that there would be no recovery for Israel until the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings, so, it is our privilege to have before us the coming of the Lord, owning that no power on earth can patch up the fragments of the scattered church, or heal the sorrows of the world. He alone can gather His people together, heal the broken hearts, bind up our wounds and still the storms of life.

If, then, these are some of the outstanding marks that Scripture sets before us, of those that have the approval of the LORD, both in the closing days of the Jewish period, and in the last days of Christendom, may we seek grace to profit by the example of the godly remnant of old, and answer to the Lord's mind for His own today. Thus amid the encircling gloom may it be the desire of our hearts to be found walking in the fear of the LORD, obedient to the word of the LORD, jealous of the Name of the LORD, and looking for the coming of the LORD.

H. Smith.

Vol 01-10 - The Same Jesus.

The Same Jesus. The same powerful right hand that held the seven stars of the seven churches is laid so gently upon John as he falls as dead at the feet of the glorious Son of Man; and the same mighty voice that sounded like many waters, said in tenderness to the heart of the troubled Seer. "Fear not; I am the first and the last." Yes! it is the same Jesus, who was once here as the Man of sorrows; who is now in the place of supreme authority, from whence He searches, tests, and judges all in divine holiness and righteousness; but Who still manifests in perfect love His tender care and watchfulness over His own.

Vol 01-10 - The Second Epistle to the Thessalonians.

The Second Epistle to the Thessalonians. An Expository Outline.

Introductory. The two Epistles to the Assembly of the Thessalonians were written to meet errors that had arisen in their midst as to the Christian's hope — the coming of the Lord.

Scripture presents this great truth in a double aspect. There is first the coming of the Lord for His saints to take them out of this world to be with Himself in the glory: secondly, there is His coming with His saints to bring them into the world to reign with Him. The First Epistle presents the coming of the Lord to take His saints out of the world, and corrects the error that had arisen as to the saints who had fallen asleep. The Second Epistle presents the coming of Christ with His saints and corrects errors that were being taught as to the saints still living. The Thessalonian Assembly was well aware that the coming of the Lord with His saints would end man's day and usher in the day of the Lord. Already the Apostle had referred to "the day of the Lord" in the First Epistle (5: 2) as a truth with which they were well acquainted; and again he takes up this great theme in this Second Epistle (see Chapter 2:2, where "the day of Christ" should be translated "the day of the Lord").

These believers would know that the prophets spoke of this day as "The great and dreadful day of the Lord" (Malachi 4:5); "a day of trouble, and distress, a day of wasteness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness" (Zephaniah 1:14-15). Thus, however great the glory and blessing of the reign of Christ, the day of the Lord, that leads to the Kingdom, would be ushered in by overwhelming judgments on the world.

It would seem that the enemy took occasion, by the persecutions and tribulations that the Thessalonian believers were passing through, to raise the terrible thought in their minds that the day of the Lord was present, and that the believers would have to pass through the horrors of this day before being taken to be with the Lord. The Apostle writes this Epistle to correct this error, not only for the Thessalonian Assembly but for all God's people who still think that the Church must pass through the great tribulation before the Lord comes to receive His own to Himself. Moreover, as ever, the Spirit of God, when correcting error, also unfolds solemn and precious truths for the warning, comfort, and establishment of believers. The contents of the Epistle may be summarised as follows:

First, the Apostle comforts believers in the midst of persecution, and fortifies them against being deceived with error, by instructing them in the truth (2 Thessalonians 1:1-12).

Secondly, having instructed them in the truth he exposes the error and foretells the apostacy of Christendom and the manifestation of the man of sin (2 Thessalonians 2:1-12).

Thirdly, he comforts believers by reminding them of their present portion and their future prospect in contrast to the coming doom of Christendom (2 Thessalonians 2:13-17).

Finally, he instructs us as to the practical walk that is consistent with the coming of Christ (Chapter 3).

1. Comfort in Persecution.

2 Thessalonians 1:1-12. The Assembly of the Thessalonians were troubled and distracted by some evilly disposed persons who took occasion by the persecutions they were suffering to teach the error that the day of the Lord had already come. Before, however, exposing the error, the Apostle, after the salutation (Vv. 1, 2), gives thanks for the spiritual condition of these believers (3, 4), comforts them by presenting the truth as to the day of the Lord (5-10), and encourages by his prayer on their behalf (11, 12). The Salutation (2 Thessalonians 1:1-2). The Apostle addresses the Assembly of the Thessalonians as being "in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." He recognises that they are in the enjoyment of the full truth of Christianity that reveals God as our Father and Jesus Christ as our Lord. So the Apostle can write to the Corinthian Assembly, "To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him" (1 Corinthians 8:6). He desires for these saints grace to endure in their persecutions, and peace to garrison their hearts in spite of their tribulations.

Thanksgiving on their behalf (2 Thessalonians 1:3-4). The spiritual condition of this Assembly was such that it was meet that the Apostle should thank God on their behalf. There may be ignorance that calls for instruction, error, that requires correction, and even individuals whose walk is disorderly, but, as ever, the Apostle delights to recognise what is of God in His people before dealing with their ignorance and failure.

It is noteworthy that the Apostle gives thanks for the fruit of the work of God in the saints — their "faith" and "love." He does not, in this passage, thank God for the knowledge of the truth they may have acquired or for their diligence in searching the word, but for the results of the truth seen in their lives. Even so, in writing to the Ephesian believers, he does not thank God that they entered into the highest truths connected with the counsels of God, but he thanks God for the measure in which the truth had affected them, as witnessed by their "faith in the Lord Jesus" and "love unto all the saints" (Ephesians 1:15-16; also Colossians 1:3-4).

Very blessedly the Assembly was characterised, not only by faith toward our Lord Jesus, but by faith that was growing exceedingly; and not only by love to one another, but by love that was abounding. Moreover it was not only that there were devoted individuals in their midst but the Apostle speaks of "the love of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth."

There was then, in these Thessalonian believers, a very blessed witness to what the Assembly should be according to the mind of God — a company of people to whom Christ was the one Object of their faith, and where divine love prevailed. In such a company there would be no room for the pettiness of the flesh with its love of self-exaltation, its jealousy and its malice. In such a company confidence in one another would abound, every one's reputation would be safe, and all would seek the good of others. The Apostle says nothing, in these introductory verses, of their hope, as in the first Epistle. Probably their hope had become a little dimmed by the false report that the day of the Lord was already present. The effect of this Epistle would be to revive their hope so that later he can close the corrective part of his Epistle by reminding them of the

"everlasting consolation and good hope" given to us "through grace" (2:16).

(2 Thessalonians 1:4). An Assembly where faith was growing and love abounding would not, either in that day or this, escape the attacks of Satan. So we learn they were passing through persecutions and tribulations. Nevertheless God allowed these trials for the testing of their faith, for the proving of faith "works endurance" (James 1:3). With the Thessalonian believers the efforts of Satan had only been a means of drawing out their faith in Christ, their love to one another, and their endurance in trial. Such qualities called forth the thankfulness of the Apostle to God and enabled him to glory on their behalf in other Assemblies.

Every effort of the enemy is to weaken faith in Christ, to break up love between one another, and to lead us to resent evil rather than patiently endure. In the midst of the special trials of the closing days we may not, in this country, have to meet active persecution; none the less we shall have tribulation. In a day of confusion and scattering among the people of God the trials we have to meet are more often from the flesh showing itself, in different forms, within the circle of God's people rather than from opposition from without. Such trials are allowed of God in order to work endurance. Alas! too often we miss the lesson God would teach us by resenting the trial and rendering evil for evil, and railing for railing. In such circumstances the trial may be allowed to continue, or, if removed we miss the blessing that God intended, and shall have to go through yet further trials. Good for us if we take every trial from God, and to God. Then, having committed all to God we shall learn "endurance" which carries with it great blessing for our souls even now, and, in the day to come, a bright reward in glory. The Kingdom of God and the Day of the Lord (2 Thessalonians 1:5-10). The reference to the persecutions and tribulations that these saints were passing through, naturally leads the Apostle to speak of the Kingdom of God and the day of the Lord by which the Kingdom will be introduced, and thus prepare these saints to detect- and refuse the error by which they were being troubled and of which the Apostle speaks in the second chapter.

(2 Thessalonians 1:5). First we learn that the coming Kingdom will make manifest the righteous judgment of God in allowing His people to pass through persecution and tribulation. The beautiful traits these believers were exhibiting in the midst of persecution and trials, proved them to be worthy of a place in the coming glory of the Kingdom. It was the maintenance of the principles of the Kingdom that brought them into suffering, and the suffering was allowed in view of the rewards and glories of the Kingdom.

(2 Thessalonians 1:6). Secondly, in the coming day, the righteousness of God will also be seen in recompensing tribulation to those who trouble His people. This is a truth of the utmost importance showing, as it does, that we must wait for a future day for the final solution of the righteous government of God. The righteousness of God, whether in rewarding those who do good or in the judgment of those who do evil, is not fully seen in this life, as the friends of Job falsely argued. Now the people of God oftentimes have to endure suffering while the wicked prosper. Nevertheless, in the world to come all will be brought to an issue, and it will be demonstrated before men and angels that God has not been unmindful of the sufferings of His people throughout the ages, nor indifferent to the violence and corruption of their enemies. Every kind of persecution and trial whether from pagan Rome or papal Rome, whether from within or without the professing Christian circle, will at last be remembered for exposure and judgment. In the light of that day

God's suffering people need not be indignant with their enemies; they need not seek to take vengeance, or even vindicate themselves: they only have to wait God's time when all will be dealt with in perfect righteousness.

(2 Thessalonians 1:7). Thirdly, the future day of tribulation for the world, will be the day of "rest" for believers who are troubled in this the day of grace. So the Apostle can say to these tried saints, "rest with us" in that day. One has said, "Now it is the saints that are troubled, then it will be the world. Now the saints suffer at the world's hands; then the world will be punished by the Lord's hand."

Fourthly, we learn that the "rest" of the saints and the tribulation of the world will be brought about by the day of the Lord — the day "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels." At His first coming, in humiliation and grace, the angels announced the glad tidings and a multitude of the heavenly hosts were there to celebrate His praise, and announce blessing to man and glory to God. At His second coming He will be revealed in power, and again the angels of His might will be present, but to execute judgment on a world that has rejected His grace.

(2 Thessalonians 1:8-9). Fifthly, we learn that, in the day of the Lord, divine vengeance will fall on all those who know not God. The nations have the witness of creation through which the eternal power and divinity of God can be known (see Romans 1:19-20; Psalms 19:1-6). They have rejected creation's testimony, fallen into idolatry, and corrupted themselves with every conceivable lust. All this evil has not been passed over; it will be dealt with in the day of the Lord. Their ignorance of God is an ignorance that has had opportunity of knowledge but rejected it.

Sixthly, there are those who have heard the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ — a much higher testimony than that of creation for therein is revealed the love of God. Such will be dealt with according to the light and privileges they have had. But whether men reject the creation testimony or the gospel testimony it will involve their everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power. They saw no glory in His humiliation in grace that they might be saved; they will know nothing of the glory of the day of His power.

(2 Thessalonians 1:10). Seventhly, above all else, the day of the Lord will be the day of the glory and exaltation of Christ, when He will be "glorified and "admired" in all them that believe.

Prayer for Believers (2 Thessalonians 1:11-12). The Apostle closes the introductory portion of the Epistle with a word of encouragement to these believers by telling them of his prayers on their behalf. He has set before us the rest and the glory of the coming Kingdom to which we are called in association with Christ; now he prays that the saints may be found walking in a way worthy of this high calling. Did we enter more fully into the reality and greatness of this calling — that we are going to be associated with Christ in glory — we should be more entirely separate from this world and its passing glories.

Further, the Apostle prays that God would fulfil in us "all the good pleasure of His goodness." We are not left here to fulfil the pleasure of the flesh. It is our high privilege to be here for the pleasure of God. The Lord, in the perfection of His way, could say, "I do always those things that please Him" (John 8:29). Alas! too often we do the things that please ourselves. In the light of the Lord's example, and the Apostle's prayer, we may well challenge ourselves and ask, Are our thoughts,

our words, our ways, our walk, pleasing to God, and according to the pleasure of His goodness? Let us remember that His pleasure can only be good, and for our good.

Moreover, the Apostle desires that "the work of faith" — that which God has given us to do — may be carried out by power given by Him. The power is needed to continue the work of faith. We should like power to deal with our enemies and all that oppose and insult us. This however is the Lord's work who will deal with them by "the glory of His power" when He is revealed (V. 9).

Finally, the Apostle desires that "the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified "in the saints even now. Christ will be glorified in His saints in the day of His glory, but it is the good pleasure of God that the Name of Christ should be glorified in His people in the day of His rejection. The flesh would like to glorify itself, and, in the presence of opposition, and insults, we would like to vindicate our-selves. But our business and our privilege is to think only of what would be for the glory of Christ. His glory demands that we should act as He acted "Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, he threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously." This however calls for great grace, therefore the Apostle closes his prayer by desiring that we may glorify Christ "according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ." We need power for the Lord's work and grace to glorify Christ.

There is thus set before us, in this first portion of the Epistle, a beautiful picture of the moral qualities that God desires to be found in the Assemblies of His people. He would have all such to be marked by growing faith in Christ; by abounding love to one another; by endurance in the midst of trials; by a walk worthy of our calling; by ever seeking His good pleasure; by continuing in the work of faith, and, above all, by a condition that glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ. We know how far we come short of the picture, but at least may we have nothing less than the perfect pattern before our souls.

2.The Doom of Christendom.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-12.

(2 Thessalonians 2:1-2). In the second division of the Epistle, the Apostle takes up the special subject that led him to write again to the Thessalonian believers. The enemy, taking occasion by their trials and persecutions, had deceived them into thinking that the day of the Lord was present, and, therefore, believers, before reaching their final blessing, would have to pass through the great tribulation that the day of the Lord will bring upon all the world.

Owing to a defective translation in our Authorised Version, the difficulty that troubled these believers is not very apparent. The statement at the end of verse two, "that the day of Christ is at hand," should, beyond all question, read "that the day of the Lord is present" (see N. Tn. and Rev. Ver.). The fact that the day of the Lord was at hand would be no occasion of trouble to these saints. If, however, the day of the Lord was present, then, instead of being caught away to meet the Lord in the air, according to the truth of the First Epistle, they were apparently left behind to go through the great tribulation. Little wonder they were troubled.

Apparently this error had come to them through false teachers who, were not merely themselves deceived, but were deliberate deceivers, for they had even stooped to forging a letter, as from the Apostle, in order to give this error the appearance of apostolic authority. The Apostle appeals to

these saints not to be "shaken in mind nor troubled" by such errors, whether they come through an evil spirit, by oral teaching, or through a forged letter purporting to come from himself, and bases his appeal on the great fact, already brought before these believers, in the first Epistle, — the fact of "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him." This great event will precede the day of the Lord.

(2 Thessalonians 2:3-4). It is of the first importance to see that Scripture clearly distinguishes between the Lord's descent into the air for His saints, and His later appearing with His saints. It is of the interval, between these two great events, that the chapter speaks, and with which so much prophecy is occupied, whether in the Old Testament, in the Lord's own prophetic utterances, or in other prophecies of the New Testament. This period is referred to by our Lord as "the completion of the age" (Matthew 24:3, N. Tn.). It must be remembered that the "end of the age" is not the end of the Christian interval which ends with the rapture. The "end of the age," of which the Lord speaks, is the end of the Jewish age, not the end of the Christian period. It comprises the last unfulfilled week of Daniel's Seventy Weeks. It is, as one has said, "the cut off end of the Jewish age." It is to this age that the day of the Lord belongs. Much confusion would have been saved if the true meaning of the expression "the end" or "completion" of the age had been seen. The false interpretation that it refers to the end of the Christian period has led many "to hunt for dates and calculations of times which have been so fruitful a cause of disappointment to multitudes at various periods" (F.W.G.). This period — the interval between the rapture and the appearing — is one of solemn import in the history of the world. The great outstanding feature of this time will be the development of the evil of man apart from the restraining power of God. For this reason it will of necessity be a short period, for when once God removes all restraint, man's evil will develop with fearful rapidity. This heading up of the lawlessness of man will prepare the way for the appearing of the Lord in judgment. It will make manifest the need of judgment, as well as the righteousness of the Lord in intervening in judgment. The Apostle, in this passage, throws great light on this solemn period. First, he shows that this period cannot commence until the coming of the Lord Jesus for believers, and "our gathering together unto Him." These two events are sufficient to meet and dispose of the error that troubled these saints. But there were other events to take place before the day of the Lord comes. So the Apostle goes on to say, "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come except there come a falling away (or 'apostacy') first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition." Here, then, are two more events that precede the day of the Lord. The "gathering together" of the saints to Christ in heaven, is followed by the apostacy of Christendom on earth; and the apostacy prepares the way for the manifestation of the man of sin. As to the apostacy, we are warned in other Scriptures that as we near this awful day, signs of the coming apostacy will manifest themselves. We read, "the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall apostatise from the faith giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons" (1 Timothy 4:1-3). While, however, individuals may apostatise, "the apostacy" awaits the removal of the true Christians. This event will be followed by the apostacy of the whole corrupt professing Christendom. Thus the gathering together of the saints to Christ in heaven, is followed by the falling away of professing Christendom on earth. Alas! it is only too evident, how fast Christendom is moving towards the apostacy. Modernism with its rationalism; science, falsely so-called, with its godless and self-confident speculations; superstition, with its childish ritualism, are all preparing men to throw off the outward profession of that of which they have never known the vital reality. The apostacy will prepare the way for the appearance of the

man of sin. Comparison of this Scripture with others, leads to the conclusion that the person spoken of in this passage, as the man of sin, is the Antichrist of whom the Apostle John writes, and the one who is described under the figure of the second beast in Revelation 13:11-18. It is only in the Epistle of John that this wicked person is called the Antichrist. As the Apostle Paul warns us that there will be individual apostates before the great apostacy, so the Apostle John warns us there will be anti-christian teachers before the manifestation of the Antichrist (1 John 2:18). The Antichrist is not to be confused with the blasphemous head of the revived Roman Empire, described under the figure of the first beast in Revelation 13:1-10. The Antichrist will be the vessel of religious energy and opposition to Christ. The revived head of the Roman Empire will be the leader in evil public government. One will wield evil religious power; the other evil secular power. Both powers will be energised by Satan, and both will come to the same fearful end (Revelation 13:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:9; Revelation 19:20). The Apostle John shows that the religious opposition of the Antichrist will have both a Jewish as well as a Christian character. He will deny the christian revelation of the Father and the Son, and deny that Jesus is the Messiah promised to the Jews. The Apostle Paul, in this Epistle, gives further details of the character, and actions, of this terrible man. He is here called the "man of sin," for in this man there will be seen the result of a man being left to do his own will without restraint from God or man. As in the case of Judas, he is called the "son of perdition," for, even as Judas was a traitor in the midst of the favoured band of disciples who companied with the Lord, so this man will arise from the ranks of professing Christians. Both men are doomed to perdition, or utter destruction (John 17:12). As to the activities of this wicked man, they all express religious wickedness, rather than secular mis-government, being impious toward God and seductive toward men. He "opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped." In this man will be expressed all the enmity of the human heart to God which is the effect of sin. Moreover, the man that seeks to dethrone God, is set upon exalting himself. So we read of the man of sin that, he not only opposes God, but, he "exalts himself." So boundless is the pride of man that it would seek to exalt man "above all that is called God, or that is worshipped."

Further, this fearful man defies the God of Israel, for "he himself sitteth in the temple of God," and would seek to eliminate all faith in the one and unseen God, for he shows himself that he is God. One has said, "There is thus concentrated in this man of sin all the power of sin, all the enmity of the human heart to God, all the pride that exalts self, all the defiance of the human heart against every revelation of God, whether in nature, in Judaism, or Christianity. In this person God is excluded from the earth, and man arrogates to himself the place and honour that alone belong to God."

(2 Thessalonians 2:5-8). In the course of his description of the coming Antichrist, the Apostle stops to remind us of what is taking place at the present moment, while the true Christians are still on the earth. First, in the goodness of God, there is that which holds back the revelation of this terrible man of sin. Secondly, though the goodness of God holds back the full manifestation of wickedness, yet the evil, that leads to the apostacy, and the revelation of the man of sin, is already at work. This iniquity was, indeed, at work in Paul's day, for he has to say, it "doth already work." It has continued working all through the Christian period, though in a secret way, and therefore is called "the mystery of lawlessness." The great restraining power is spoken of as a Person, and One who is present upon the earth, but who will soon be gone, so we read, "He who now restrains

until He be gone" (N. Tn.). There is only One to whom this can refer — the Holy Spirit. It is not merely the presence of true Christians that hinders the full development of evil, however much the Holy Spirit may use such in restraining power, but it is rather the presence of a Divine Person who restrains the power of Satan.

Thus the mystery of lawlessness, though not set aside, is at present restrained, a truth that gives great comfort, and confidence, to the Christian. When the Holy Spirit is gone, the restraint will be removed, and the mystery of lawlessness will stand revealed in the lawless one (N. Tn.). The consummation of evil in this man of sin will call forth the righteous judgment of God. The Lord Jesus, the One to whom Antichrist is in deadly opposition, will consume this wicked man with "the spirit of his mouth." This, surely, is the "sharp sword" that proceeds out of His mouth of which we read in the Revelation, and doubtless symbolizes the word of God applied in judgment. This sword of judgment will be wielded by the Lord Jesus at the "appearing of His coming" (N. Tn.). It is well to note the difference that Scripture makes between the coming of the Lord for His saints, and His coming in judgment. When the Apostle speaks of believers "gathering together unto Him," His coming or presence is named, but not a word about His appearing (verse 1). When the lawless one is dealt with in judgment it will be not merely at the coming of the Lord, but at His appearing. He can, and will, come for His saints without appearing to the world. When He comes in judgment, He will appear before all the world. As one has said, "The distinction therefore of 2 Thessalonians 2:1; 2 Thessalonians 2:8 (the presence of Christ simply, and the appearing of His presence) is precise, instructive, and undeniable. The one is to gather together the saints to Christ above: the other is for Him (and we may say for all His saints thus gathered to appear with Him) to crush His enemies. It is then that every eye shall see Him, as it concerns every soul on earth" (W. K.).

(2 Thessalonians 2:9). Having instructed us as to the power that restrains the full development of this fearful evil, the Apostle concludes his description of this lawless one by foretelling the seductive power he will wield, and its terrible effects upon those who have rejected the truth. This fearful display of seductive energy will give occasion for the full manifestation of the power of Satan. The coming of this man of sin will be "after the working of Satan with all power, and signs, and lying wonders." This lawless man will act in deadly opposition to Christ, but his seductions will be shown in that he does so by imitating Christ. We read of the Lord Jesus that He was "approved of God . . . by miracles and wonders and signs" (Acts 2:22). The same words that are used to set forth the power of God, acting in grace, in Christ, are used to set forth the power of Satan, acting in malice, in the man of sin. Thus Antichrist, under the power of Satan, will seek to belittle the witness borne by God to Christ, by miracles and wonders similar to those performed by Christ.

These powers and signs will not be the trickery of some man-made priest, or the sham healings of men; they will be terribly real, though called "lying wonders," inasmuch as they will deceive men. Thus the coming of the lawless one will be accompanied by the supernatural power of Satan. Men forget that there are spiritual beings — "angels that excel in strength," and that Satan, though a fallen angel, has immense powers, far exceeding the powers of man. When the restraining power of God is removed the supernatural powers of Satan will be fully displayed. The working of Satan will be accompanied with the manifestation of "power" far beyond the power of man, with "signs" which convey some portent, and with "wonders" which excite attention.

(2 Thessalonians 2:10-12). The Apostle closes this solemn portion of his Epistle by describing the awful effect of Satan's power working through the lawless one. All this unrighteousness will deceive "them that perish," those who have heard and refused the truth. "They received not the love of the truth that they might be saved." Having refused the truth they will be given over to this "strong delusion" and will believe a lie. Moreover they "believed not the truth," because they had pleasure in unrighteousness. The whole passage plainly discloses the order of these solemn events.

1. At the present moment evil is secretly working, here called "the mystery of lawlessness."
2. At the coming of Christ for His saints, true believers will be caught away, and the One who restrains will be gone.
3. Following upon the rapture of the saints to Christ in heaven, there will come the apostacy of the christian profession on earth.
4. The apostacy will prepare the way for the revelation of the man of sin.
5. The revelation of the man of sin will become the occasion for the full display of the power of Satan.
6. The display of the power of Satan, through the man of sin, will lead to the strong delusion of those who, finding pleasure in unrighteousness, had rejected the truth.
7. Evil, both in man and Satan, having come to its head in open revolt against God, will be dealt with in overwhelming judgment by the Lord "with the appearing of His coming." In the light of this passage it is clear that so far from the millennial blessing being brought about by the spread of Christianity or the preaching of the gospel, Christendom itself is passing on to judgment. One had said, "It is a remarkable proof of the power of Satan, that in the face of these passages (2 Thessalonians 2:3-12; 2 Timothy 3:1-5; 2 Timothy 3:13; 2 Tim. 4:34) men, wise in their own conceits, will bring reason to prove that they are to go on and fill the whole world with the gospel — that, at the very time that judgments are hastening upon them, men will cherish the expectation of the earth being filled with a widespread blessedness, — is the strongest possible evidence of the power of that delusion of which the Apostle speaks. It is not that God is not working, and turning men from darkness to light. It was the same before the destruction of Jerusalem; three thousand were converted in a day. If we had three thousand converted in a day now, would it be a proof that the millennium was coming? No, but rather that it was judgment that was coming. It was because the judgment was coming that this happened. It was the Lord's gathering out His saints before the judgment, and adding to the Church such as should be saved. And, if He is now working in a special manner to gather out souls, it is not because the gospel is to fill the world, but because judgment is coming upon the professing Church" (J. N. D. Col. Wri. 11:448).

3. The Portion and Prospect of the Believer.

2 Thessalonians 2:13-17.

Having dealt with the error which had been a cause of agitation to the Thessalonian believers, and foretold the coming doom of Christendom, the Apostle, by way of contrast, speaks of the present and future portion of believers. In the first part of the Epistle he had thanked God for these saints,

instructed them, and prayed for them; so, again, he resorts to thanksgiving, exhortation, and prayer. The Thanksgiving (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14). In the opening verses of the Epistle the Apostle thanks God for the saints because of the graces found in them for God. Here he gives thanks because of all that God is for them. Very happily, he speaks of believers as "Brethren, beloved of the Lord." However much the failure and weakness among the people of God, and whatever differences there may be in spiritual attainment, he delights to view them as being bound together as "brethren." Seven times, in the course of this short Epistle, the Apostle addresses these saints as "brethren" (1:3; 2:1, 13, 15; 3:1, 6, 13). Moreover, though persecuted and tried by the world, they are "beloved of the Lord." Should we not be more careful of the way we think of, speak about, and act towards, one another, if we remembered that we are "beloved of the Lord?" Can the Lord be indifferent to any persecution, or insults, suffered by those who are beloved of Him, from whatever quarter such suffering may come?

Then the Apostle thanks God for all that God is for His people, whether in the past, the present, or the future. First, looking back into eternity, he says, "from the beginning" God has chosen us unto salvation. Left to ourselves we should have passed on with the world to the judgment of which he has been speaking; but the sovereign grace of God has chosen us to salvation. This salvation has not been brought about by any works that we have done; but through the work of the Spirit in us, separating us from the world, and leading us to believe the truth. That truth, we know, is the gospel concerning our Lord Jesus Christ, who, in order that we might obtain salvation, died for us (1 Thessalonians 5:9-10). The Apostle thus draws a contrast between believers and unbelievers, of whose doom he has previously spoken. Unbelievers, wrought upon by Satan, received not the love of the truth, and come under condemnation. Believers wrought upon by the Holy Spirit, believe the truth and obtain salvation.

Secondly, if believers were chosen in a past eternity, they are called in time, and the call reached them by the gospel which Paul speaks of as "our gospel." We often confine the gospel to the preaching of the forgiveness of sins; but Paul's gospel not only proclaimed the salvation that meets our need, but also the calling that meets the need in the heart of God; for if God calls us it is in order to gratify the purposes of love in His own heart. The call of God has a twofold character. It calls us out of this present world, and it calls us to another world. When the God of glory appeared to Abraham, the word was, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I will show thee" (Acts 7:3). We, too, are called out from this present world in view of a heavenly home. For us the world is the world of corrupt Christendom — a mixture of Judaism and Christianity — therefore the call to us is "Go forth therefore unto Him without the camp." Having gone forth we immediately find that "Here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come" (Hebrews 13:13-14).

If then we were chosen in eternity, and called in time, it is in view of "the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ," throughout the coming ages. Wonderful grace! If God calls us, it is with no less purpose than the obtaining of the glory set forth in our Lord Jesus Christ as Man. We are to be like Him and with Him. Again, we may say, how differently we should speak of, and act towards one another, did we view the Lord's people as "chosen," "called," and going on to glory, The Exhortation (2 Thessalonians 2:15).

Seeing then that we are brethren, beloved of the Lord, chosen, and called, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Apostle exhorts us to "stand firm," and "hold fast" (N. Tn.). Again, be it noted, that it is as "brethren" these exhortations are pressed upon us. It is only as we walk together, united as brethren, that we shall be able to "stand firm" and "hold fast" in any collective sense. If, like the Galatian Assemblies, we "bite and devour one another," it will end in our being "consumed one of another." But, says the Apostle to the Galatians,

"If," in contrast to biting one another, "we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit." Then, indeed, we shall not be "desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another," but we shall walk as brethren, "bearing one another's burdens" (Galatians 5:15; Galatians 5:25-26; Galatians 6:1-2).

Walking as brethren we shall be able to "stand firm" in the presence of the assaults of the enemy, whether by persecution or tribulation. Moreover we shall be able to "hold fast" the instructions of the Apostle (N. Tn.). For the Thessalonians, these instructions came either by word or by letter; for us they are preserved in the Epistles. Every effort of the enemy today, is to lead the saints to "give way" in the presence of trial, and "let go" the truths we have been taught. The Prayer (2 Thessalonians 2:16-17). The Apostle has brought before us the salvation and calling of God, he has exhorted us to "stand firm" and to "hold fast;" but He realises that, if we are to enter into the calling, and stand firm in the presence of all the power of the enemy, it will not be possible in our own strength. Thus it is he resorts to prayer. He turns to our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, the One who is going to deal with all evil and annul every opposing power by the appearing of His coming. How good that we have access by prayer to "Himself!" Further he turns to "God even our Father" — One who loves us, has chosen us, called us, and given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace.

There may be many sorrows to meet on the road, but there is "everlasting consolation" at the end of the journey. We may have to pass through difficult times, but we are passing on to the fulfilment of the "good hope." False teachers may seek to distress and distract the saints, but the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and God our Father can minister comfort. The enemy may seek to turn the saints from their service of "good works and words," but, in spite of every attack of the enemy, whether from false teachers within the Christian profession, or from persecution without, God can enable the saints to "stand firm," to "hold fast," and to continue in every good work and word.

4. The Practical Walk of the People of God.

2 Thessalonians 3:1-18. In the closing portion of the Epistle, the Apostle instructs us as to the practical walk that should mark the Christian Assembly in the presence of opposition from without (1-5), and in view of difficulties that may arise within the circle of fellowship (6-18).

Instructions as to meeting opposition from without the Christian circle (1-5).

(2 Thessalonians 3:1-2). In order that we may meet the opposition of wicked men, and resist the evil of the world we are passing through, the Apostle presents the practical Christian qualities which, if found among believers would enable them to "stand firm" in the face of opposition.

First. Paul speaks of prayer. If we are to "stand firm" in the face of opposition, and "hold fast" the instructions given by him (2:15, N.Tn.), it will only be by grace supplied from the Lord Jesus Christ

Himself, and God, even our Father. On our side, we receive this grace through prayer by which we draw near to the Throne of grace to receive grace in the time of need. In prayer we express our weakness and dependence upon God, and acknowledge our confidence in His power and grace.

Already, the Apostle has twice spoken of his prayers for these saints (1:11, 12; 2:16, 17): now he desires their prayers on his behalf. Though an Apostle, and one who received revelations, and could speak by inspiration, he felt the need of prayer, and was conscious of the value of the prayers of God's people. He thus views the people of God as a praying company to whom he can appeal. The particular request that he desires brings out another mark that should characterise the Christian company. They should be a company of believers in whom the word of the Lord is glorified. The Apostle gladly admits that the Gospel was glorified in these saints, but realising the opposition of the world, and that he, himself, was a very special object of the attacks of unreasonable and wicked men, he desires their prayers that he may be delivered from such. He personifies the gospel and views it as actively pursuing its course. Where the gospel is received, and fruits produced, and lives are changed, as in the case of the Thessalonian saints, the gospel is indeed glorified. Nevertheless a gospel thus glorified will raise the opposition of wicked men who find in these changed lives a condemnation of their own lives.

(2 Thessalonians 3:3). Further, in order that the word of the Lord may be glorified we need to be established in the truth, and Paul is confident that the Lord, in His faithfulness, will establish the saints. Wicked men may oppose, but the Lord is faithful to His own. Our safeguard against error, and every form of evil, is found in being grounded in the truth. If the Lord establishes us in the truth we shall be kept from the evil. Our care then should be to pursue the truth. "I would," says the apostle, in another passage, "have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil" (Romans 16:19).

(2 Thessalonians 3:4). Moreover, the Christian company is to be marked by obedience to the instructions of Scripture. It is true that the Lord alone can establish us in the truth and keep us from evil; nevertheless, on our side there is to be the readiness to obey; as the Apostle can say, "We have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we enjoin you." We may thank the Lord when His people do obey, but only deep confidence in the Lord will enable us to say that they "will do," and thus continue to obey. We need not only present obedience, but continuance in obedience come what may. Good for us to be found amongst those who "both do and will do."

(2 Thessalonians 3:5). Further, the Apostle says. "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God." The One through whom, at such a cost, all the love of God has been fully revealed, is the One who alone can direct our hearts into that love. In the woman by the well we see not only the way in which the Lord declares the love of God to a sinner, but, also, the tender way He takes to direct her heart into that love.

Finally, the Apostle desires that we may be led "into the patience of the Christ" (N. Tn.). Christ is waiting to receive His saints at the rapture, and to reign with His saints at His appearing. He would have our hearts marked by that same patience.

Thus the Apostle passes before us some of the marks that God would have to be found in every Christian company. They should be a praying people, in whom the word of the Lord is glorified; a

people established in the truth and separate from evil; a company obedient to the word, walking in the love of God, and patiently waiting for the coming of Christ. A company thus characterised would be able to withstand the assaults of the enemy and the temptations of the world.

Instructions as to meeting disorder within the Christian circle.

(2 Thessalonians 3:6-18). Having instructed us as to the Christian qualities that will enable believers to stand against wicked men, and the evil of a hostile world, the Apostle passes on to instruct us how to deal with disorder that may arise within the Christian circle.

(2 Thessalonians 3:6). There were, at that day, as so often since, some in the Christian company who walked in a disorderly way," and not after the instruction "received from the Apostle."

We are solemnly enjoined, in the Name of the Lord Jesus; how to act towards such. In the first Epistle he had instructed the Assembly that, if there were unruly people in their midst they were to be warned (1 Thessalonians 5:14). Here he carries his instructions a stage further. If the warning had no effect, those composing the Assembly were to "withdraw" from the disorderly brother. His disorder is to be judged by the instructions of the Apostle.

(2 Thessalonians 3:7-9). Paul reminds these saints of his own life in their midst as an example of one who walked in an orderly way. His manner of life was the practical expression of his own instructions. In order that he might be an ensample to the simplest Christian, he refused to take any temporal help from these believers. He had "the right" (N. Tn.), as a servant of the Lord, to receive temporal help (1 Corinthians 9:7-14). But for their good, he waived the right, and wrought in "toil and hardship" night and day, to meet his own needs. Thus, his life became an ensample for all, and a rebuke to those who would not work. Apparently, if the enemy could not rob these saints of the truth of the Lord's coming, he sought to beguile them into abusing the truth, by leading some of them to give up their daily work under the plea of the immediate coming of the Lord.

(2 Thessalonians 3:10-11). When present the Apostle had warned them against disorderly practice, and that if any one would not work, neither should he eat. In spite of the example of his life, and the warning of his words, there were some who declined to work and had become mere busybodies in other people's affairs. They were marked by disorderly walk, refusal to work, and unprofitable talk. From such we are to withdraw. As one has said, "Foolish talkers are maintained by the folly of hearers; and bread eaten without cost must find those ready to pay the cost." Foolish tongues would soon be quiet, if there were no foolish ears to listen.

(2 Thessalonians 3:12). Having instructed the brethren how to act towards the disorderly, the Apostle now makes a direct appeal to such, enjoining them, in the Name of the Lord Jesus, that with quietness they work and eat their own bread.

(2 Thessalonians 3:13). In the presence of disorderly persons we are to beware lest we grow impatient, or weary in well doing. There is the danger that through weariness of constant exercise we either grow indifferent to disorderly persons, or deal harshly with them.

(2 Thessalonians 3:14-15). If a disorderly person persists in disregarding the instructions of the Apostle we are to mark that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet, even so, we are warned against treating him as an enemy; he is to be admonished as a brother. We are to beware of a pharisaical spirit; even, if for a time, we can keep no company with him, we

are still to act in brotherly love.

(2 Thessalonians 3:16). The Apostle finally commits them to the Lord of peace. He can, under the guidance of the Lord, give us instructions, but only the Lord, Himself, can give the saints peace at all times, and in every way. Disorder would make for disruption and conflict in the Christian circle. The Lord of peace would bring into the Christian circle that godly peace which soon He will bring into the Kingdom; and where the peace of the Lord is, there the Lord, Himself, can be. Hence the Apostle closes with the desire that the Lord Himself may be with them all.

(2 Thessalonians 3:17). The Thessalonian assembly had, apparently, been disturbed by a letter professing to come from the Apostle. Hence, in his closing salutation, he tells them they may be assured of the authority of his letters by finding the salutation attached in his own handwriting.

(2 Thessalonians 3:18). He has desired for us peace from the Lord of peace; now he closes with the desire that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ may be with all. If the instructions of the Epistle are to be carried out, it will only be by a company maintained in the peace of the Lord, with the Lord Himself in the midst, and under the constant supply of His grace.

H. Smith. And Saviour! 'tis Thee from on high We await till the time Thou shalt come, To take those Thou hast led by Thine eye To Thyself in Thy heavenly home.

Vol 01-10 - The Secret of Peace.

The Secret of Peace.

"I laid me down and slept: for Jehovah sustained me." How emphatic and simple! Is it so with you reader? Does all trouble find your heart so resting on God as your Father, that, when it is multiplied, it leaves your spirit at rest, your sleep sweet, lying down sleeping, and rising as if all was peace around you, because you know God is and disposes of all things? Is He thus between you and your troubles and troublers? And if He is, what can reach you? The thousands of enemies make no difference if God is there. The Assyrian is gone before he can arise to trouble or execute the threats which, after all, betray his conscious fear. We are foolish as to difficulties and trials, measuring them by our strength instead of God's, Who is for us, if we are His. What matter that the cities of Canaan were walled up to heaven, if the walls fell at the blast of a ram's horn? Could Peter have walked in a smooth sea better than on a rough one? Our wisdom is to know that we can do nothing without Jesus — with Him everything that is according to His will. The secret of peace is to be occupied with Him for His own sake, and we shall find peace in Him and through Him, and be more than conquerors when trouble comes; not that we shall be insensible to trial, but find Him and His tender care with us when trouble comes. J. N. Darby.

Still the Spirit is revealing Heights of glory Thou hast given, And our eyes by faith are seeing Christ at Thy right hand in heaven; As on earth His path was trodden, Ever subject to Thy will, As the Man of all Thy counsels, Who the universe will fill.

Vol 01-10 - The Witness of the Spirit in Stephen.

The Witness of the Spirit in Stephen. In Acts 6:1-15, we are introduced to Stephen as chosen and ordained by the apostles to serve tables; but as one who was full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, he had purchased for himself a good degree and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 3:13). So that when we find him preaching the word, none were able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit with which he spoke. Coming out in the Spirit of His Master, Stephen is seen "full of grace and power," working wonders and great signs among the people. With such a ministry, it is no wonder that he becomes the object of the enemy's assault, and that like his Master, evil men are suborned to bring false accusations against him, saying that he had spoken blasphemous words against Moses and against God. When he is brought before the council to answer to the false charges, we read, "And all who sat in the council, looking fixedly on him, saw his face as the face of an angel." No doubt the rays of the heavenly glory of Christ were shining upon Stephen, and ministering grace to his heart, to sustain him in his faithful and devoted witness to Him, in the face of all that religious evil and bitter enmity and hatred against Him whom he served. But to the onlookers, his face appeared as the face of an angel. This was God's testimony against those who accused His servant of speaking against Moses and against Him. Had not the law of Moses been given by a dispensation of angels? And where now is the angelic witness? Is it with the false witnesses; with the council; or in Stephen? This should surely have come home with conviction to the leaders of the people; but no, they have the veil over their hearts.

Answering for himself, Stephen begins with the wonderful moment, when God, the God of glory appeared to Abraham, calling him from the land of idols into the land of His purpose, where he was to walk as a stranger. Isaac and Jacob are mentioned, then the twelve patriarchs, who, envying Joseph, sold him into Egypt. But God was with Joseph, and delivered him from his afflictions, giving him favour and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh; and exalting him into the place, where, in the ways of God, he typified Jesus as the Son of Man over all the world. The rejected one is known as the Saviour of the world, and his brethren and all the men of the world, must bow before him: beautiful type indeed, of Jesus. Moses, too who was "exceedingly lovely," and "mighty in his words and deeds," is rejected by his brethren; and spite of their rejection of him, God sends him to be a ruler and deliverer; the great leader of His earthly people. And it was Moses who had foretold of the coming of Jesus, the coming of a Prophet raised up of God, like himself.

Having brought home to them their rejection of Joseph and Moses, Stephen recalls the unfaithfulness of the people, but the faithfulness of God. But their continued history is one of rebellion and persecution of the servants of God culminating in their slaying of the Just One, of whom the prophets had spoken. They had been highly privileged in receiving the law by a ministry of angels, but how great their guilt: they had not kept it. Had not Stephen just charged them with resisting the Holy Spirit? Now they deliberately refuse the Spirit's testimony in Stephen. Hearing his witness against them, they do not repent, but being cut to the heart they gnash their teeth against him. The spirit manifested against the Son of God is manifested against His servant who witnesses to Him by the Spirit. But man's hatred turns Stephen to heaven, and being full of the

Holy Spirit, he sees there the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. What a contemplation for him! what glory, what joy fills his heart, as his eye rests complacently, and with the deepest delight, on that blessed One. Lost in the wonderment of it, he gives his closing testimony, the Spirit's testimony, to that rebellious nation, saying, "I beheld the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." He tells them of Him who will bring in universal blessing for men, and cause all that hath breath to praise the Lord.

See how Israel treats the testimony of the Spirit to a glorified Christ. Crying with a loud voice, they stopped their ears, and rushed upon him with one accord; and having cast him out of the city, they stoned him. Their thoughts towards the glorified Christ were just the same as when He was among them in lowliness and meekness. They have no desire to hear of Christ's glory: they stop their ears; and loud in their protests against the witness of His glory, they are thoroughly united in their wicked desire to be rid of him. How clearly had they made their mind known, "We will not have this man to reign over us."

Stephen, in the Spirit of Christ, prays for his enemies and murderers, saying "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." His heart is filled with love, deep compassion for Israel, so that like the Son of God on the cross, he intercedes. For himself, Stephen's request is "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." What a marvellous triumph of grace over all the power of religious hate and wickedness: what a joy for the Lord Jesus to receive the spirit of His faithful and devoted servant. May the contemplation of Stephen speak to our hearts and consciences, so that in this evil day we may seek to be marked by the same spirit; and be lost in adoration and worship in His presence of whom the hymn writer speaks:

'Tis Jesus fills that holy place
Where glory dwells, and Thy deep love
In its own fulness (known
through grace) Rests where He lives, in heaven above.

R. Duncanson.

Vol 01-10 - They that Feared the Lord.

They that Feared the Lord.

Ephesians 4:1-7; 2 Timothy 2:19-22; Revelation 3:7-14.

(Notes of an address by J. A. Trench, Edinburgh. 1891.)

It is of deep importance for our souls that we should be in the intelligence of what God is doing. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him. That surely involves the intelligence of His mind. Twice, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, the Apostle is arrested to betake himself to prayer: first, for intelligence to show us the path, and secondly for power to take the path; and this preparatory to the exhortations of the three last chapters. Do we know, indeed, that our path is set in the light of the glory of God. Our failing walk does not alter it. We find two things that are traceable all through God's Word, His unchangeable principles, and His grace that always keeps a feeble remnant true to Himself to the end of a dispensation.

First, as to His principles; in Ephesians 4:1-7, we find the path set before us; lowliness and meekness are to characterise it. Was there ever a day that such a spirit was more called for? If at the beginning, when all was at its brightest, there was the greatest need for this, how much more now. "Endeavouring" (verse 3) has not the sense here that it has acquired; it does not convey the thought of the possibility of failure, but is more "using diligence" — throwing all our energies into seeking to realise that wonderful unity formed with all the that are Christ's. Are we really walking in the sense of being united by the Holy Ghost to a risen Man in glory, even our risen Saviour? Are we living in the fresh sense of this, so as to have the consciousness of the relationship through Christ with all those belonging to Him? It is one thing to assent to the truth, and another thing to realise it in our own souls.

But, it may be said, it is difficult to act upon the truth; things are changed since this Epistle was written. Yes, but the principles of God do not change; we are not left to modify Scripture to suit the changed state of things. All the elements of failure were already at work in the Apostle's times. They have received a terrible development since, but we have the Word of God still to guide.

Blessed be God, no ruin has touched His principles. Look at the verses in the Second chapter of the Second Epistle to Timothy. There we read, "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are His. And, let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity." Blessed word, He knoweth them that are His. You and I may not be able to pick them out — this is His responsibility, I say it reverently; but then comes our responsibility in the verses that follow. These verses apply to the state of a ruined church. First a man is to purge himself from vessels to dishonour; a very full word in the original, implying separating himself. The second step in the path is, "Flee also youthful lusts." Watch your own heart lest the enemy get in and mock the so-called path of separation. Then, thirdly, we are to seek out those that are similarly separated. Here, again, we are met by another of God's unchanging principles. From Matthew 11:1-30; Matthew 12:1-50; Matthew 13:1-58; Matthew

14:1-36; Matthew 15:1-39; Matthew 16:1-28; Matthew 17:1-27; Matthew 18:1-35; Matthew 19:1-30, the Lord was educating and training His disciples for the path in which He was about to leave them. He says, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20). There the church was to be found, and it abides in a day of ruin, although not in view of it. It was the richest resource of God from the beginning, and it remains to the end.

I want now to look at another thing — the ways of God in His grace in keeping a few cleaving to His Name in the end of the dispensation. Look at Ezra 3:1-13. A day of ruin, but a day of God's grace that opens the way for those who had been in captivity to return to Jerusalem. A very broken company, indeed, but they were there in faith, and set up the altar of the God of Israel, with the most scrupulous adherence to the Word of God, no innovations, no altering to suit altered circumstances. Then, in Nehemiah, when the people wept, they were told, "The joy of the LORD is your strength" (Nehemiah 8:9-10). What a moment for that principle to be first enunciated in Scripture! The LORD comes in to encourage faith, though sad days were before that remnant during the lapse of centuries.

We have nothing to look forward to but the Lord. We must remember, in referring to these types, that we have nothing to reconstruct, the Holy Ghost having formed the unity of the body of Christ at Pentecost, maintains it in that unity ever since, even if there was but one on earth walking according to it.

Now I refer to the Book of Malachi when there existed a deplorable state of things, for while the Lord can say to Israel, "I have loved you," they reply, "Wherein hast Thou loved us?" and everything that the Lord says is met in the same way, with scoffing. Yet we find a remnant in the midst of this appalling state of things. There were those who, in the face of everything, "feared the Lord" and "spake often one to another" (Malachi 3:16). The fear of the Lord became a bond to those that loved Him in the midst of the darkest conceivable state of things. It was so sweet to the Lord that He kept a book of remembrance, even when they did not say anything, but only "thought upon His name." The Lord says, they shall be my peculiar treasure.

Again, in Luke 2:1-52, after the lapse of centuries we still find the remnant. Look at Anna, in verses 36 to 38, what cleaving to the Lord was there, even in her great age! Her heart was in the centre of God's interests on earth and so we find the grace of the Lord still preserving a remnant, for bad as was the state of things in Malachi it was worse here. Pass on to Luke 21:1-38, and in verses 1 to 5, we see a beloved woman, in all her desolation, adhering to the centre of God's interests on earth, even at the last moments of the dispensation, for in the next verse we find that the days were coming when not one stone would be left upon another. Here was faith, lovely faith, adhering to God's, unchangeable principles to the end.

Now comes the earnest question for us. Is there anything to answer to this in Christendom? This is where the Address to Philadelphia, in Revelation 3:1-22, comes in prophetically. As we come near to the close we find the Lord indicating what suits Him in the last state of things on earth. He presents Himself, not now in His official glory, but in His own essential nature, "The holy" and "The true." There are two words used for "true;" it is not here, he that speaks the truth, but He that is true, genuine. Holiness must be the first thing, and then genuineness, reality, unfeigned reality. He uses His power to open the door, and we have the assurance that this open door will continue to

the end. Then we have the character of those who are to occupy the open door, "Thou . . . hast kept My word, and hast not denied My Name." They are not characterised by strength, but by keeping His word. Oh, for obedience that having got a word from the Lord acts upon it. Those that do so will find an open door before them. In the presence of the ruin of these last days, nothing but uncompromising obedience will do. Adhering to the unchanged principles of His word to the end, holding fast the precious revelation of Christ in a day when the enemy with all his power will seek to get it from us. He gives us His attitude, and His path, and He looks for the reflection of that attitude. He says "I come quickly." It is not "Behold" here. He is only addressing Himself to those who are awake. He adds, "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."

Then the Lord addresses the overcomer — the one true and faithful to this position upon whom He puts His seal, as with the remnant in Malachi 3:1-18. We cannot fail to observe in this verse (12) the constant repetition of the little word "My," the sweet association with Him. There can be no addition to that "Hold that fast," and there will be the richest reward in the glory. I feel that the question is unsolved as to who the persons are. Once in the path does not ensure our being there always, even as the remnant lapse back. It does not need centuries for us to do so. What need of girding up of the loins. Out of the brightest state for Christ we may fail, but He will raise up others to the end. He will find what answers to Him until He comes. May we not be satisfied with anything short of this.

Vol 01-10 - This Same Jesus.

This Same Jesus. In the Acts of the Apostles various glories of the Person of Jesus are brought before us. In chapter 1 we see Him companying with His own for forty days, speaking to them of those things pertaining to the kingdom. Then the moment of His departure comes, when He goes back to the Father, and He gives them His final instructions (Acts 1:7-8). It must have been a wonderful moment for those faithful few, as they beheld, with fixed gaze, Jesus ascending into heaven. He had been their Comforter, and had richly unfolded to them the love and affection of the Father's heart, with the grace that was to sustain them during His absence. What a lesson is here for each one of us, to test our hearts before Him. Are our eyes fixed steadfastly on Him in that place into which He has gone? If they are, we shall be changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. This is the Christian's true attitude, and should be ours day by day, and moment by moment. How much we should be saved from if Christ was thus continually before us; and we would be able to say in the words of the Psalmist "Thou art at my right hand, I shall not be moved."

Heavenly messengers are sent to tell His disciples where Jesus had gone, and note what they say, "Ye men of Galilee" They do not say Ye men of Jerusalem: they are addressed as the poor of the flock, the few in whom the Lord had found His joy and pleasure and belonging to the place where He loved to walk in the manifestation of the Father's grace (John 7:1). This surely touches our hearts, recalling the poverty of His own circumstances, who had nowhere to lay His head, and who, when all went to their own homes, went to the mount of Olives. Although He was heir of all things, He entered into the depths of poverty to reach us and bring us in spirit to that place where He now is. The Lord forbid that we should seek or aspire to anything in man's world, but rather should we walk as belonging to the Father's world, even as we some-times sing:

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

There is another precious thought; "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." What a prospect! He is coming again, to take His loved ones home, and to shine forth in His glory. The same Jesus, Who was here manifesting all those moral excellencies and heavenly perfections for the glory of God — the same Jesus, lowly, meek, gentle, and long-suffering, shall set up His kingdom, and the meek shall inherit the earth; and all those lovely features shall shine out in the same moral excellency and perfection. Till then, it is our privilege, to manifest in some feeble way, for the delight of the Father's heart, those same features, so that He might be glorified in us.

R. Duncanson.

Vol 11-20 - "God . . . a Very Present Help."

"God . . . a Very Present Help."

Psalms 46:1-11.

Two truths of great practical importance, for believers of every dispensation, are brought before us in this beautiful Psalm. In the presence of the upheavals and conflicts of a godless world, we are reminded, first, that God is "a very present help in trouble." Secondly, in order to realise, and obtain, the present help of God, our part is to "be still" and know that God is God (Verses 1 and 10). Only faith can enter into these truths. Flesh can lean upon an arm of flesh; but flesh can neither trust in God, nor "be still" and wait for God to act.

Verse 1 presents the great theme of the Psalm — God, our refuge, strength, and present help in trouble.

Verses 2 and 3 the trouble and confusion of the world through which we are passing.

Verses 4 to 11, the means whereby God sustains the faith of His people so that they are enabled to "be still" and prove God to be "a very present help." The Present Help.

(Psalms 46:1). We do well to notice the little word "our" in the opening verse. It is true that God is a refuge; but believers can say, "God is our refuge." The world has those to whom it looks for protection, and guidance, in the time of trouble. Believers have in God their refuge from the storms and distresses of life. Moreover, God is our "strength" in weakness, and "a very present help in trouble." The better and more exact translation is, "a help in distresses very readily found." To realise, however, that God is "a very present help," calls for the exercise of faith, for His present help is not always immediately apparent. Sometimes we have to wait for the manifestation of His present help. Our natural tendency is to endeavour to extricate ourselves from trouble by our own efforts, and God may, for our blessing, keep us waiting until we have learnt that we are utterly without strength to meet the trial, and there is nothing left for us but to "be still" and learn that God is God. Was it not thus, in the gospel day, that the Lord dealt with Martha and Mary when faced with the sickness of their brother? They were in sore trouble, and in their distress the Lord was their refuge. They rightly turned to Him and spread out their trouble before Him. They said, "He whom Thou lovest is sick." The Lord was indeed "a present help," though His help was not immediately forthcoming. Having received the urgent appeal of the sisters, we read that "He abode two days still in the same place where He was." Apparently He was doing nothing. He waited until death closed all hope in human efforts, and there was nothing left for the two sisters but to "be still" and learn that God is God. This was indeed a trial of faith. Martha's faith was not equal to sitting "still," for we read that "Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him;" but Mary "sat still in the house."

Then we see how graciously the Lord revealed Himself to Martha as "a very present help in trouble." Martha said, "I know that he shall rise again . . . at the last day." The Lord replied, "I am

the resurrection." Then Martha's thoughts travel back to what had been counseled in times past as to the Lord, for she said. "Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world." Her faith believed the great things the Lord will do in a day to come, and she believed in the Lord as connected with all the counsels of God in times past, but her faith was not strong enough to "be still" and believe in the Lord as the great "I am" — the present help in trouble. Have we not to confess that, too often, this is our difficulty. We can believe in the power of God put forth in times past and that His power will be manifest in days to come, but we are slow to believe that God is so truly "a very present help" that, when there is no duty to be fulfilled, we can "be still" and wait for His help to be made manifest. The Trouble.

(Psalms 46:2-3). The second and third verses describe the trouble that necessitates a "refuge," requires strength, and calls for "present help." The world, in which the godly man finds himself, is in turmoil and upheaval. The waters roar, and the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Often in Scripture the sea, in its restlessness, is used as a symbol of the nations in a state of turmoil (Isaiah 5:30). Today, can we not hear the roar of the waves as, in every part of the world we see the nations in a state of upheaval, revolution, and conflict? As a result, ancient constitutions that have existed for centuries, and established forms of government that seemed as stable as the mountains are being overthrown by the rising violence, and increasing corruption of men. Little wonder that men's hearts are "failing them for fear and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth" (Luke 21:26). But, says the Psalmist, "Therefore will not we fear," for "God is our refuge, and strength, a very present help in trouble " The way in which the faith of God's people is sustained in trouble.

What then is the secret that strengthens the people of God to pass through the terrifying conditions of the world without "fear"; that, in the presence of change and upheaval, enables them to "be still," and realise that God is "a very present help in trouble"?

(Psalms 46:4-6). First, God sustains the faith of His people by unfolding to them the secret of His purpose. In this passage the purpose of God is brought before us in the river and the city of God: "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God."

Through all time, with its changes, upheavals, and conflicts, there flows the river of God's pleasure. No power of the enemy, no violence and corruption of men, no failure of the saints, can thwart God in carrying out His deep eternal counsels. Dispensations come and go: empires rise and fall; every testimony that God commits to the responsibility of men breaks down in their hands. But, over all, and through all, God is carrying out His purpose for the glory of Christ and the blessing of His people, earthly and heavenly.

Secondly, all the blessing that God has purposed for Christ and His people centres in the city of God. The Psalmist looks beyond the desolations of the actual Jerusalem of his day, and, looking by faith into the future, He sees the city according to the counsels of God. There rises before his vision a city of gladness, a "holy place," a city that "shall not be moved," with God dwelling "in the midst of her." So, too, in the presence of all the turmoil and confusion in the world by which we are surrounded, and the corruptions of Christendom, the believer walks in the light of the heavenly city. We see "the New Jerusalem" — a city of gladness where all tears will be wiped away, where there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain. We see, too, that it is a holy city into which nothing that defiles will ever enter; we see that it will not be

moved, for it is a city that hath foundations. Above all, we see that "God is in the midst of her," for we read "the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it." Thus our faith is sustained by the river of God's pleasure, and "the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10).

Thirdly, the Psalmist sees that though the nations may rage against God's city, yet "God shall help her, and that right early." There is a better, and more beautiful, translation that reads, "God shall help her at the dawn of the morning" (N. Tn.). So, again, our privilege is to "look beyond the long dark night and hail the coming day." On every hand we see the nations raging, the kingdoms of the earth being overthrown — the waters roar and are troubled, and the mountains shake; but, even as the Psalmist could say, "He uttered His voice, the earth melted," so we wait to hear the voice of the Lord when He shall say, "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away." Then indeed "the dawn of the morning" will come, the day will break, "and the shadows flee away."

(Psalms 46:7). Fourthly, amidst the deepening shadows of the night, until the dawn of the morning, we can say with the Psalmist, "The LORD of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our refuge." The LORD with all power at His disposal, and the God of grace that can take up and bless a poor failing man like Jacob, is with us, and our refuge. When the day dawns we shall be with Christ in the glory of that day; in the meantime He is with us as we pass through the sorrows of the night. He "died for us that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him." Seeing "He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee, . . . we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me" (Hebrews 13:5-6).

(Psalms 46:8-9). Fifthly, the Psalmist sees that in due time God, Himself, will deal in judgment with all the evils of the world; and after the "desolations" of judgment, He will bring in the blessings of the reign of Christ, when wars will cease unto the end of the earth. Men, by their own efforts and wisdom, through leagues, and pacts, and conferences, are seeking to bring about universal peace and introduce a millennium of prosperity without God and without Christ. The Christian who sees that his blessing is bound up with the city of God, and who knows that God will deal with the evil of this world, refuses to be linked up with man's futile efforts to end the world's unrest.

Thus, that we may be delivered from all fear, in the presence of so much that would make the natural heart tremble, we are instructed in the secret purpose of God that cannot fail. We see by faith the city of God shining before us in all its glory and beauty; we wait for the dawn of the day; and, in the meantime, we have the Lord with us to deliver us from every fear, a refuge from every storm. Furthermore, we know that in due time God will judge the wickedness of men and bring in universal peace.

(Psalms 46:10-11). Only as these great truths are held in living faith in our souls shall we be able to "be still" in the presence of the world's unrest, even as the Lord, Himself, could sleep in the storm. Our danger is that, in the presence of the increasing evils of the world, we may get over-occupied with events and lose sight of the city of God, and thus be tempted to join with men in their efforts to combat the evil. To act thus is to leave God out and seek to meet the evil by human wisdom and human power. If such efforts had any measure of success it would only lead to the exaltation of men. Our part is to "be still," and wait for God to act for His own glory, for God has said, "I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth."

Only as we are "still," shall we be kept in the blessed realisation that the Lord is "with us," "our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."

H. Smith.

Vol 11-20 - "Godliness."

"Godliness."

"His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness" 2 Peter 1:3. In the Second Epistle of Peter the Spirit of God addresses believers, who, with the apostle, are marked by "like precious faith." The apostle warns us against "false teachers" that will be found in the Christian circle — as he says "among you:" and he foretells the corruption that will mark Christendom "in the last days" (2 Peter 2:1 : 2 Peter 3:3).

Let us remember that the apostle is not describing heathenism, but the condition of Christendom, in which our lot is cast, and as it exists in our times, for who can doubt that we live in the "last days." the awful condition of which is so vividly portrayed. The terrible character of this corruption is brought home to us by the illustrations and figures used to set it forth. We are carried far back to "the angels that sinned" to find a parallel to the rebellion against God of Christendom. "The world of the ungodly," before the flood, is used to illustrate the violence and corruption in Christendom. The wicked lives and "filthy conversation" of the men of Sodom and Gomorrha, are used to set forth the moral degradation that exists in Christendom. The history of Balaam is referred to as setting forth the covetous practices that prevail in these last days. To find figures that adequately set forth the return of Christendom to the conditions of heathenism, the apostle uses the figure of a dog returning to its vomit, and the washed sow to her wallowing in the mire. But there is another side to this solemn picture. The apostle not only warns us of the evil. but, for the comfort and encouragement of the believer, he shows that in the darkest moments of the last days it is still possible for the individual believer to escape the corruptions around and live a life of godliness. Moreover, he encourages us to live this life by setting before us the promises of coming glory to which the path of godliness will lead. So that we may say, the two great truths of this second epistle are, first, to set before us the life of godliness by which the believer passes on to glory; secondly, to warn us against the awful corruptions of Christendom which are leading on to judgment. A brief consideration of the way these truths are presented in the Epistle will make this clear. In chapter 1, the apostle sets before us the life of godliness (2 Peter 1:1-9), and the glory of the Kingdom to which it leads (2 Peter 1:11-21). In 2 Peter 2:1-22; 2 Peter 3:1-10, he brings before us the different forms of corruption and the judgment to which they lead. He speaks of those in the Christian profession who bring in "destructive heresies;" who deny the Lord; who pursue "pernicious (or 'dissolute') ways:" who abandon themselves to covetousness and the lust of uncleanness: who act in bold self-will and defiance of authority: whose eyes and hearts are given over to sin; who speak great swelling words of vanity, and are the servants of corruption (verses 1, 2, 3, 10, 14, 18, 19). He further shows that all these corruptions lead to overwhelming judgment. In chapter 3, the apostle warns believers not to be carried away by scoffers, who, taking advantage by the long-suffering grace of God, pursue their lusts and deny that any judgment is coming (2 Peter 3:1-10). Having been warned of the corruption and the certainty of coming judgment we are again exhorted to live the life of godliness (2 Peter 3:11-18). By opening and closing his epistle with exhortations to godliness he emphasises its deep importance. In the same strain the apostle

Paul warns us that in "the last days" Christendom would have the form of godliness but without the power. If he presses upon us the path of separation, he also warns us, that having taken that path, to "Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, love, peace" (2 Timothy 2:19-22; 2 Timothy 3:1-5).

Protestantism judges the gross evils of Romanism and boasts of its separation from Rome. Again, Nonconformity may deplore the evils of Protestant nationalism, and separate from it: the Brethren, so-called may rightly condemn the evils of Rome, Protestantism and Nonconformity, and take the separate path; but let us remember that neither Protestants, Nonconformists, nor Brethren will escape the governmental judgment of God simply because they have separated from known evil, and that which is contrary to the truth. Unless the inner life of godliness, consistent with the outward path of separation is maintained, all outward position, however correct, will be of no avail.

If then we desire to escape the corruptions of Christendom, and live the life of godliness, we shall do well to consider the rich provision that God has made to enable the individual believer to live this life in the midst of the appalling evils of the last days.

Firstly, let us note, that the solid basis for the life of godliness has been laid in the cross of Christ. To this reference is made when the apostle speaks of "the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (1:1). At the cross the rights of God were maintained by our Saviour giving Himself a propitiation for "the whole world" (1 John 2:2). God is so satisfied, and glorified, by the Person and work of the Lord Jesus when He "offered Himself without spot to God," that now in perfect righteousness He can proclaim forgiveness of sins "through this Man" to the whole world, and pronounce the one that believes justified from all things (Hebrews 9:14 : Acts 13:38-39). At the cross the righteousness of God is satisfied; the love of God is gratified; God, Himself, is glorified; and "through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ," the believer is justified.

Secondly, we learn that not only is the believer saved and forgiven, but, being saved, God, by His divine power, hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3). We have to face the power of the flesh within, the power of the world around, and the power of the devil against us; but "divine power," which is far above every adverse power, is for us, and in this power it is possible to live the life of godliness.

Thirdly, to encourage us to live the life of godliness, we are told that connected with it are "exceeding great and precious promises." In the course of the epistle we learn that these promises connect us with the "everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," and the "new heavens and a new earth" (2 Peter 1:4).

Fourthly, there are unrolled before us the beautiful moral qualities that mark the life of godliness (2 Peter 1:5-7). The apostle speaks of "faith," "virtue," "knowledge," "temperance," "endurance," "godliness," "brotherly love," and love." We are exhorted to have these qualities together, each one affecting the other so that in result there may be an even, balanced, life of godliness.

1) Faith naturally comes first, for it is by "the door of faith" we enter into blessing (Acts 14:27): and, in our practical lives as believers, without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6).

2) In our faith we are exhorted to have virtue. Virtue sets forth moral excellence. In the first epistle we read that believers have been chosen to "set forth the excellencies of Him" who has called us

(1 Peter 2:9 N. Tn.). This is the same word in the original language that is here translated "virtue." The reality of the faith is proved by a change of life that exhibits some of the moral excellencies seen in perfection in Christ.

3) To set forth these moral excellencies we shall require "knowledge." Therefore in virtue we are exhorted to have knowledge. However true and sincere the heart may be, if there be ignorance as to the commands of the Lord there will be failure in obedience. As one has said, "A true heart is of vital importance; but an instructed mind as to what the will of God is, is needed to regulate and guide the warmest heart." May we not say that Martha's service for the Lord exhibited many excellent qualities, but it was not tempered by the knowledge of the mind of the Lord — the knowledge that Mary obtained by sitting at the feet of Jesus and hearing His word (Luke 10:38-42). We may well pray with the apostle Paul to "be filled with the knowledge of His will" (Colossians 1:9); and, again, that "our love may abound yet more and more in knowledge," in order that we may "approve things that are excellent" (Php 1:9-10).

4) In our knowledge we need temperance. In Galatians 5:23, this word is translated in the New Translation, "Self-control." The possession of knowledge, apart from self-control, may lead, as with the Corinthian saints, to our being puffed up with a sense of self-importance. We are warned that if a man seeks to use knowledge to exalt himself, that man "knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know" (1 Corinthians 8:2). How important then to judge ourselves so that with our knowledge there may be temperate thoughts of self — not thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought to think: but to think soberly (Romans 12:3).

5) With sober thoughts of self we shall need patience or endurance (N.Tn.) with others. If by grace we have a sober estimate of ourselves we may be in danger of being impatient with a self-assertive person who possibly thinks himself to be something when he is nothing (Galatians 6:2-3). All such pretensions we have to bear with patience, considering ourselves lest we be tempted.

6) Furthermore in endurance with one another we are to have godliness, or the fear of God. Otherwise there is the danger of making endurance with the weaknesses and failures of one another an excuse for passing over actual evil in ourselves or others.

7) While ever seeking to give God His place we are not to forget what is due to our brother. With godliness we are to remember to show brotherly love.

8) Lastly we are to beware lest the love to a brother may degenerate into mere partiality, or natural friendship. It is to be love after the divine pattern. With brotherly love (philadelphia), we are to have divine love (agapee).

Commencing with faith we come at last to divine love, and thus partake of the "divine nature" of which the apostle speaks in verse 4. These, then, are the beautiful qualities that make up the life of godliness.

Fifthly, having brought before us the life of godliness, the apostle, in the verses that follow, encourages us to live the life by setting before us its blessedness and warning us of its neglect. We are told that if "these things" be in us and abound, our lives will not be unfruitful. Where these beautiful Christlike qualities are found there will be fruit for God — the Father will be glorified, and

we shall be manifested as the disciples of Christ (John 15:8). Then we are warned that the lack of these things will result in spiritual blindness that cannot look afar off to the glory to which godliness leads, nor look back to the cross where all ungodliness was dealt with.

Sixthly, we are encouraged to "do these things" and thus be preserved in the present from falls, and, in the future have an abundant entrance "into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Every believer will be in the Kingdom, but only those who live the life of godliness will have an abundant enhance. Let us remember that "these things" of which the apostle speaks in verses, 8, 9, 10, 12 and 15, are the beautiful qualities that form the life of godliness. The apostle is not speaking of preaching or teaching or the exercise of gifts, which are not given to all, and which may give prominence among the saints or before the world. He is speaking of the secret life of godliness which is open to all. We all have to beware lest we form a false estimate of ourselves through any little service. Those specially who are gifted, and much before the public eye, have to beware lest amidst the excitement of constant engagements, constant preaching, and public work before men, they neglect the secret life of godliness before God. Does not Scripture warn us that it is possible to preach with all the eloquence of men and angels, and yet be nothing? That which bears fruit for God, and will have its bright reward in the day to come, is the life of godliness from which all true service must flow, and without which no amount of religious activity will carry any blessing for the soul, even if, in the over-ruling ways of God it may be used for the blessing of others (Php 1:15-18).

Seventhly, to encourage us to live the life of godliness the apostle sets before us the glory of the Kingdom to which it leads. He, and two other disciples, had been eye-witnesses of this glory on "the holy Mount." There they saw the "power and coming of our Lord Jesus, which will introduce the Kingdom. There, too, they saw the "Majesty" of Christ that will be displayed in the Kingdom. There they saw that the One Who had received dishonour and shame at the hands of men, "received from God the Father, honour and glory." Further they realised that believers will be "with Him" in the day of His glory. In the closing chapter, the apostle, still having in view the manner of persons we ought to be, marked by "holy conversation and godliness" (3:11), carries us in spirit beyond the Kingdom, where righteousness reigns, into the "new heavens and a new earth where righteousness dwells." To sum up the truth as to godliness, so blessedly brought before us in this portion of the Word of God, we learn: The basis of the life of godliness in the cross (2 Peter 1:1): The divine power that enables us to live this life (2 Peter 1:3): The precious promises attached to the life (2 Peter 1:4): The moral qualities that form the life (2 Peter 1:5-7): The present fruit for God that flows from this life (2 Peter 1:8): The abundant entrance into the Kingdom that the life secures; and The glory of the Kingdom and the eternal state to which it leads (2 Peter 1:11-21; 2 Peter 3:11-14). As these things pass before our souls we are made to realise the truth of the words of the apostle Paul: — "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Timothy 4:8).

H. Smith.

Vol 11-20 - "His Name shall be Called Wonderful."

"His Name shall be Called Wonderful." At a Conference of Christian men, where the various aspects of the truths relating to the Person of the Christ were under consideration, at the close of the last meeting, a venerable elderly brother arose, and holding up before the assembled company a lovely rose, slowly proceeded to pull off its expanded petals, describing their structure in minute and skillful detail. This he did with each part of the rose, accurately explaining the constituent parts of each structure that together composed the rose. Having laid each part separately on a table, and having paused for a few significant moments, he said, "Now, brethren, where is the rose?" So with the Person of the Christ when we seek to analyse and dissect His holy Person, we have no Christ left — only parts of His Divine Person.

Vol 11-20 - "In the Midst of the Assembly will I Sing Praise unto Thee."

"In the Midst of the Assembly will I Sing Praise unto Thee."

(Psalms 22:22; Hebrews 2:12.) This He rejoiced to do at the beginning when the first love of the church gave the place in the midst that He loved and chose. Then He could, unhindered, lead the praise as He only knew how to do, in His own knowledge of His death and resurrection and the acceptableness of that great work of redemption to His God and Father. He alone knows the love of His Father and can rejoice and praise in the blessed light of it. He loves the church too, having given Himself for it, and He nourishes and cherishes it in the presence of the Father. And He did so in the midst, as long as the first love of the church gave Him His chosen place as Head and Centre. But soon, when first love and communion on her part began to grow faint and cool, and she began to share her love with the world which, though it crucified Him, began again to creep in unnoticed among the redeemed; what wonder that He should be jealous and cause her to feel it in some way (Revelation 2:4). What wonder that, though His love must remain to His own the same yesterday, today, and forever, the manifestations of it should not be so clear or so frequent!

If sheep herd with swine, they have to be separated, and often need some washing before they are in a fit condition (Psalms 23:1-6), to lie down in green pastures and be led beside still waters. They have His word for this separating away from unclean vessels (2 Timothy 2:21; 2 Corinthians 6:17) and in what company they are to call upon Him. Sheep whose hearts are awake to the Shepherd's loved voice, hearken to it, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from among the dead, and Christ shall shine upon thee" (Ephesians 5:14). "Lo I stand at the door and knock, if any one hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him and sup with him and he with Me" (Revelation 3:20). What wonder He should be jealous that HIS place should be given to another! But others whom He gave, perhaps to feed the sheep, have been put in the midst, or at the head instead of the Great Shepherd. Many gifts have been given to feed, nourish, tend, and build up; and many to gather in the sheep, each in his place with his own work allotted to him, but the Head Shepherd never resigned His own peculiar and singular place in the midst as sole Head of His body. How could He! How could there be a body without a Head! How could there be an assembly according to God, and according to the Spirit, and according to the Head, without Him in His own proper place in the midst? Such a thing could not possibly be. There may be assemblies according to man; (their multitude and variety proves this) but their responsibilities will be found to be according to God, when He enters into judgment with them (1 Peter 4:7; 1 Peter 4:17). Yet He knows all His own sheep and will gather them all out when He comes, for He comes quickly (Revelation 22:12). He gathered righteous Lot out of Sodom, taking Him by the hand when he lingered: and turned his wife into a pillar of salt when she looked back — dreadful monument! Yes, He gave also pastors and teachers, but never one as head and centre. He always meant to keep the whole control to Himself, and the leadership of praise in the midst of the assembly. All would then be dependent on Himself, and He could then do it as He pleased, and through whom He

pleased as in 1 Corinthians 14:1-40; Acts 13:15, etc. Let us take note of 1 Corinthians 14:30-40 as the Lord's express commands. and if any plead for decency and order, learn what the Lord pronounces to be such. Elders also He recognised and caused by the apostles to be placed over the Gentile assemblies, to whom ministry in the Word was useful if such possessed it, but not essential; and deacons to serve tables, but never a man or men to appoint these, for the apostles of His own appointment did it under His direction.

He may raise up suitable men for His service now, with no formal appointment save that of the call of love, but never a man that could take the place or be looked at as the head and centre to which to gather: how could there be — a substitute for Himself? It could but hinder those who are His members, being wholly dependent on Himself, their faith in Himself alone, occupied alone with Him, and at liberty to exhort and edify one another, as He has enjoined (Ephesians 4:1-32; Ephesians 5:19, etc.), or to praise under His own personal leading. Where is the heart that values His leading of the praise in the midst, and refuses to hand over to man what belongs to the Head alone? Is the Son, a man, set over all things to the assembly which is His body? Where are the two or three ("two or three" is the witness number) that can meet to His Name alone, as quite sufficient for them — but more, to obtain His promised and assured presence in their midst — that prefer Him to any man, or all together? Nor will He disappoint them even of ministry also. But is He not better than everything else? Yea, far better for those who love Him! "Love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave" (Proverbs 6:34; Song of Solomon 8:6; Revelation 3:6). In John 20:1-31 He, through Mary declares His Father's name to His brethren. Then on the first of the week, the disciples gathered to His name. Unto His name supposes Him not there. But when gathered, He says, "I am" there (Matthew 18:20) in the midst to open, as it were, His parliament, and gives it its character in His absence till He returns to fulfil John 14:1-4. Note, how Himself takes the whole administration into His hands, and what the Spirit relates about the assembly's joy. Note too, their account of that assembling to His name to the disciple not with them when Jesus came. The unbeliever says it is sight and sense he must have to credit His word. But he lost his opportunity never repeated, and heard some-thing else. May we profit by it. Shall we doubt John 16:7-33? Believer, there is nothing like Christ crucified as foundation, and Himself now in glory. You have much to grieve you, but this cheers you. He had nothing here but His Father and God, and a cross from men. What He had remains for you: and He promises Himself in the midst where two or three value His name and His authority and attraction to gather them. He says those who love other relations more than Him are not worthy of Him. If He makes heaven what it is, why not His presence be sought here — first alone and then in the midst of His own? If not enjoyed the first way, it will not be valued in the second. But study John 9:35-38.

G. W.

Vol 11-20 - 1Pe_1:1-25.

1 Peter 1:1-25.

Notes on a Bible Reading at Guildford.

Like the epistle to the Hebrews, this epistle was written to believers among God's earthly people, but to those dispersed among the nations, strangers and sojourners, as we also are, in this world. The epistle to the Hebrews was evidently written in view of the impending destruction of Jerusalem with all its material religious attractions. Believers were to have their minds on the things of heaven, on Christ Himself in Whom there was the substance of all that was found in the shadow of Judaism. In this epistle, the Apostle Peter points out that the Lord Jesus had died to deliver His own from the vain conversation, the empty manner of life, that was theirs in a corrupt, traditional religion, where men's thoughts had set aside the commandments of God. The precious blood of Christ had redeemed them from their former manner of life, and now they were to live for God in the life of Jesus, a life of obedience to God's will. Though scattered in heathen lands they were God's chosen people, and not now for blessing on earth but for heavenly blessing. They had known the privilege of being the elect of Jehovah, and also what it was to be disowned as "Not my people;" now they were the elect of God the Father as foreknown of Him, and thus blessed in relation to God's counsels. Set apart in time by the Spirit of God Who indwelt them, they were brought under the efficacy of the blood of Jesus, and left in the world to be for God's pleasure as living in the life of obedience set forth in Jesus. The children of Israel were acquainted with blood sprinkling, "Moses . . . sprinkled both the book, and all the people . . . moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry" (Hebrews 9:19; Hebrews 9:21). The leper, at his cleansing was sprinkled, and the blood applied to his ear, thumb and great toe; then the oil was put on top of the blood. At his consecration the priest had the blood of the offering applied, then the blood and the oil mingled and sprinkled upon him. Here in verse 2 we have the oil and the blood together, for the believers addressed were not only cleansed lepers, but consecrated priests.

God has nothing less for us down here than walking in the steps of His own dear Son. The obedience of Jesus Christ is not a single act, but a life of constant obedience. He was obedient even unto death, and that the death of the cross. Israel failed grievously as regards the obedience of the law, and God is not seeking from us any legal obedience: but having given us His Spirit He desires us to walk in the power of the Spirit in the steps of Jesus. It is in obedience to God's will that we enter into His mind, and by obedience that we manifest our faith in Him. The truth is only really held in the measure of our obedience to the will of God. The Apostle breaks forth in praise: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ:" just as Paul does in 2 Corinthians 1:1-24 and Ephesians 1:1-23. Here the praise is because of God's great mercy. Peter rejoices to see everything secured on the other side of death, all that we have is connected with the risen Christ, and death cannot touch it. Israel's inheritance was on this side of death: they corrupted and defiled it and in consequence lost it; God has given us a heavenly inheritance that cannot be

corrupted or defiled. In Ephesians we go up and look down upon the inheritance, upon all that we shall share with Christ in the glory of the coming day; here as pilgrims and strangers we look up to all that is ours in heaven. While we wait for the inheritance, we are kept by the power of God. But faith lays hold of this divine power, the only thing that can preserve us from all the evil of the world through which we pass. Soon we shall be delivered entirely from the present scene, from all the evil of the world, from all the breakdown, failure and ruin of the church: and this through the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. The Lord Himself will come to deliver us, to bring us into the heavenly inheritance: but faith looks up to Christ in the presence of God, and as engaged with Him lays hold of the power that keeps us in the midst of all the evil and ruin.

Well do we exult in the contemplation of the salvation for which we wait; but during the waiting period there is the trial of faith. God finds delight in the faith of those who please Him, for "Without faith it is impossible to please Him." The reality of faith is proved in testing, and God delights to see our confidence in Him; this is the reason He puts us through the various trials. Very soon it will be the inheritance with all its blessedness, but while we wait for it, there is the work of purification: that which separates in us the flesh from the work of God. But this work has the coming day in view, "That the proving of your faith . . . be found to praise and glory and honour in the revelation of Jesus Christ." We should realise that there is a day coming when all that God is working out now in His saints will be manifested. When Scripture speaks of Christ's coming, it is more grace that is in view, when it is His appearing it is more connected with our responsible course. (The word "appearing" in verse 7 is another Greek word, better translated "revelation" and compares the Lord's coming out publicly with His being hidden in heaven at the present time). In the path of trial and sorrow the fruits of righteousness are being borne, and the day of their display will surely come (Php 1:11; Hebrews 12:11 : James 3:18). God's glory and praise are secured through the present trials, but those who thus bring glory to God will have praise and glory and honour in that day.

Everything for us now is in faith; we have not seen Christ, yet we love Him; we do not look upon Him with the natural eye, yet we believe in Him, and faith brings to us joy unspeakable and fills our souls with the coming glory. Even now by faith we have the salvation of the soul, a salvation connected with the sufferings and glory of Christ, and spoken of by the prophets of old. These we have clearly set forth by Isaiah, who passes quickly from the one subject to the other at times. See Isaiah 52:1-15 for example: "Behold my servant . . . shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. As many were astonished at thee: his visage was so marred more than any man. . . . So shall he astonish many nations: kings shall shut their mouths at him." See also Isaiah 53:1-12. The prophets, desiring to know of these things searched their own writings to find them out, only to be told they were for a coming generation, not for themselves. Angels desire to look into these things so great and wonderful are they, but it was not for the prophets nor for the angels, but for us these things were written. How great is our privilege! Is it not touching to think that God desires us to know His mind about the sufferings and glories of Christ? It is the same in Colossians where He desires us to know His thoughts about the mystery, "To whom God would make known. . . ." A great deal is spoken of the sufferings of Christ in this epistle (see 1 Peter 1:11; 1 Peter 2:21-24; 1 Peter 3:18; 1 Peter 4:1; 1 Peter 4:13; 1 Peter 5:1), sufferings for righteousness sake, and sufferings on the cross for our sins. These are brought before us to encourage us in the path of suffering to which we are called. We never could enter into Christ's sufferings for sins,

nevertheless these are brought before us that we might see how far Christ went in sufferings for God's will and our blessing. The contemplation of this will surely encourage us to endure whatever suffering God has marked out for us in His wisdom and love. The things written before have been declared to us by those who have brought the Gospel to us in the power of the Holy Spirit, sent down, from heaven. We have received a ministry from the ascended Christ in the power of the Spirit. In no other way could we have entered into the truth of what has been recorded in the writings of the Old Testament. What has been declared by the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven is something far greater than anything manifested in the old creation. Angels rejoiced in what was connected with the creation of old; what the Holy Spirit brings to us now they desire to look into, for they know the surpassing greatness of these heavenly things. With the knowledge of such wonderful things as have been brought to us by the Spirit, we are to gird up the loins of our minds and be sober. We should not allow the mind to wander, nor should it be the master, but the servant. Our minds are to be directed into proper channels of thought, to the things revealed by the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven; to the things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. We are to "be sober" for the time is short. We have seen that faith is tried in view of the day of revelation of Jesus Christ, (verse 7) now we learn of the grace that is to be brought to us in that day. Once we were "children of disobedience," now as "children of obedience" we are to be like our Father, holy as He is holy. The walk is of paramount importance; God our Father is concerned with our walk and work down here; He is no respecter of persons.

Those to whom the Apostle wrote had been redeemed from a religious life of human traditions. Hebrews was written to deliver the believers from a system of ordinances and shadows, to bring them to Christ, outside the camp of Judaism. Peter tells them that what they had been connected with was an empty manner of life, the product of their fathers' traditions. Nor had they been redeemed by the half shekel of silver, demanded of old, or of anything greater in value in the eyes of men; but with what was of infinite value in the sight of God — the precious blood of Christ. He was the true Pascal Lamb. Israel's lamb was taken on the tenth day and kept till the fourteenth day: God's lamb was "foreknown before the foundation of the world."

Vol 11-20 - A Few Thoughts on Joh_14:1-31.

A Few Thoughts on John 14:1-31. In this chapter the Lord is inside with His own intimating to them His departure to be with the Father. Laying aside His garments He takes the attitude of a servant in washing the disciples' feet, teaching them that moral suitability must be theirs if they are to have part with Him in the place into which He was about to enter. Then in chapter 14 He opens out to them the Father's House, the place from whence He came, and where He has ever the joy and delight of the Father's affections. All that the Father is is treasured in the affections of the Son, and all that the Son is is enshrined in the Father's heart. As Man, the Son is about to enter that scene of holy delight and joy, and He tells His own that His great joy will be to have them with Him there.

He opens out to them in John 14:6 what He is, showing that if we approach the Father it must be through the Son. Paul speaking also of this says, "Through Him we both (Jew and Gentile) have access by one Spirit to the Father (Ephesians 2:18). He is also the Truth, the divine revelation of all that the Father is in grace. In Him alone shines out all the holy love and affections of the Father, creating in our hearts a response to all that He is, thus securing worshippers for Himself. The Father is also revealed in the words of the Son which bring out the details of those blessed communications made known to His own; His works giving the outward expression of the revelation in power. How our souls adore as we contemplate the patient way in which our God has been pleased to make Himself known.

John 14:12 is the continuation of that revelation in His own because He has gone to the Father; while John 14:15 shows that we are to be marked by love and obedience during His absence. The life that was manifested in the Son, and that in keeping His Father's commandments, is to be manifested in us, through keeping His commandments. His Name was ever available before the Father for that rich supply of grace through which the Father is glorified in the Son; in the manifestation of the features of Christ in His own. At the request of the Son, in sending the Comforter, the Father makes full provision for maintaining all the interests of Christ. But the Comforter is also the Spirit of Truth, and brings out the moral characteristics seen down here in the Son. Dwelling in us the Spirit maintains in us the power of what is divine; and as being with us He carries out everything for God in separation from all that is of the world. He would not leave His own orphans in the world, and in resurrection He sees them again, taking His place in their midst, bringing joy and gladness to their hearts. It is as beyond death that we live with Him, in a life that death cannot touch, in a life that gives pleasure to the eye and heart of the Father. The present knowledge of the Son dwelling in the affections of the Father, and our dwelling in His, opens out to us that circle of divine affections which we shall for ever enjoy. The Son is also in us to bring out in manifestation His own moral features. From John 14:21 we have what is individual, "He that hath my commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves Me." The keeping of His commandments is the proof of our love to Him. All that was so blessedly manifested in Him is to come out in His own; the life that was in Him, the grace that so richly cared for them, and the love with which He deeply loved them. As these things are kept by us we are blessedly compensated in being loved by the Father, and being loved by the Son. What a precious portion for us! Then again the obedient one

has the secret spiritual manifestation which sustains Him in power that will carry him triumphantly through all here until the end. John, in the Isle of Patmos, would enjoy all the blessedness of this manifestation, giving him a rich taste of all that was divine. In John 14:23 we come to the keeping of His word, that testimony so blessedly set forth in John 8:1-59 by the Sent One of the Father, a testimony that presented to man the wealth of the Father's grace, but which he refused and set at naught in his hatred to God. God was not speaking from the mount that might be touched, but in grace that man might be brought near to Him. This is the word that the overcomer keeps, which when cherished in the heart enriches the spirit, and causes responsive affection to the Father and the Son. The Spirit has also been given that all the precious ministry of Jesus might be retained and recorded, so that those who would be brought in through the word of the disciples might through it enter into and enjoy all the varied glories, beauties, and moral excellencies of the blessed Person who gave continual delight and joy to God the Father. The closing verses of this wonderful chapter show us the Prince of this world finding no response when he comes to the Son. What a great moral triumph over the originator of all evil in this world. The Son's love to the Father is manifested in His going to the cross, in accepting every-thing from the Father's hand, and in bowing in lowly submission to His will, so that all the counsels of divine love should be brought to light for the joy and pleasure of the Father.

R. Duncanson.

Vol 11-20 - A Few Thoughts on Joh_16:1-33.

A Few Thoughts on John 16:1-33. In this chapter we have further divine communications from the Son in relation to the path of the disciples through this world. Like the man who confessed Jesus in chapter 9 they would be put out of the synagogues; and in their blind, religious zeal, and hatred of the Name of Jesus, the Jews would even put them to death. This was fulfilled in the martyrdom of Stephen and James the brother of John; and also in the activities of Saul of Tarsus, who breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord until, in mercy, the Lord intervened to secure him as a vessel to bring the light of the knowledge of God to the Gentiles. It was ignorance of the Father and the Son that caused the Jews so to act, even as Paul confessed, "I did it ignorantly, in unbelief" (1 Timothy 1:13).

Thus forewarned, the disciples would remember when the time came, that the Lord knew all about what they were passing through. He had not told them these things when first they came to Him, but on account of His impending departure it was necessary to tell them what lay ahead. From the beginning He had sheltered them from the hatred of the world: every assault being against His own Person. As the Master of every situation He met and overthrew every form of opposition; the open attacks with the wiles and seductions of the enemy. The path marked out in love for His own was the path that He Himself had trodden; and now He tells them, when sorrow was filling their hearts, that it was expedient for Him to go away in order to send them the Comforter, whose gracious support they would have during His absence. As regards the world, the Spirit would bring demonstration to it of sin, righteousness and judgment. The refusal of the Son of God in unbelief marks the world in which the Son of God was, and in which the Spirit now dwells in believers. Righteousness is connected with the Son in the presence of the Father: righteousness fully demonstrated, yea accomplished in His work on the cross, and vindicated in His entering the presence of His Father, where, alone, and hidden from every eye (saving as seen by faith) His Father finds the deepest satisfaction in Him and in all that He has wrought for His glory and pleasure. If the prince of this world is judged, the world of which he is prince is judged with him. How can the world escape the divine judgment when it has followed Satan to cast out the Son of God? The Lord had many things to communicate to His loved ones, but they were as yet unable to bear them: the Spirit however would guide them into all the truth as being fully conversant with all the mind of God. He would not speak as the source of His communications, but as telling out what He heard, thus witnessing to all connected with the Son in the Father's presence, and showing the wide range of the glories that shall shine out in undimmed lustre in Him Who is Head over all things, the glorified Son of Man. How the Spirit delights to present the glory of Jesus, to receive of His and show it unto us. In that day He will not be seen as the lowly Nazarene, but having all authority and power He shall command the homage of every creature in the wide universe. Exulting in these wonderful communications of the Spirit of God, the disciples would gladly suffer the persecution foretold by the Lord, counting it all joy, and conscious too that it worked for them in surpassing measure an eternal weight of glory. But there is also the present glory of the Son as centre of all the Father's counsels, His headship of the body; His headship too of every principality

and authority. Then there are the things of the Father, which are brought out for us in John's epistle; and brought out that we might be in communion with the Father and the Son, enjoying the eternal life that is ours in the Son, and knowing the blessedness of being children of God. In a little while they would not behold Him, for He was to enter into death; but it would only be for a little while, for in resurrection He would be with them again. While explaining this to them the Lord evidently dwells on what was immediately before the disciples; but it may be that the words used by the disciples, and recorded by the Spirit carry the thought somewhat further. Might there not be included the time of His session at the right hand of God? During this little while of His absence from us He is with the Father, but soon. He will come again to take us to be for ever with Him, and then we shall see Him as He is.

Having come out of death the Lord gives to His own a joy that the world cannot take from them (see John 15:11); and in the day of their joy, though He was absent from them, they would receive from the Father whatever they asked in the Name of the Son. This divine certainty of receiving what they asked would give them fulness of joy. While with them He had spoken to them in proverbs, but in resurrection He would declare unto them the Father's Name, bringing them into relationship and intimacy with the Father; meanwhile assuring them of the Father's love for them, because they loved Him, the Son, and because they believed that He came forth from God. The word for love here is stronger than the usual word: it is used in John 5:20, and in John 20:2. It gave the Father joy and delight that the disciples were attached to Jesus and had faith in His Son, having received His testimony, while the world refused the fact that He came from God. At the close of the chapter the Lord indicates that in the moment of His final rejection His own would be severely tested and they would be scattered, each to his own. Left alone, so far as the disciples were concerned, He would not be alone, because He would still have the companionship of the Father. Nothing could interrupt the communion that ever existed between the Son and the Father whom He came to reveal, whose grace he had made known in its wondrous depths, and whose counsels He had richly brought to light. In the final word the Lord exhorts His own, for the moment of His absence from them, to be of good cheer. Tribulation would be theirs from the world: in Him, Who overcame the world, they would have peace. What a triumph for our hearts to contemplate. He knows no defeat; He has vanquished every foe, and has entered victoriously into the Father's House.

R. Duncanson. The Lord is Himself gone before He has marked out the path that we tread:

It's as sure as the love we adore, We have nothing to fear nor to dread.

Vol 11-20 - A Meditation on Joh_15:1-27.

A Meditation on John 15:1-27. In this chapter the Lord Jesus speaks of Himself as the true vine, the source of all vitality and spiritual power to the branches. The eleven disciples, to whom He spoke, were the branches, for it was while He was on earth that the blessed Lord was the true vine. They were connected with Him that they might bring forth the fruit that would give joy and delight to the Father's heart. This could only be through their abiding in Jesus, through dependence and communion with Him. Nothing from the natural heart could bring pleasure to God, only that which is derived from His own dear Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

John 15:6 shows that there is responsibility, for of Judas and such it is written, "Unless any one abide in me he is cast out as the branch, and is dried up; and they gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." Judas had been long in the company of the Lord, but he abode not in Him; to the very end he was unmoved by the grace and love so richly bestowed, and came to a dreadful end. As abiding in Him, and His words abiding in us (John 15:7), whatsoever we should ask would be granted. His words give the direction in which we could be here for the Father's will and pleasure; and these controlling all our thoughts and affections, would lead us to ask what would produce what would glorify the Father. Hence we read, "In this is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit, and ye shall become disciples of mine." How great is the privilege of the believer of being in this world to bring glory to the Father, and to be a true disciple of the Lord Jesus; following in the steps of Him Who constantly brought glory to the Father's name.

During the absence of the Lord Jesus, we are to continue in His love, a love whose character and measure are seen in the love of the Father to the Son in Manhood. Only as abiding in such love can we respond to the Father as He desires. But we are to keep the commandments of the Lord; commandments of which He Himself was the expression in His life on earth. It is not like the demand to keep the ten commandments, which held out life to those who kept them; but having communicated His own life to us, He has given us also the power to manifest in love towards one another, the same love that He expressed towards us. We have also His joy, that by which He carried out all for the Father's pleasure; and having this our joy will indeed be full. To bring His own into closest intimacy with Him, He was laying down His life for them; and to them as His friends He would communicate all the things that He had heard from the Father. How He delights in the company of His own, and desires the real confidence of our hearts, so that we may be truly here as those in whom His own blessed features can be manifested. We are His by sovereign choice: we did not choose Him; He chose us that we should bear fruit, and that that fruit should remain. This fruit is surely the divine product of His love in us, that which is ever pleasurable to the Father.

All these communications have been given in relation to the place of testimony. In this path He marks out the sufferings through which His own will pass during His absence. The world would pour upon the disciples of Jesus the same hatred that was shown to their Master, and mete out to them the same persecution; and all because they hated the Son and the Father. The presence of the Son fully exposed the true character of the world. The light in which the Father was seen in the

Person of the Son also exposed the utter wickedness of the world, leaving the leaders of the world with no cloak for their sin; their true moral condition completely revealed.

He now speaks to His own of the Spirit Who would come and bring witness of His present place with the Father, presenting Him to them as a glorified Man at God's right hand, above all principalities and powers, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. We see this manifested to Stephen, who saw Jesus in the centre of the glory of God; and we have the results of that moment of witness in Saul of Tarsus, who was taken up by God to bring out the Gospel of the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. The disciples, who had companied with Him here, were to be witnesses of His humiliation, death and resurrection; and this is recorded for us in the Acts. Their witness was carried out in power and through suffering, but they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus. We have also their witness brought out in the 1st Epistle of John, left on record for His own, who should remain until His coming, that they might walk in the light and enjoyment of that which abides.

R. Duncanson.

Vol 11-20 - A Song and a Prayer.

A Song and a Prayer.

Blessed Redeemer! sent from above, Matchless Thy beauty, wondrous Thy love, Tender Thy mercies, faithful Thy word, Gladly I own Thee Saviour and Lord.

Precious the moments when I retrace Thy path so lowly, Thy ways of grace, Hearts that were broken, eyes that were blind, In Thy blest presence healing did find.

Tempted of Satan, yet did'st Thou go Forward in triumph o'er every foe, Till in the darkness of Calv'ry's tree, Thou did'st atone for sinners like me.

Past all Thy sorrow, now on the Throne, Thou without ceasing lovest Thine own, Constant and watchful, Thy shepherd care, Till they together Thy glory share.

Come! precious Saviour into my heart, Bid ev'ry rival thence to depart, Be Thou my pilot safe to the shore, With Thee to enter joys evermore.

Keep me, Lord Jesus, to Thee so near, Let Thy blest presence banish all fear, Soon from the glory Thou wilt descend, Soon shall I see Thee, Saviour and Friend.

R. B. Wilson.

Vol 11-20 - A Three-Fold Cord.

A Three-Fold Cord.

1st Strand: — "That the world may know . . . that Thou hast loved them as Thou has loved Me."

2nd Strand: — "As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you."

3rd Strand: — "A new commandment I give unto you, . . . as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." In the 1st century the heathen frequently remarked: See how these Christians love one another." In these closing days the 3rd Strand is most often lamentably strained.

G. F. Barlee.

Vol 11-20 - Abba, Father.

Abba, Father.

"And He said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto Thee; take away this cup from Me: nevertheless, not what I will, but what Thou wilt," Mark 14:36. In the different accounts of our blessed Lord's prayer and anguish in the garden, Mark alone uses the words Abba, Father. Abba is a Syriac word signifying Father, but in a way of peculiar affection and confidence. In that wonderful prayer of John 17:1-26, the Lord uses the word Father six times, two of which have the additional adjectives of Holy, and Righteous. But the word Abba is not found there. In John 11:1-57; John 12:1-50 we again find our Lord addressing His Father, and there again He uses the simple word Father. Thus, only once is it recorded that the Lord Jesus adds this word Abba to the well-loved name of Father. On searching through the New Testament, we find that only twice more is the word Abba used, and on each occasion with the wonderfully expressive term Father following it. These are found in Romans 8:1-39 and Galatians 4:1-31; but, wonderful thought, it is no more our blessed Lord Jesus Who uses this term of intimacy, but those who have been redeemed by His precious blood. It is those who have received the adoption of sons. "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Galatians 4:6.); "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Romans 8:14-15). How marvellous is the grace of God! In the first chapter of John's Gospel we read, "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power (or right), to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." Again, in 1 John 3:1, the Apostle writes: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God: . . . beloved, now are we the sons of God." Thus we see poor sin-stained sinners, dead in trespasses and sins, washed in the precious blood of Christ, quickened together with Him, made the sons of God by adoption, and brought into the innermost circle of His love, and free to use the self-same title of intimate affection employed by His own beloved Son when in this world. "How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them!" (Psalms 139:17). Well may our adoring hearts repeat, again and again, these blessed words: "GOD IS LOVE."

G. F. Barlee.

Vol 11-20 - Abiding in Christ.

Abiding in Christ.

John 15:1-8. In the Fourteenth Chapter of the Gospel of John the disciples of Christ are viewed in connection with the sovereign grace of God that opens to us the Father's house, makes known to us the Father's heart, presents Christ as the One Who is coming to receive us into that home of bliss, and tells us of the coming of the Holy Spirit to lead our hearts into our heavenly privileges. That chapter ends with the significant words, "Arise, let us go hence." Christ and His disciples pass from the privacy of the Upper Room into the outer world. At once the truth presented is in character with this change of scene. For, the disciples are now viewed as in this world in their responsibility to bear fruit for God, and to witness before men in a world from which Christ is absent. We cannot have privileges without responsibilities. If it is our privilege to have part with Christ in heaven: it is our responsibility to live for Christ on earth. To set forth this responsibility the Lord uses the figure of the vine and its branches. In a vine the fruit is not found in the root and stock, but in the branches; but the vine is the source of the life that enables the branches to bear fruit. The Lord can say of Himself, "I am the true vine" and of His disciples, "Ye are the branches." It is only as we abide in Him that we shall be able to carry out our responsibility to bear fruit for the Father and witness for Christ.

Different meanings may attach to the word fruit in different Scriptures. In this passage fruit is not, surely, preaching, or any form of service, nor the converts that may result from ministry, but rather the moral excellencies of Christ reproduced in the believer. This fruit, viewed in connection with the Spirit, and in contrast to the works of the flesh, is spoken of in Galatians 5:1-26, as "Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, goodness. Fidelity, meekness, self-control." These moral excellencies were exhibited in perfection in the life of Christ on earth. If in our inner lives we express some of the moral excellencies of Christ under the Father's eye, we shall surely exhibit something of Christ before men, and in this measure answer to our responsibility to bear fruit before the Father and to be a witness before men (verses 8 and 27).

Again, let us remember, that it is what we are, not simply what we say, that is the witness before men. The apostle could say, "For me to live is Christ." It is the life that is the true and most impressive witness to Christ. At the birth of Christ the religious leaders in Jerusalem had a very correct knowledge of Scripture, and could direct the wise men from the East to Christ, but they had no heart for Christ, and never took the way themselves. Their words witnessed to Christ but not their lives. Alas! it is possible to become a mere finger post that for ever points the way but never takes the path.

What then is the secret of living in any little measure the life of Christ? Is it not summed up in the Lord's own words, repeated four times in this passage, "Abide in Me"? This being so, we may ask, What is implied in these words? Do they not suggest a life lived in attachment of heart to Christ; in dependence upon Christ, and in communion with Christ? Is not the first thought implied in the Lord's words of verse four, "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"? Obviously there can be no fruit in a branch unless it remains attached to the vine. In like manner, unless the believer individually retains attachment of heart to Christ he will not exhibit the excellencies of Christ before God. "We love Him, because He first loved us:" how good then to seek to realise and enjoy His love that our hearts may cling to Him in love, for the Lord's words imply that it is only in the measure in which we abide in Him that He will be seen in us. The second truth connected with abiding in Christ is set forth in the Lord's words, "He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing." If then we can do nothing without Christ, we are entirely dependent upon Christ. To abide in Christ, then, implies a life of constant dependence upon Christ, that confides in Him, as unable to do anything without Him. Forgetting the Lord's words we, in our self-confidence, may often attempt to meet the little difficulties of life without reference to Him, only to find that they become occasions for some exhibition of the flesh rather than calling forth the excellencies of Christ. The Lord's words imply that left to ourselves, the smallest difficulties, and the greatest trials, are alike too much for us to meet in our own strength. How good, then, to cultivate a life of continual dependence upon Christ, and thus, "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 2:1). So living we should realise the truth of the Lord's words to the apostle Paul, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9). This would lead us in our little measure to enjoy the experience of the apostle, when he said, "I have strength for all things in Him that gives me power (Php 4:13 N. Tn.).

Thirdly, have we not the thought of communion with Christ implied by the Lord's words, when He says, "If ye abide in Me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (Verse 7)? If our thoughts are formed by His word, we shall surely think with Him according to His revealed mind. Does this not imply communion with Him which Mary enjoyed when we read of her that she "sat at Jesus' feet, and heard His word"? To abide in Him, then, supposes not only the practical surrender of our wills, and distrust of ourselves, but clinging to Him in love, depending upon Him in our weakness, and communion with Him in His thoughts as made known in His word.

Moreover, the very word "abiding" supposes continuance. Alas! too often we are content with an occasional taste of His love; with turning to Him in some great emergency; and with knowing a great deal more of Martha's activity, even in His service, than of Mary's communion at His feet.

Further, let us remember that to abide in Him is not a matter of attainment only possible for an aged and mature saint, nor is it something that is limited to gifted servants. It is the privilege of the youngest believer, for the outstanding exhortation given by a servant of the Lord to some young converts was that "with purpose of heart they would cleave to the Lord" (Acts 11:23). To "cleave to the Lord" is surely to abide in Christ.

Furthermore, let us remember that to abide in Christ is wholly individual, and a privilege that remains in a day of ruin. The apostle John having reminded us that we are living in the "last hour," when there are many anti-christs, instructs us how to escape those who would lead us astray by exhorting us to "abide in Him" (1 John 2:18; 1 John 2:26; 1 John 2:28). The distinctive name of Anti-christ is "the lawless one" (2 Thessalonians 2:8 N.Tn.). The outstanding mark of the present age is lawlessness. One has truly described lawlessness as: "a want of respect for everything that

is above self. A determination to have one's own way. . . . It is what will characterise the whole of Christendom. Now it works in individuals, and it works largely in whole companies, but it will become the reigning spirit." The only safeguard against the intrusion of lawlessness into our individual lives, or into the companies of God's people, will be found in each one abiding in Christ. We might think that our safety lies in continuing in a particular company. There are, indeed, privileges to be enjoyed by two or three who meet together in the Name of the Lord, and we are exhorted not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together. But no individual, in any company of saints, however scripturally gathered, will be safe unless abiding in Christ.

Further, let us remember, that to abide in Christ speaks of the inner life lived before God. The effect of the life will, indeed, be manifest before men as proving we are disciples of Christ: but attachment of heart to Christ, dependence upon Christ, and communion with Christ, all speak of the secret experiences of the soul. This is of the deepest importance for all the ruin of the church in responsibility, and the corruption of Christendom, can be traced back to departure from Christ in heart. The Lord's words to the church in Ephesus are, "Thou hast left thy first love." If we fail to abide in Christ, and thus cease to live the inner life before God, it will not be long before we cease to be a witness before men. The Lord has to say to the church that left first love to Himself, "I will come unto thee, and will remove thy candlestick out of His place." As the love grows less before Christ, the light grows dim before men.

Let us remember that this loss of heart attachment to Christ commenced among true Christians of whom the Lord has much to commend as far as the outward life was concerned. We are thus warned that it is possible to be active in christian works and yet lack the true secret motive for all service — love to Christ, or abiding in Christ. This outward life of service, without the inner life that clings in heart to Christ, leads at last to the self-complacency of Laodicea combined with indifference to Christ, and the greater the zealousness of the outward works without the inner life the greater will be the self-satisfaction. If the beginning of the church's fall is found in that saints did not continue to give Christ the first place in their hearts, the end will be a vast christian profession that will be spued out of Christ's mouth.

Christendom is only repeating the history of Judaism. When the Lord Jesus was here, the Jews were boasting in the law at the very time they were rejecting Christ, their promised Messiah. Today the civilised world boasts in Christianity while utterly indifferent to Christ. It sees the marvellous effects that have been produced in the world by the profession of Christianity, the mitigating of human misery, and the check that it is to the grosser evils of heathendom; and for the purposes of civilisation, and in the effort to make a better and brighter world it is prepared to make a profession of Christianity, to observe Christian ordinances and go through religious ceremonies, but it is indifferent to the Person and work of Christ. Even as Judaism ended in an outward religious profession while rejecting the Messiah, so Christendom ends in a profession of Christianity without Christ. To use the figure of the vine, the great mass make a profession of being branches but they are dead branches with no vital link with Christ the true vine. Such will be cast forth" as branches and come under judgment. In these last solemn moments of the church's history on earth, when the signs of the approaching apostacy of Christendom are clearly manifest, and lawlessness increases on every hand, is not the Lord recalling believers to Himself? His last words to the churches are addressed to the individual as He says. "Behold, I stand at the door and am knocking: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to Him, and will sup with

him, and he with Me. Will not one that responds to the Lord's word, and opens the door of his heart to Him, get back to first love, and enjoy communion with Christ, and thus answer to His words, Abide in Me, and I in you?

Such will not get back to any great public testimony that marked the Church in Pentecostal times, but he will get back to first love that marked the Church in the past; he will be lifted above the lawlessness that marks Christendom in the present; and he will look for the coming of Christ in the immediate future. In response to the Lord's words. "Surely I come quickly," he will reply, "Amen, even so come Lord Jesus." May it then be our earnest desire to cleave with purpose of heart to the Lord: to walk in dependence upon Him, and in communion with Him, and thus answer to His own words, "abide in Me, and I in you."

H. Smith.

'Tis only in Thee hiding We feel ourselves secure:

Only in Thee abiding, The conflict can endure Thine arm the victory gaineth O'er every hateful foe:

Thy love our hearts sustaineth In all their cares and woe.

Vol 11-20 - Adoption According to God's Counsels.

Adoption According to God's Counsels.

Romans 8:1-39.

Adoption in its fullest sense we await (verse 29), and that will involve the redemption of the body. Then we shall be like the Son of God, and with Him in the place that belongs to sons — the Father's house. Divine love will never rest until it brings us there. But now we have the Spirit of adoption, which enables us to take our place as sons in the presence of God, and to feel at home there, knowing that the Father loves to have us there; that it is a greater joy to His heart to see us take up our place before His face than it is to ours to take the place, however great our joy may be. We must keep in mind that the place of sons was not given to us in answer to any desire in our hearts but it was His own eternal thought to have us as sons before His face. Even when we became exercised about our sins, and the judgment to which we were exposed on account of them, it did not occur to us that more than forgiveness would be extended to us, nor did we desire more. The position of a hired servant, a "lone place within His door" was the height of our expectation. It was not love to God that attracted us to Him. Had we not heard of His grace, we had never come; but we came because it would have been death to us to have remained away. But He first loved us. How hard it is for us to believe this. But the witness of it is the death of His Son. Though we may be long in learning it, we were in His thoughts before the world was, and that we should be sons with His Son was what he had in view for us. It was all to satisfy His own heart, for, as I have said, we had no wish for such a place, even when we turned to Him through the preaching of the Gospel. And even now that He has made known His mind toward us, we are very slow to enter into possession of this great privilege. Yet it is true that He thought of us individually before the earth's foundation — thought of you, my reader, if you have believed on His beloved Son, and in His counsels you had your place given to you along with that Son in heavenly glory. You may think yourself very unworthy, but you had better not think of yourself at all; think only of Him and of His unspeakable love.

J. Boyd.

Vol 11-20 - Alone.

Alone.

"It is not good that the man should be alone" Genesis 2:18.

"If he came in alone, he shall go out alone" Exodus 21:3 N.Tr.

"Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone" John 12:24. In bringing Adam into such a wonderful garden of delights, and into such an exalted place as head of the lower creation, God did not intend that he should be alone. His purpose was that man should have a companion, one suitable to be united to him, who could enter into all his thoughts and feelings, share with him his glory in the garden, and be the object of his heart's affections. From the New Testament we learn that in Adam and Eve, God had Christ and the church in view (Ephesians 5:32). According to God's eternal counsels, Christ became Man, to be the centre and Head of a vast universe filled with glory and blessing; and in those counsels God gave Christ a companion, one in whom He could find His joy and pleasure, and who would share in the display of His glory. This favoured companion of the Christ of God has been derived from Him, and is therefore suitable for union with Him. Such is the church: composed of those who once were sinners far from God, but who have been cleansed from all their sins, quickened out of death, and formed in new creation power in Christ. God thus produces the fair companion of His Christ, upon whom He can lavish His affections, and with whom He can share all His thoughts, feelings, and glory. The Hebrew servant who came in alone beautifully typifies the Lord Jesus Christ coming into the world, and entering into the place of a bondman, even as we read in Php 2:6-8 "Who being in the form of God . . . took upon him the form of a servant . . . and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Like the Hebrew servant the Lord Jesus loved His Master (John 14:31), His wife (Ephesians 5:25), and His children (Hebrews 2:13); and therefore went to the cross, the place of piercing, to possess for ever the loved ones He had secured by becoming a bondman. But to have His loved ones for ever the Lord must remain in the place of subjection for ever, and this we find Him doing in 1 Corinthians 15:27-28. So that He might not be alone, the Son as Man will remain for eternity in the subject place, with His Master, His wife and His children; while still having the part, ever His with the Father and the Holy Spirit, where God is all in all. No intelligent Christian can fail to see that the Corn of Wheat is figurative of the Lord Jesus Christ. In Him was life, but ere life could be communicated to His own, the Son of God must die; and except He die, he must for ever remain alone in His own precious, holy, heavenly life. How the necessity for Christ's death is brought out in each of these lovely figures! Adam must have his deep sleep to have his Eve; the Hebrew servant must be pierced to have his loved ones; the corn of wheat must die to secure the much fruit. But Christ will not be alone, He will have a great company for the joy and satisfaction of His heart, the fruit of the travail of His soul; "much fruit;" "many brethren;" "many sons." When the glad universe, redeemed from the effects of sin, looks upon Christ and the great company that shares His glory, it will see the One who came in alone, but who will nevermore be alone.

Vol 11-20 - An Old Letter on the Lord's Table.

An Old Letter on the Lord's Table.

Yesterday morning we had a sweet little word connecting in a train of thought, Luke 9:1-62; Luke 22:1-71; and 1 Corinthians 11:1-34, showing our vast superiority at the Lord's Table over theirs who were with Him in the transfiguration. What a reproach to the earth that scene was: when men upon earth saw no beauty in Him, despised and rejected Him, men in glory are there with Him, occupied about His decease to be accomplished at Jerusalem; and God's voice attests his glory as the Son: yet even the chosen three He has brought up with Him from earth are dull and insensible to it all, and asleep. What hearts are ours — asleep on the mount in presence of the excellent glory, and within hearing of the voice that in the glory spoke of His death — asleep again in Gethsemane in presence of His agony and sufferings as He takes the pathway of death to the glory, determined to associate us with Himself in it. And so He came down from the mount, back to earth with its rejection. We behold Him next with twelve men upon earth, telling out all His heart too — "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you;" thus introducing them into the passing over of their sins by God as a result of His death: seeking also a place in their hearts when He is gone. Lastly, the work accomplished, death between the sinner and his sins, and the risen Saviour gone up into the Glory — the Holy Ghost too came down to associate men upon earth with Him in that glory — the Lord from the glory sets the table in our midst while yet on earth, again seeks remembrance of us, and adds the new attending circumstances of showing forth His death till He come. No longer asleep, we are to be with Him there, in nearer association than ever; the men from the glory on the mount in full intelligence of the wondrous decease accomplished at Jerusalem, while its results are not yet known there.

I feel we want this lifting of the Table in our hearts to its own true place and height and glory; and if we were then as truly occupied with His decease as Moses and Elias, with a little bit deeper intelligence of its true character, as interpreted in the light of our church place and glory, would it not greatly simplify all questions of the becoming walk of any who are there? Is it not so easy to get into "breaking bread" because it is our custom, while our hearts are asleep to all the true intents and occupations of the Table? I feel how terribly low and earthly all my highest thoughts of such have been as yet.

Yet, midst Thine own the Spirit still Bears witness of His glory there, And from the sphere which He doth fill Brings knowledge of His fulness here.

Vol 11-20 - Can We Trust God for Emergencies in His Church?

Can We Trust God for Emergencies in His Church?

We are not wearied so readily in looking to ourselves, we break down in the case of others; and unless our souls are fortified by the word of God and prayer, we sink from the pressure of trial, into indifference: or, wearied with combating the wills of others, determine on the unrestrained exercise of our own. But God has written confusion on man's efforts. And even men of God have wandered furthest from His thoughts, when they have sought to provide for emergencies in the church before they have appeared, or to obviate their manifestation by discipline of their own. The chaos around us in the Religious World, the very vanity and vexation of all things, are God's warning to us, to "cease from man." Man would not trust God for His church, and has sought to restrain disorder by bonds of his own. How utterly has this exercise of will proved abortive, and brought in confusion which nothing can remedy, the end of which is revealed to be judgment.

Present Testimony, 1849.

Vol 11-20 - Christ in the Glory.

Christ in the Glory.

(Notes of an Address.)

"When He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, He was there alone. But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. . . . And when Peter was come down out of the ship he walked on the water, to go to Jesus" (Matthew 14:23-25; Matthew 14:29).

"He being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus" (Acts 7:55).

There is a connection between these two passages. In the fourteenth chapter of Matthew we have the first clear indication of the Lord's rejection by the Jews, and in the seventh chapter of Acts this is consummated. It is not that the Lord was not foretelling His rejection in previous chapters, but in the fourteenth chapter we have the fact that His messenger is put to death.

It is a matter of great moment to us; and yet the saints have lost the sense that the One Who has the right to this scene has been rejected. How little sense have we of the absence of Christ as we walk down here! The Corinthians had lost the sense of this; so the Apostle writes to them, "Ye have reigned as kings," and adds, "I would ye did reign." It is easy to lose this sense of our Lord being absent. This chapter shows what true hearts would do the moment His rejection is indicated. What does the Lord do? What course does He observe when rejected? There are two things brought out. First He goes into the desert (verse 13), and shows that He is unchanged toward the people who need Him. His heart is the same. He uses miraculous means for ministering to the needy upon earth. No matter what the world thinks, He must even be cut off, but it is as if He said, "I do not change in my affections to those around Me." His heart is ever the same to the poor of the flock.

Secondly, If He is unchanged to His people, He is entirely changed to things. He leaves things as He finds them; but He walks above them. He does not change winds. He did it once, but not now. People can see that all goes on in a tumult now; but He does not allay the tumult of the waves, or the fierceness of the winds. He is gone above them all. Where is He? Raised far above all principality and power. Faith learns, thus, His true place preparatory to our finding ourselves in the place of a Peter — a stone in the living building. Faith leaves everything and everyone — ship and all in it — no matter what, even if it seems protection, to join Him, and take the place of apparent helplessness; but really that of supreme power. Peter walked on the water: true he did not do it long; still he did walk as well as Christ for the time. In anticipation of His rejection, we get what characterises His walk, and the place we should take, and what is opened out to us. In Acts 1:1-26, it is said to the disciples, "Why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into

heaven." He is offered to the Jews as ready to return to the Nation. It was not merely that He had been rejected, crucified and slain, but He was offered to come back to the Jews from the glory. God's purpose in grace to Israel, was to fulfil the statement of chapter 1, but they refused. They said, "We will not have this Man to reign over us." This wonderful offer of God to Israel is deliberately refused, not by the mob, but by the Council.

What is the course that is now disclosed for the saints of God on earth? It is not a question of His coming back, for He has been palpably rejected. We are not looking for Him to come to earth, but we are looking for Him in the air. We must remember the condition of things when He comes. When it is to earth He must rule, and He cannot do so over things as they are. Scripture shows the path for the saint, and where his strength lies in the midst of this scene of trial and sorrow, in the place where our Lord is not — where He is rejected. People do not see how this affects them. It is very simple; but we often lose a truth because it is simple. You never find out what a truth is until you practise it; and when you begin to practise it you will find out how utterly powerless you are. Truth is a thing that has life in it, and power in it. People say we cannot understand it, and the reason is they do not practise it. It is a hard thing to make a child that has never walked put his feet to the ground; but when once he has done it, it is a thing you would not easily make him leave off. To keep your eye on the Lord seems a simple thing, but it is a thing that has life and power in it, and the moment you begin to practise it, you will find what a powerful thing it is. Stephen, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up to heaven; there was an end to earth and its hopes.

Look at Elijah and Elisha: when God was going to show Elisha his power over things as they are, he wants a double portion of Elijah's spirit. What are the conditions on which he gets it? "If thou see me when I am taken from thee" (2 Kings 2:10). We may be sure he was afraid to take his eye off him all the way lest he should lose the benefit. What does this indicate? That I must keep my eye in another direction. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth." This proves that He is not here. Must we not challenge our hearts? Are we seeking the things above? Where am I looking? This is very simple, a child can understand it. People may say, "I do not know what good it will do:" but it is everything to be looking to the source whence everything should come, instead of, as people are doing, looking for something to grow out of this scene. "Your life is hid with Christ in God." "Have your mind on things above." This involves the fact that we are dead; that we have lost connection and interest in everything down here — for that is the force of a person being dead. This is practical. The fourteenth chapter of John shows how the Lord makes provision for His people on earth when He is about to leave it. This chapter is often read when a person is going out of the world, because they are shut up to every-thing but Christ; but why should it not be so now when death is around us in this scene. "Ye believe in God, believe also in Me." These words show how He meets His people in His absence, and how He would have all their thoughts centred in Himself. If I believe in a person I do not see, it is faith not sight. He says, "I will come again and receive you unto Myself;" and again. "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you." This is a most blessed truth, and there is not a heart that is true to Christ who does not know it. Many look to Christ as a benefactor, but we have to get beyond that. I am united to Him: I am no longer merely a recipient. "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in Me, and I in you." This is given to meet His people during the day of His absence. It goes far beyond merely looking to Christ as a benefactor. When the heart is the least true it affects us. Things around us are not changed; trees may be as beautiful as ever, flowers as fair and lovely,

but it casts a shade upon them. It is vain to tell me your heart is true to Christ if it does not; it could not be otherwise. The One that causes the blank is the only One that repairs it. The Spirit of God is the only One which can fill up the blank of Christ's absence. The head of a family could not say to his own, "I will come to you during my absence;" but Christ can. The Holy Ghost is the only One who could fill the blank. Do you feel His absence? You cannot go on without Him. How could you get on without your life? "Skin for skin, yea all that a man hath will he give for his life." You must admit that He is your life; you are united to that blessed One. How can you get on without Him?

We read that, Stephen "being full of the Holy Ghost looked up stedfastly into heaven." We do not all have a vision; but this vision reveals the line we are upon. We are not exactly alike in apprehension, but we get here the new order that God is setting forth. He would have us occupied with Christ where Christ is. We see the consistency. God says as it were, "you have rejected my Son from the earth, and I am going to take my saints to be with Him where He is, in heaven." There must have been a revelation before man could be taken into heaven. God must be glorified before man could find a place in the glory of God. That wonderful verse in John 13:1-38, "Now is the Son of Man glorified" must be accomplished, and that is the cross. The cross has swept away all that is offensive to the eye of God, and then, as Stephen, man can look up stedfastly into heaven, and see the glory of God, and Jesus.

Moses could not bear to stand in the sight of the glory of God, nor could Habakkuk; but here was a man who could look straight up into heaven. It is the very beginning of a new order of things in which the Apostle says, "We all, with open face, beholding . . . the glory of the Lord." What is the effect? We are transformed into something of His image? No, but into the "same image." When we read such a passage and accept it as truth, we are amazed at the little perception we have of the magnificent purpose of God toward us. When the saint of God gets a sense in the soul of this place of nearness to the Lord in God's own presence, it is no longer a question of what suits me, or of what I want, or of what I like, but what God in His own thoughts desires about me. We see people experience this on their death beds. Why? Because they are getting nearer to God. We take our place of nearness to God, not according to our own desires, or wants, but according to His sense of how welcome we are to the heart of the Father.

Stephen saw Jesus, and gave his spirit to Jesus. And look at the circumstances: it was not only that Stephen had to meet death, but at the hands of the people most respected in the world — from his own nation — And for what? Was it for doing wrong? Nay, it was, "Am I become your enemy because I tell you the truth." How does he conduct himself? Are the waves rough; are the winds high? They are; but Stephen is unmoved. And they stoned Stephen "praying" (N.Tn.). He is still preaching, and no sermon could be more emphatic. What a thorough abnegation of self! What a dropping of all down here! What a reaching forward to the prize! They were battering him with stones; still he goes on praying: so calm, so safe, so satisfied. And what about the people? Unchanged as ever. Still, in feeling like his blessed Master to the last, his last thoughts are thoughts of love for them. So unmoved by the stones that he can pray for them; not one word about self; he is thoroughly at rest. One might read this, and if it were not in Scripture one would say it was all imagination. The believer must find that while he has a home in heaven, he has a race to run down here, and he must do it "Looking unto Jesus." This is a course of faith, not of sight. There are two orders of trial; one in running, and one in wandering. You may get down to Egypt, like Abram or Isaac, and pick up a thorn which will stick to you for life; but do not confound

the trials you meet with in running with those you meet with in wandering. If I am running, or racing, I must lay aside every weight, knowing I have a bright home above. If I am running with posts I must keep within and fulfil my ordinary duties which I find there. I cannot run outside. If I get outside by wandering, I must come back in shame, very likely with a thorn for which I may suffer through life. God will not remove the thorn.

Keep your eye upon Christ where Christ is, walking in the energy of the Spirit, looking up. This is the new thing of which Paul speaks when he says, "We all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, even as by the Lord the Spirit."

Vol 11-20 - Christ the Object of the Heart.

Christ the Object of the Heart.

What a vain thing it is, for any of the sons or daughters of men to speak of "My" anything, as to this world! Supposing that one could speak of everything that the world holds dear, as my riches, my influence, my power, my wisdom, my fame — what would they, what could they do for the soul, the nobler part of man? But oh! how different when Christ — the well beloved, is the object of desire — of affections! And when faith can say without the least misgiving — "Christ is mine — He is my beloved — and my beloved is mine" — mine now — mine to wash my sins away — mine to clothe me with the righteousness of God — mine to dwell in my heart by His Spirit — mine through life — mine in the swellings of Jordan — mine in heavenly glory! Yes, my soul, and more — much more! Mine to look to — mine to speak to — mine to care for me — mine to sympathize with me — mine to succour me — mine to close my pilgrim's path — wind up my long and weary journey and take me up in the skirts of His cloudy chariot to be with Himself for ever. Say, say, O my soul, is this — all this, a suited portion for thee? Is it enough for a poor vile sinner?

A. Miller.

Vol 11-20 - Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ.

Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ.

It is to be feared that because some who are called Christians make too much of the Lord's supper, or rather misapply it, and run for a priest to administer it to a dying man to ensure his salvation; others are apt to make too little of it, and think of it solely as a table of remembrance. Our Lord said, "This do in remembrance of me," and to partake of the Lord's supper without remembering the Lord Himself, is surely not really partaking of it at all. The Lord knew what poor forgetful creatures we should be, and how much we should need a frequent ordinance by which to call Him to remembrance, and He instituted His supper for that very purpose. But is there not more than this in the Lord's supper? God has caused it to be written, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread" (1 Corinthians 10:16-17). Now here it is plainly a question of communion — communion in its double aspect. In verse 16 it is communion with the body and blood of the Lord, the body of our Lord that was nailed to the cross, the blood of our Lord that was shed to put away our sins. In verse 17 it is communion of the body of our Lord that is composed of His saints: though we be many, we are but one loaf — one body; and this is proved by being all partakers of the one loaf. The communion between the offerer and the offering is illustrated from the Old Testament: "Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?" (ver. 18). That is, the saints have communion with the One offered on the altar, Christ Himself. In Leviticus 3:1-17, it is the peace-offering, and this it is that corresponds to what we have in Corinthians. It has the two characteristics that we need; there is the shedding of blood, and the partaking of the offering. "Things New And Old" (Vol. 33).

Vol 11-20 - Divine Cleansing.

Divine Cleansing.

"He that abideth in Him, ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked . . . purifies himself, even as He is pure." How couldst thou get on one hour without Him? Think on thy many unworthy thoughts and feelings, not to speak of thy doings. And yet He keeps thee clean, "clean every whit" — clean according to the presence of God — clean according to all those relationships into which thou hast entered in Him. He girds Himself for this lowly service, though in heaven, and He restores communion and power to serve God, by the Holy Ghost and the word. Oh wondrous, gracious, matchless love, that can thus serve in spite of everything! "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1).

A. Miller.

Vol 11-20 - Divine Guidance for a Time of Confusion.

Divine Guidance for a Time of Confusion.

There is a temptation in the time of confusion to cast up all as hopeless and gone; and to say, it is endless and needless to be still distinguishing. All is in disorder and apostacy; why then attempt to distinguish? But this was not the Lord. He was in the confusion, but not of it, as He was in the world, but not of it, as we said before of Him. He met all sorts of people, in all sorts of conditions, heaps upon heaps, where all should have been compact together; but He held His even, narrow, unsoiled and undistracted way through it all. The pretensions of the Pharisee, the worldliness of the Herodian, the philosophy of the Sadducee, the fickleness of the multitude, the attempts of adversaries, and the ignorance and infirmities of disciples, were moral materials which he had to meet and answer every day. And then the condition of things, as well as the characters of persons, exercised Him; the coin of Caesar circulating in Immanuel's land; partition-walls all but in ruins; Jew and Gentile, clean and unclean, confounded, save as religious arrogance might still retain them after its own manner. But His one golden rule expressed the perfectness of His passage through all — "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's." The remnant in the day of captivity, a like day of confusion, carried themselves beautifully, distinguishing things that differed, and not hopelessly casting all up. Daniel would advise the king, but not eat his meat: Nehemiah would serve in the palace, but not suffer the Moabite or the Ammonite in the house of the Lord: Mordecai would guard the king's life, but would not bow to the Amalekite: Ezra and Zerubbabel would accept favours from the Persian, but not Samaritan help, nor Gentile marriages: and the captives would pray for the peace of Babylon, but would not sing Zion's songs there. All this was beautiful; and the Lord, in his day, was perfect in this remnant-character. And all this has a voice for us; for ours is a day, in its character of confusion, not inferior to these days of the captives, or of Jesus. And we, like them, are not to act on the hopelessness of the scene, but know still how to render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.

J. G. Bellett.

Vol 11-20 - Divine Provision.

Divine Provision.

Notes of an Address. In Luke's Gospel the blessed Lord is brought before us as "The Man, Christ Jesus," manifesting in this world the wonderful grace of God. He came freighted with blessing for men; to take upon Himself the discharging of all their liabilities; to take away their sins, and remove the distance in which the sinner stood in relation to a righteous and holy God. Something of this comes out beautifully in the parable of Luke 10:1-42, where we see a man on the way from Jerusalem, the place of blessing, to Jericho the city of the curse. What a picture of the poor sinner in all his ruin and wretchedness is here! Falling among thieves, he is stripped of his raiment, wounded and left half-dead. Such was our condition, morally, when the Lord saw us: stripped of our innocency, wounded in sin, and with the sentence of death upon us. It was to help us in such a state that the Lord, the Good Samaritan, left the glories of Godhead and came into Manhood. He came to where we were, to minister His heavenly grace; to bind up our wounds, to pour in the oil and wine, to set us on His own beast, and take us to the inn. What a rich provision for our need! Divine comfort reaching down to our misery, divine joy reaching the heart with the gift of the Holy Spirit; the support of Christ's own strength made ours, and His own loving provision assured until He comes for us.

Christ has not only rescued us from the place of degradation and distance from God, but He is conducting us, in His own power, through this defiled and defiling world. He has taken us in hand completely, supplying every need for today, and if He tarry, every need for the morrow as well. What comfort for the heart it is to know that He knows every part of the journey, every circumstance of the way, and that He has undertaken every responsibility in relation to the journey. As entering into the meaning of this, can we not say with the Apostle Paul, "But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus?" (Php 4:19). But we are not left down here without responsibilities and exercises, while waiting for the Lord to come and take us to be for ever with Himself. We are to be for His pleasure and glory the little while that remains before His coming. To this end He has given to us His word: and in Mary, brought before us from verse 39 of our chapter, we have one availing herself of the divine provision so needful for us in this world. She sits at Jesus' feet as a learner, hearing His word. It is only in communion with Him that we can really know His mind, and receive the grace to carry out His will. The next time we read of Mary is in John 11:1-57, where again she is at the feet of Jesus, but as a mourner, receiving His sympathy and consolation. Yet again we find her at Jesus' feet, in John 12:1-50 : this time as a worshipper. May we each one know the blessedness of sitting at the feet of Jesus With the hearing the word of the Lord Jesus there is also to be prayer; and in the first verse of chapter 11 the disciples desire Jesus to teach them to pray. We shall be kept fresh in our spirits, and be enabled to do the will of God, if there is the desire for divine teaching regarding the word and prayer. Every effort of the enemy is put forth to divert us from prayer; and how often we allow ourselves to be hindered from prayer and to be otherwise engaged when secluded for prayer. The Lord spent whole nights in prayer and communion with His God and Father. Faithful men have

long since called attention to this, that declension of soul begins so often with neglect of private prayer, and this is followed with the giving up of attendance at the public prayer meeting. It is not a matter of saying prayers, but of being before the Lord in the spirit of dependence and pouring out our hearts to Him in all kinds of prayer; and seeking too the blessedness of true and deep communion with the Father and the Son. So many know what it is to approach God regarding their own interests, yet are little conscious of the joy of being occupied in communion with the interests of God in this world, or with the counsels of divine grace that centre in the Son.

Passing down to verses 33-36 we learn that the saints of God are light-bearers in the world. On the same line, Paul, in Php 2:15, speaks of the children of God appearing as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation. This will surely result from our sitting at the feet of Jesus to hear His word, and from learning of Him how to pray. To shine as lights in this world is a wondrous privilege. It is not a question of preaching or engaging in some special sphere of service for the Lord, blessed as these may be: but of manifesting the heavenly traits of the Man out of heaven. Only as we take character from Christ can we truly represent what He is to this world. When the eye is single, Christ is before the heart: and then it is we are in the state to express aright what He is. So often our motives are mixed: there are the desires to please Christ, and to set Him forth: but along with this there is self-seeking and self-gratification.

Another aspect of our life is found in the next chapter. We are left down here to seek the Father's kingdom, not to be full of anxious care about our needs. So often the children of God forget that their Father loves them, and knows their every need far better than they do themselves. He takes care of the birds, clothes the flowers and even the grass; so that we need never have an anxiety regarding food, drink or clothing. Moreover, it is the good pleasure of the Father to give us the kingdom; and if this knowledge enters into the hearts of the "little flock," their anxious care will disappear. In chapter 14 we have God's great supper spread, and the invitation sent out to those bidden to come for all things were now ready. But all began to excuse themselves from accepting the divine invitation. Yet God's house shall be filled: and even now the Glad Tidings are going forth, inviting men to come to the feast that God has made in the riches of His grace. We may not all be evangelists, but we can tell needy sinners of the goodness of God in preparing such a feast for the blessing of men. Timothy may not have been an evangelist, yet he was exhorted by Paul to do the work of an evangelist. The work of God's grace still goes on, spite of the growing indifference around us; and it is our privilege to have fellowship with the Gospel in these last days. There are those gifted for public preaching; but a great deal of God's work in the Gospel is carried out in individual contact with men: and in this we can all have our part. Moreover, apart from speaking, we can testify to God's grace by living for Christ in the world; like Paul, who said, "I live by the faith of the Son of God." At this great supper that God has spread, it is our blessed privilege and joy to celebrate with Him His wonderful grace.

Luke 15:1-32 shows us the deep love and compassion of the heart of the Father. As we sometimes sing: The Father's house, the Father's heart, All that the Son is given Made ours — the objects of His love, And He, our joy in heaven. The recollection of the Father's goodness brings the erring son to repentance; and coming back he is reconciled and clothed with the garment of salvation, with the best robe, the righteousness of God. Inside the house, graced with the dignity and liberty of sonship, the erstwhile prodigal feeds on Christ, the fatted calf; feeding and delighting his heart in communion with his Father. Such is the blessedness of the portion that God has given

to us in His wonderful grace and love.

We began in Luke 10:1-42 with a man on the wrong road, wounded and nearly dead; but Christ took him up and has taken us up, and will care for us until He returns to take us to His Father's house. Meanwhile He teaches us His word and teaches us to pray; brings us to the feast that God has spread puts the best robe on us, and gives us to know the deep joys of the presence of God. May we know increasingly the blessedness of such divine goodness towards us.

J. Muckle. In Christ's Hand. No one can pluck us out of Christ's hand; but why say this if there were not real danger and keeping of us in it? The wolf "catcheth" (same word as pluck) the sheep and scattereth them, but cannot catch them out of Christ's hand, but here our responsibility comes in, our dependence on Him, our leaving ourselves to His infallible care; and one as precious as the other is necessary.

J. N. Darby.

Vol 11-20 - Eternal Life.

Eternal Life. When God formed Adam from the dust of the earth and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, He set him up in all the delights of the earthly paradise, so that he might be happy in the circumstances provided for him in God's goodness, and be there with his God-given companion for the pleasure and glory of God. Alas! so very soon after, Adam and his wife forfeited fair Eden: and the tree of life was guarded by the Cherubim and the flaming sword, lest they should eat of it and live for ever in their sinful condition. That God had eternal life for man did not come out in relation to Adam innocent or fallen; indeed, it is expressly recorded that life, found in the tree of life, was forbidden to man in sin: nevertheless the tree of life surely indicates that God had in reserve a life upon which man had never fed, in which there was divine life and blessing for him. With the sentence of death upon him, Adam lived nine hundred and thirty years, but death at length claimed him; and although men in the successive generations lived to nearly a thousand years, every one of them, save Enoch, departed by way of death.

After cleansing the polluted earth, God called out Abraham, and gave him the promise of earthly blessing, blessing that would be complete in Christ's day, which Abraham was privileged by faith to see and rejoiced in it. From the seed of Abraham, the nation of Israel was separated from the nations, and put under the law, having the oracles of God and many advantages in the goodness of God. Man in Israel was under probation; he was being tested under the most favourable circumstances and had he kept the law he would have lived on earth in the blessings promised to those who kept the law; even as the Lord said to the young man, "This do and thou shalt live." Poor Israel failed miserably: but the gifts and calling of God are not subject to repentance: and on the ground of the promises made to Abraham, Israel will yet have blessing on the earth. This will not be on the ground of the covenant made at Sinai, but as founded on the New Covenant secured by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Looking forward to that day, David by the Spirit sees Israel in millennial blessing, where the dew of Hermon descends upon the mountains of Zion, and he says, "For there hath Jehovah commanded the blessing, life for evermore." What is denied to Adam in sin, is vouchsafed to Israel under God's grace, living for ever on the earth. No doubt, when the first earth passes, it will be to live on the new earth, in the conditions and circumstances prepared of God for men in the eternal scene. Daniel also foresaw many in Israel entering into this millennial blessing, awaking from their sleep among the nations to have eternal life, the life of earthly blessing promised to God's earthly people.

Speaking of Messiah, David said. "He asked life of thee thou gavest (it) Him, length of days for ever and ever." This is God's answer in resurrection to His dear Son. Who glorified Him on the earth. These are all the Old Testament Scriptures pertaining to eternal life, and it will be readily seen that there is no mention of its being communicated to any in those days there is no one who speaks of it as a present possession no one who sees anything other than continuance of life on earth.

Coming to the New Testament, the synoptic Gospels present eternal life in connection with the world to come yea it comes thus from the Lord's own lips. To the enquiry of the young man in Matthew 19:1-30, who asked "What good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life;" the Lord replies, "But if thou wouldest enter into life, keep the commandments." This of course would not take him beyond the Old Testament ground. It is evidently the same young man in Mark 10:1-52 and Luke 18:1-43. Arising out of this interview, the Lord speaks of life eternal in the coming age for those who, like Peter, had forsaken things here for Him and His testimony. In Matthew 26:1-75 it is again clearly in connection with the coming day that the sheep are given eternal life. Replying to the lawyer in Luke 10:1-42 the Lord tells him to keep the commandments, saying, "This do and thou shalt live." There is no thought in the synoptic Gospels of the revelation, present possession, or present enjoyment of a divinely communicated heavenly life; something entirely different from anything yet known upon the earth. With John the subject of eternal life is opened up in an entirely new way. In John 3:1-36 we find the necessity of the lifting up of the Son of Man that through faith in Him, the believer might have eternal life. God, in wonderful love, gives His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him might not perish, but have eternal life. Does not this scripture show that eternal life could not be given to men apart from the death of the Son of Man? Eternal life also brings to us the knowledge of the wonderful love of God. At the close of this chapter, the one who believes on the Son has life eternal; it is the present possession of the believer. So that eternal life is brought to us through Christ's death; it brings to us the knowledge of the love of God; and is possessed by those who believe in the Son. Another instructive point to be noted is that eternal life is heavenly; the truth of new birth and the kingdom, the Lord speaks of as earthly things. So that eternal life is a heavenly life, brought to us in the Son of God and made available to us through His death, in which we learn the love of God, and which is given to those who believe in the Son. The rivers of living water in John 7:1-53 expressly refer to the Spirit, about to be given as the power for testimony in the life of the believer; so that the fountain of living water in John 4:1-54 is evidently the indwelling Spirit, which in springing up into eternal life is the power for the enjoyment of the life given to those who believe in the Son. Verse 36 of this chapter may refer to the coming day; in service for the Lord now the reaper receives wages, according to the estimation of the Lord of the service rendered; and the fruit is being gathered in view of the coming day when the sower and the reaper shall rejoice together. The gathering unto life eternal may look at the display of the fruits in the coming glory; it may also be that in the results of the service of Christ the servant is brought into the blessedness of the life enjoyed in the power of the in-dwelling Spirit.

Eternal life in John 5:1-47 belongs to him who hears the word of God's Son, and who believes Him Who sent Him. So that this life consists in hearing the word of the Son, and in having the faith of the Father Who sent the Son. How blessed it is to be listening to the word of Him Who came forth from the Father, for that word brings to us all the thoughts of the Father's heart, all the things belonging to the Son, all the wealth of grace introduced in the ministry of Him Who knows all the secrets of the Father's will and counsels. This was not found in the Old Testament Scriptures. The Jews searched these Scriptures: and had they understood them they would have learned of Him Who alone could give them life eternal; but they would not come to Him that they might have life.

There is food which abides to life eternal, food which can nourish and satisfy the heart; the bread of God. Feeding upon Christ brings this blessed life to the soul in its practical realisation in communion with God. How necessary then to feed on Christ if we would truly know what eternal

life is; delighting in Him, meditating upon Him, appropriating Him: and all this as we are communing with Him. It is not that we willed to have this life: we have it on account of the Father's will. Not only are we to be raised up in the last day in glory with Christ, but even here we are brought into this wonderful portion, partaking of the heavenly life which is found in the Son; and entering into it as believing in Him. Surely this means that as we are truly occupied with Him, the eye in faith resting on Him, we have the life which lies outside of things here. It is true that this life belongs to every one who has believed in Him; but faith is a present living thing, which engages the heart with the object upon which it rests; and it is being thus engaged with the Son of God that eternal life is ours in its reality. But if it is as feeding upon the Son and as believing in Him, it is as eating His flesh and drinking His blood that we have eternal life. Eternal life is truly known in feeding upon the death of Christ, in thus appropriating the love of the Father and the Son made known in Christ's death.

Well did Peter say "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." Eternal life has come in the Person, and in the testimony of God's own Son; and although it was but in a feeble way the disciples of Jesus could then know eternal life, not yet having the indwelling Spirit, they knew that in the Son of God, present among them, there were the precious words which gave them some knowledge of it. That blessed heavenly life was theirs, the gift of God to them, received by believing in the Son of God, yet the full joy and blessedness of it could not be theirs until the Lord Jesus died, and until they ate His flesh and drank His blood. There could not be the full knowledge of God's love until His Son died; nor could there be the true knowledge of the Father and the Son until the Holy Spirit came to indwell the believer. Still, it is good to know that while awaiting the full knowledge of the eternal life, the disciples knew that the Lord Jesus had for them the words of eternal life, which held them in deep attachment to Him, so that Peter could say "Lord to Whom shall we go?" They seemed to realise that eternal life was the substance of the Lord's ministry for them: a blessing of surpassing value, so valuable that they would remain with Jesus, even if all others left Him. In John 10:1-42 the Good Shepherd leads His sheep from the Jewish fold, saying "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand." The disciples recognised and followed the Shepherd, they knew His voice; they not only knew He had the words of eternal life, but the voice drew them to His Person, the giver of eternal life. He was not simply giving the words of eternal life, or the promise of eternal life, but He was giving the life itself. It was a life altogether different from the life they had in the Jewish fold: in it they could go in and out and find pasture; they had divine liberty and heavenly food. Nor was it a life that death had claim to, for they would never perish; it was truly eternal life as to its duration, even if it was eternal as belonging to a scene where time was not. Moreover if there was no cessation of this life, and death could never rob them of it, none could ever take them from the hand of the Son or the hand of the Father, so that there never could be any possibility of the sheep losing the eternal life. They might lose the enjoyment of it, or never have a very deep sense of its reality in their souls nevertheless, if they were Christ's sheep, this eternal life was theirs as the gift of the Good Shepherd, the Son of God. But observe it is after the sheep follow the Shepherd out of the Jewish fold that He speaks of giving them eternal life. They could not have eternal life there, for it was not connected with the legal system, but with the heavenly order of things into which the Son was leading them. The first reference to eternal life in John 12:1-50 shows that it is a life in contrast to the life we live in our present circumstances "He that loves his life shall lose it and he that hates

his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal." Do we really value life in this world or are we seeking our life in another world? The life lived down here in the enjoyment of the things of nature and of the things of the world will come to a close, it will be lost; only what has been sought of Christ will abide, being kept to life eternal. No doubt the future is in view, for eternal life is not only a present possession, it is ours after we leave this world behind. Hating the life in present things we shall indeed seek the life that is to be ours in the coming day, but that is the eternal life even now ours in association with the Son of God on the other side of death. Hence the life we keep to eternal life is what we have lived and enjoyed in communion with Christ, yea with the Father and the Son, in those things made known by the Son in His testimony here, and made available for us by His death upon the cross. So that eternal life is not connected with our life in this world; it is not the life touched in natural things; it lies in things outside of this world altogether.

John 6:1-71 told us that it was the Father's will to give the believer eternal life; now the Lord tells us that all He spoke was from the Father, it was His commandment, containing life eternal. And this is what the Jews were rejecting in refusing the Son of God; they were turning from the divine blessing of eternal life offered to them in the Father's grace. If this brings before us the utter folly of Israel, it also manifests the wondrous grace of the Father and the Son. What can we say to this, that the Father had sent forth His well-beloved Son into the world with this great message of life eternal, giving Him the very words to speak, so that we might know perfectly the grace of His heart? And to think that the Son, so great and so glorious, should undertake to proclaim the message of the Father; giving out exactly the thoughts and the very words committed to Him by the Father. Surely these things should bring us down in worship before the Father and the Son. But the Son is no longer here, He has been glorified by the Father, and this in response to the expressed desire of His heart, "Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee" (John 17:1). Then we see how the Father's glory is to be secured, "As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him." Had He not glorified the Father in faithfully proclaiming the words of eternal life according to the Father's commandment? Now He would still glorify the Father in giving eternal life to those the Father had given to Him in the counsels of His grace. As the Good Shepherd He had spoken of giving life eternal to the sheep; this was the grace of the incarnate Son; now in that same grace, the glorified Son would communicate the eternal life for the Father's glory, for it was the Father's will to give the believer life eternal. Here we see how the life is connected with the counsels of the Father, not as elsewhere with our believing, but as imparted to those given to the Son in the Father's counsels of love. The Son in communicating the eternal life to His loved ones is glorifying the Father in accomplishing His will and counsels.

Then the Son, in speaking to the Father, lets us into the true secret of eternal life, "And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent." It is a life that consists in the knowledge of the Father, revealed in the Son, and in the knowledge of Him in Whom God is revealed. This is a knowledge that lies entirely outside of man's world; it has come down here in Jesus, but it shall be ours in Him for all eternity. How blessed for the believer to retire in spirit into the Father's presence, to be engaged there with Him-self and with His well-beloved Son; to be in the consciousness of the deep love made known in Jesus, and to enjoy it in the wonderful place of nearness and relationship into which God's grace and Christ's work have brought us. Here is an entirely new world for us to live in, with new pleasures, new joys, new

relationships, new affections, new objects; yea where all things are new. But while they are new to us, they are the things that have ever existed, belonging to a world outside of time and the senses of men, for it is the eternal life that was with the Father, and was manifested unto us. In the holy atmosphere of divine and heavenly relationships and affections the spirit can rest in all that the Father is, and the divine nature within us can delight in Jesus Christ, sent of the Father to bring us into this eternal life.

Paul and Barnabas told the Jews that they had judged themselves unworthy of eternal life, so they turned to the Gentiles; then Luke records that as many as were ordained to eternal life believed (Acts 13:46; Acts 13:48), indicating as John does that the subject is connected with God's sovereignty and the exercise of faith. In the epistle to the Romans, the apostle Paul shows that eternal life is entered into at the close of the life of those who seek for glory, honour, and incorruptibility, that is the life of the saint of God. Again in Romans 5:21 we are taught that grace reigns through righteousness until eternal life is reached in the world to come. Then at the close of Romans 6:1-23 as servants of God we have our fruit unto holiness, and the end for us is eternal life; but this eternal life is the gift of God to us in Christ Jesus our Lord. These passages in Romans plainly teach that eternal life belongs to the end of the life of responsibility; it is not at all connected with our path of service to God down here. But while this is so, Galatians teaches that "He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." Life eternal will be reaped at the end, although there is also a sense in which we may enter into it now, as John teaches, and as Paul exhorts Timothy, "Lay hold on eternal life." In Timothy's first epistle, 1 Timothy 1:16, eternal life is the end reached by faith; and in chapter 6 as we have seen Timothy is exhorted to lay hold of eternal life now, the life to which God has called us. Paul, introducing the second epistle to Timothy, speaks of himself as apostle, "according to the promise of life, the (life) which is in Christ Jesus;" and in the introduction to Titus, Paul is bondman and apostle "in (the) hope of eternal life, which God, Who cannot lie, promised before the ages of time." Eternal life is the "blessed hope" of Titus 2:13, and for the third time in this short epistle it is referred to as a hope in Titus 3:7.

Jude also gives the future aspect of eternal life. Here in a world, fast ripening for divine judgment, the Christian is to keep himself in the love of God, and the bright prospect before him is eternal life, into which the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ shall bring us. Life in its divine fulness and joys shall be ours when the Lord Jesus takes us to heaven, and when, with glorified bodies like His own body of glory, we shall enter into without hindrance all that has been brought to us here by the Holy Spirit, and those things which could not be tittered to men in flesh and blood down here.

John, in his First Epistle has much to say of eternal life: it was something entirely new for men; first manifested by the Son of God incarnate, the Word of Life: the True God and Eternal Life; manifested in view of its communication to us, that we might possess it in Him, and find our deepest joys in its realisation in communion with the Father and the Son.

Wm. C. Reid.

Vol 11-20 - Faith in the Risen Christ.

Faith in the Risen Christ.

Bear in mind for thyself, O my soul, that wonderful word, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Php 4:13). Here observe, and carefully note, that it is through faith in the risen Christ, that we go from strength to strength. The risen Christ, victorious over every foe, is the strength of the Christian for his journey through this world. He has his motive to devotedness, in the once lowly Jesus, and strength for walk in the now exalted Christ of God. "He loved me and gave Himself for me," is surely enough to command the entire consecration of the heart and life to Him. It is easy to give our hearts to Jesus, when once we see that He gave His heart for us. But our strength from day to day, and from one stage of our journey to another, is in the risen, triumphant, glorified Christ. Blessed Lord — my Lord — Jesus — Christ — I need Thee in all Thy Names and titles — I need Thee as my Jesus — my powerful motive for this sluggish — this carnal — ease-loving heart of mine. I need. Thee as my Christ on high, with every enemy beneath Thy feet, and beneath mine too, as one with Thee. I need Thee as my Lord — my sovereign Lord — my coming Lord — my blessed hope, amidst all that would entangle and hinder me down here. Oh let my affections be governed, and my character formed, by my knowledge of Thee as my Lord, Jesus, Christ, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

A. Miller.

Vol 11-20 - Faithfulness in a Day of Ruin.

Faithfulness in a Day of Ruin.

We are living in a day of ruin and departure from those precious things that our God would have us to enjoy. But we can only enjoy them if we walk in the path God has marked out for us. In 2 Timothy 1:1-18, we have the spirit of power and of love and of a sound mind; three essentials to maintain us in this evil day. But in ver. 8 we are exhorted not to be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord. Faithfulness to the Lord's testimony may bring reproach, hatred and all the bitter feelings of which the flesh is capable; but when we know that we have been called with an holy calling, according to God's purpose and grace, given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, how great is the consolation and encouragement. All has now come to light in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus; death is annulled, and incorruptibility has been brought to light in the Gospel. God's great victory is seen in the resurrection of Christ; and no one can overthrow that foundation on which God has laid a new order of things in association with Christ for evermore.

R. Duncanson.

Vol 11-20 - Fruitbearing.

Fruitbearing.

(Notes of an Address by J. A. Trench.)

(John 15:1). In the 15th of John, Jesus contrasts Himself — the true Vine with another vine which had been familiar to the minds of His disciples, and of which we have frequent mention in the word. We read of it in the 80th Psalm and the 8th verse, and again in Jeremiah 2:21. Israel was that vine: God had brought that nation out of Egypt and planted them in most favourable circumstances to bring forth fruit unto Him: but though He had planted them wholly a right vine, they had turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto Him. The cause of their doing so we have in Jeremiah 2:13 : "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." First, they forsook the LORD, and so, of course, lost all joy and happiness, and then, as they must have something, they hewed them out cisterns that can hold no water. They turned to the world and tried to find in it what they had lost in forsaking the LORD; but they lost not only their own joy and happiness but also their power of fruit bearing, for we read, From Me is thy fruit found," and thus defeated the object for which God had brought them out of Egypt, and planted them in a good land. So Israel, the Old Testament vine, had to be laid aside, and here Jesus sets Himself forth as "the true Vine." He alone ever brought fruit to the Husbandman. The Father never came to seek fruit from Him, without finding in rich abundance that which He sought.

(John 15:2). Jesus not only brought forth fruit Himself, but He is the source of fruit in others. "Every branch in Me that beareth fruit," He says, showing that the branch must be in Him, the true Vine, in order that it may bring forth fruit. This sentence gives us the key to the passage: it shows us that the union here spoken of is an earthly union, for vines do not grow in heaven, and in heaven there is no fruit bearing in the sense of this passage. The heavenly union of Christ with His body was not yet formed or manifested, for Christ was not yet glorified, and until He was we do not hear of a Head in heaven and members on earth. Our union then with Christ as members of His body is not here alluded to: that is indissoluble, and independent of us altogether. The union here spoken of may be dissolved, and is dependent upon our abiding in Him.

It may be said, None are disciples, but those who are true disciples, and as such must bear fruit: but that is a misinterpretation of the word "disciple." In the Bible we read of true and false disciples. If men will call themselves by the Name of Christ and profess to belong to Him, they will be taken on their own profession, and fruit will be sought from them. They will have Made themselves responsible to bear that fruit to God which can only be borne by abiding in Christ. "Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away: not "cast forth" as in the sixth verse. The distinction is drawn between the false and true professor; if we, His own beloved ones, cease to bear fruit the husbandman must take us away. This may be done in various ways: it may be by removing us from our position of service for Him, perhaps by laying us on a bed of sickness. There may be also a taking away by temporal life being cut off, which was what happened in the Corinthian church, as

we read in Corinthians 11, on account of the manner in which they partook of the Lord's Supper.

"Every branch in Me . . . that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." Many of the Lord's dear children are dismayed when they find themselves in trial; they get alarmed and troubled and question why it is that now they meet with trials unknown till they became the Lord's children. They overlook the blessed truth revealed to us here, that purging necessarily follows fruit bearing. Only bear a little fruit and you may be sure that the husbandman will not spare the pruning knife. One time when walking round an orchard I remarked a tree unpruned: on asking the gardener why he had neglected it when all the others bore marks of his care, he replied, "That tree is half dead, I have no hopes of it bearing more fruit, so do not think it worth the trouble of pruning." Another day I remarked a tree very closely cut, to my eyes almost ruined, so unsparingly had the knife been used on it. Again I asked the gardener, "Why was this?" "Ah Sir," he replied, "that is my finest tree. I look for more fruit from that tree in autumn than from any other in the garden." Just so you may expect to feel the pruning knife if you are bearing fruit: but remember it is a Father's hand that uses the knife. "If ye endure chastening God dealeth with you as with sons." Will you consent to be treated as a son, or would you miss this proof of sonship, because "no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous?"

(John 15:3-5). "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. 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." In the first two verses we had the husbandman's part quite independent of us; in the 4th verse we have our responsibility to "abide" in Jesus: words of deepest and most blessed significance. Abiding in Jesus is dependent upon, and connected with, obedience to His word. Jesus kept His disciples clean by keeping them walking in His word, and we learn from this that the way to abide in Jesus is to walk in obedience to His word, learning His will as there revealed to us. Let us take it as one sole rule of life, so shall we abide in Jesus, and so bring forth much fruit to the glory of God the Father. Seek to maintain a tender heart, and a sensitive conscience — a tender heart that instinctively knows His will, and a sensitive conscience that is aware of the slightest departure from Him.

(John 15:6-8). In the sixth verse there is a change; we read. "If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch." Hitherto, Jesus had been using, to the Eleven, gathered round Him, the word "ye," personally addressing the beloved disciples: but there was a vacant place at the table. Judas, the twelfth, had just left. Already he was on his way to the High Priest's palace, thinking for how many pieces of silver he would sell Jesus, and Jesus knows it. It may be in reference to him, He says, "If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." But again He personally addresses them in the 7th verse, "If ye abide in Me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." Fruit bearing, we have already seen, is the result of abiding in Jesus: here we have another precious promise and result of abiding in Jesus, namely, "Ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you;" and remark here again how closely are connected abiding in Jesus and His words abiding in us. His words, not His commandments, are here mentioned. But does the heart that is abiding in Jesus' love need more than a word from Him, a passing hint of His wishes? No! it is all joy to the faithful heart to find out one little thing it can do to please Him. There are some Christians that know but little of this kind of obedience: the language of their hearts seems to be, "Show me His commands and I will follow them." They would put themselves again

under law, and seem to think it a higher place to be a servant under law, than a son under grace: but the truth that characterises this dispensation is sonship. Our Father ever seeks for the service and worship of children only.

(John 15:9-10). In the 9th verse Jesus tells us the measure of His love to us, even as much as His Father bears to Him, and in the 10th verse He tells us that He abode in the Father's love because He kept His commandments. Would we enjoy uninterruptedly and uncloudedly the sense of the love Jesus bears us, we must keep His commandments. Unbroken communion is another sure result of walking in accordance with the word.

(John 15:11). In the 11th verse, He tells us, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." "These things;" what things were the source of Jesus' joy? First to be the true Vine that never failed to bring forth fruit to the Father. Secondly, to walk in perfect obedience to His will and thus to have a perfect plea for intercession for His people. Thirdly, to abide in His Father's love by keeping His commandments. These things "Jesus reveals as the source of His joy — a joy He would share with us; He would have us as full of joy as He was Himself. He says, emphatically, "That My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." Truly to abide in Jesus' love is fulness of joy.

(John 15:12-13). In the 12th verse He gives us the measure of our love to one another, even the extent of His own love to us. How we fail in this! How often, if we judged ourselves truly, would we find that we loved one another because of some natural amiability, or because we suit each others natural disposition, or because we find each others society agreeable. Does Jesus love us for any of these reasons? Ah! Jesus never found anything in us to attract His love: He loved us when we were enemies, and dead in trespasses and sins, and found no beauty in us, but utter entire loathsomeness: and now that He has cleansed us from our sins, and arrayed us in all His own spotless beauty, He still loves us in the same sovereign way of grace. His love knows no limit, and no partiality. Think you He loves the fruit bearing branches better than the barren ones? Those who bring in much service, you might imagine more merit His love but such is not His way to love. He loves all alike: the difference being that those who are abiding in His word have a clearer, deeper sense of His love.

(John 15:14. 15). In the 14th verse He shows us that obedience brings us into the wondrous position of being "friends of Jesus." Think of this What is it to be a friend of Jesus? A friend is one on whom I depend: on whose sympathy I count: to whom I can confide all the secrets of my heart, and disclose the motives of my actions. Such a friend is Jesus to us, and such a friend would He have each of us be to Him. Jesus wants a friend, and He goes to you and asks you to be His friend. Will you be a friend to Him? Then show your willingness by obedience to His will. How can two walk together except they be agreed? And is He not much better able to choose the right way than you are? The difference between my servant and my friend is, that to my servant I give my command without assigning a reason: but to my friend I tell my wishes and also my motives, and this is just how Jesus treats us, as He tells us in the 15th verse, "Henceforth 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."

(John 15:18-27) In the 18th and following verses Jesus shows them (the consequence of what He had been telling them) their treatment by the world. He had been telling them that obedience

would bring them into the path of much blessing: it would be the source of their fruit bearing; of bringing glory to the Father; the source of successful prayer of their dwelling in the full enjoyment of His love: of their enjoying brotherly love amongst themselves, and, finally, of their being His friends. In mentioning this last result He would make known to us that not only are we more blessed and happy, by walking in His ways, but that He is the gainer also, for Jesus loves to have the friendship of His people. But He then faithfully reminds them that they cannot be His friends and be loved by the world, "The friendship of the world is enmity to God." Once take Jesus' part against the world and show yourself to be His friend, and the world will hate you, just as it does Jesus. Just as far as you manifest on whose side you are, so far you may expect it to treat you as it treated Him. Which will you have? Jesus, or the world? You cannot have both. It may be that you will have to meet the world in those nearest and dearest to you. I care not in whom the spirit of the world's opposition may be found, it may be the father, the husband, the brother, the friend you prize most on earth, and you think you must follow their will first. But you have a Father, a husband, a friend in heaven and His will you are bound to follow first. Not first the earthly and then the heavenly, but first the heavenly and then the earthly. His love is a love that had no beginning and can have no ending. "Greater love," He, Himself tells us. "hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." His love has been proved to be limitless. Which of your earthly friends has ever given you such a proof of their love? Would they ever do it? Ah no! Then yield yourselves to Him Who loves you best; be His friend; walk in His ways, and you will truly find that "His paths drop fatness." When the world would bid me leave Thee, Telling me of shame and loss, Saviour, guard me lest I grieve Thee, Lest I cease to love Thy cross; This is treasure All the rest I count but loss.

Vol 11-20 - Fulness of Joy.

Fulness of Joy.

"Fulness of joy," . . . Can this indeed be experienced by God's dear children whilst journeying through this sad world? No doubt many earnest Christians will exclaim. "Oh no; when we reach heaven, then indeed we shall be perfectly happy; but never here, surrounded as we are with disappointment and failure." But let us examine for a few moments some of the many Scriptures which speak of this subject. First, what does the Lord Jesus say to his beloved disciples when He was on the point of leaving them, and they were filled with sorrow at the thought of losing their dear Master? "These things have I spoken unto you that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full (John 15:11). Also, in His wonderful prayer to the Father, speaking of His disciples, He says, "These things I speak in the world, that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves" (John 17:13). In the Acts of the Apostles we read of the disciples rejoicing and being filled with joy, even when, they were persecuted, and driven from one place to another. In the Epistles very many verses speak of the joy which filled the hearts of the Christians in those early days: I quote but a few of them. "We also joy in God." "Joy in the Holy Ghost." "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing." "The abundance of their joy." "Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, rejoice." "Rejoice with joy unspeakable." "These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full." But why is it that so few, so very few of the Lords saints ever realise, or indeed seem to know anything of this fulness of joy so freely given us of God? We read in Psalms 16:1-11, "in Thy presence is fulness of joy." The Lord Jesus, replying to Judas' question, said: "If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." The only way then for a Christian to experience this wonderful joy is to keep the words of the Lord Jesus, and thus abide in the presence of the Father and the Son. But this means denying oneself, taking up one's cross daily, and following Him. It means fighting the good fight of faith and laying hold on eternal life. How many of us are prepared to do this, cost what it may? When Moses spent forty days on the mount in God's immediate presence, he wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with Him. When Stephen stood before the Council, full of the Holy Ghost, all its members, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel. It may be said, "Oh, but those were exceptional cases;" true, yet is it not written, "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18). Did believers but grasp by faith, and take in what is the marvellous position into which God has brought them, having chosen them before the foundation of the world, predestinated them unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, and made them accepted in the Beloved, in Whom they have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace, that they should be to the praise of His glory; that they are now sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of their inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession . . . I say, did they really believe and take to their hearts these wonderful truths, they could not be cast down by the troubles and cares of this life, but would be filled with continual joy.

The great enemy then which hinders them from enjoying the position in which God in His wondrous grace has placed them is just unbelief, instead of boldly taking God's Word as it stands. He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? . . . Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things which are freely given us of God. We know that the Lord Jesus, that blessed Man in the glory, is the delight of the Father's heart; and, oh wonderful thought, He desires to share now His joy in Him with His children. What do we not lose by being so much occupied by earthly things? No wonder our hearts are so often sad and downcast, when they might be filled with joy. The great secret, the only way of obtaining this joy, is to abide in Him. "He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth 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." "These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." Beloved Brethren, the time is short, and now indeed our salvation is nearer than when we believed. Let us then so walk. during the little while remaining, so as to enjoy to the full that love so richly bestowed upon us, and to rejoice in that blessed Man in the glory, to the praise and glory of our God and Father.

G. F. Barlee.

Vol 11-20 - Gideon's Three Hundred.

Gideon's Three Hundred.

Personally one's spirit is kept in peace, for truth does not change and Christ does not change, and one can rejoice if there are a few with whom it is possible to walk in the truth while confessing to the universal weakness and failure. We can thresh wheat behind the winepress like Gideon, getting the good out of what the Lord gives us, and in our spirits owning that the Lord alone is our help. He was slow of movement, saw difficulties in the way of his becoming prominent, did not dare to destroy Baal by daytime, but smashed his image under cover of darkness, wanted tokens on his own doorstep, and was granted a further one on the edge of the enemy's camp, and further had to see his large force reduced to one per cent of the original, from thirty thousand odd to three hundred and even then the three hundred going weaponless to the fight, having but a little testimony in the trumpets and a little light in the pitchers, but somehow it pleased the Lord to use the reduced numbers and the weaponless, nameless force to more purpose than all the large number who sought an easier path.

Many secede like the twenty-two thousand who shirked the conflict through fear; others drop out through want of directness of purpose and concentration on the conflict to which they were called, like the nine thousand seven hundred who wished to enjoy to the utmost any mercy that came within their reach. May we, dear brother, go on with God, though we be nameless and weaponless, though we have nothing that men would regard as resource; no one but God. "I will leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the Name of the Lord" (Zeph.).

W. H. Westcott.

Priesthood And Advocacy.

Priesthood is that I may behave well — advocacy is when I do not behave well. Priesthood keeps my heart in constant dependence in my walk — Its exercise is that I may not go wrong — Advocacy is when I have gone wrong.

J. N. Darby.

Vol 11-20 - Glorifying and Vain-Glorying.

Glorifying and Vain-Glorying. The title we have chosen for this paper reminds us of two conditions of soul that may characterise us as believers. They are found in Paul's two epistles to the Corinthian Assembly. The Apostle first deals with the spirit of vain-glory which was very much in evidence at Corinth, for he well knew that this evil must be firmly judged and removed before the Corinthians could be in a fit spiritual condition to appreciate and enjoy the glorious things that filled his own heart to overflowing. Indeed it is well for us ever to remember that God's order is always "Cease to do evil; learn to do well" (Isaiah 1:16-17); for if we reverse this order, as many attempt to do, we shall always be in doubt and difficulty.

It is well known that the saints at Corinth had fallen into such a low spiritual condition that the Apostle was burdened with grief on their account. In his second letter to them (2 Corinthians 2:4), he writes, "for out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears" — "Much affliction," "anguish of heart," "many tears." Surely the repetition of these significant and sorrowful words from the pen, and from the heart, of the Lord's devoted servant ought to touch a sympathetic chord in every true Christian's heart. How great must have been his affliction when the sad news reached him from the household of Chloe, that the saints at Corinth, among whom he had so fervently laboured, through trying days of persecution, and among whom he had determined to know nothing save "Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2), were forming parties and thus destroying the unity of the assembly, in the truth of which he had sought to establish them! How great his "anguish of heart" to behold his beloved children torn by strife and contention! and when we recall the fact that in Christ Jesus he had begotten them through the Gospel we can understand that the "many tears" flowed copiously from a heart filled with parental affection for them notwithstanding all their waywardness and folly (1 Corinthians 4:15).

We may here remark that the evil of division which had its beginning at Corinth in the early days of the Church, is fully developed in Christendom today, and apparently there is no hope of recovery. This lamentable state of things is due to the fact that the professing church has abandoned the truth of Christ's Headship, and aided and abetted earthly heads to usurp His place. More grievous still is the fact that there are many true believers who give a mental assent to the truth of Christ's Headship of His Assembly, and yet who in practice deny it. Boasting the knowledge of such important truths as the one "Headship" and the one "Body" and yet refusing to walk in the separate path such knowledge apportions to them, do they really differ in spirit from those to whom our Lord addressed the heart-searching and memorable words "Why call ye Me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say" (Luke 6:46)? No worldly-wise schemes such as we hear of today, for healing the many breaches in Christendom would have met with Paul's approval. Nor would those leaders, who refuse the guidance of Scripture and adopt human arrangements, such as amalgamation, have been any more successful.

It is both uplifting and edifying to note how Paul seeks to win the Corinthians from their evil ways and thus to accomplish his desire that they should be "perfectly joined together in the same mind

and in the same judgment." We refer to 1 Corinthians 1:9-10, here he tells them that "God is faithful, by whom ye have been called into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord." Without further preamble, the Apostle at once endeavours to bring the consciences of these wayward and worldly saints into God's holy presence.

He reminds them that they have a link with God as His "called" ones, and further that this calling was a high and holy one, even to be in the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Doubtless this forcible reminder of their high calling, falling, as it did on the ears of saints who were in a low spiritual condition, would produce searchings of heart, such as were caused by the divisions of Reuben; but it was generally Paul's method in seeking to reach the consciences of backsliding saints to remind them of the purpose of God for them. This he does in the beautiful context preceding the verse we are considering, in which he assures them that they were "awaiting the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ Who shall also confirm you to the end unimpeachable in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." Precious, precious promise! What words could be more fitting to deepen the work of repentance in backsliding hearts? As a result of the wonderful declaration in 5:9, Paul now exhorts them by the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ that they all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among them. The Apostle well knew the power and sweetness of that Name, that it was the only centre of unity, and only by that Name would his exhortation to unity and happy fellowship come home to their souls. When Paul called together the elders of the Church at Ephesus (Acts 20:29) he informed them that after his departing grievous wolves would enter in among them not sparing the flock. In Corinth, however, it was the flock themselves who were the evil workers. The enemy, whose constant purpose it is to scatter the sheep, does not mind whom he uses as his instruments, so long as the scattering is accomplished, and it is important to note that these instruments, whether false shepherds or deluded sheep seek their own glory. All the parties in Corinth were verily guilty, but surely the worst was the one that chose for its party badge the very Name which should have been their common bond of union, the very Name pleaded by Paul, for the restoration of unity among them.

It is most touching to note how Paul seeks to instruct and to warn his beloved children in the faith. This he does in ch. 1 (latter part), 2, 3 of 1 Corinthians. These chapters contain many profound and precious truths for example:

1 Corinthians 1:18. The preaching of the Cross — foolishness to the perishing. Unto us which are saved — the power of God.

1 Corinthians 1:20. Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?

1 Corinthians 1:23. Christ crucified — unto the Jews a stumbling block. Christ crucified — unto the Greeks foolishness.

1 Corinthians 1:25. The foolishness of God is wiser than men. The weakness of God is stronger than men.

1 Corinthians 1:31. He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

These are selected from ch. 1, and there are many other gems in this wonderful casket of holy Scripture. In 1 Corinthians 4:1-21 other matters are referred to by the Apostle which manifest the spirit of vain-glory existing among the saints at Corinth, but limited time and space will only permit

a brief reference to them. We gather from 5: 3 that such was their high opinion of themselves that they considered they were quite competent to pass judgment on their leaders, even Paul himself not escaping their criticism. What dignity and humility is shown in Paul's reply! "With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment, . . . But He that judgeth me is the Lord(vv. 3, 4). Happy is the Christian who can make a like confession! In 5: 6 the Apostle charges them with being puffed up for one against another, and that this exaltation of their teachers was really a gratification of their own pride. It was not that they puffed up the teacher, but themselves. Then he explains their folly and shows how absurd is their glorying in men, for even if one possess some gift, he has not attained it by his own excellence or ability, but it is the free gift of God. Paul asks "What hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?" It is apparent that there were those in Corinth, apart from the leaders, who gloried in their own fancied gifts. Paul refers to such in ch. 8, where he says "Knowledge puffeth up, but love edifieth, and if any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know" (5: 1-2). The last two cases to which we wish to refer, display the spirit of self-glorification in a more marked degree than any of the others. The Apostle brings them vividly before us in ch. 4 and 5. In 1 Corinthians 4:8, he says "Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us, and I would to God ye did reign that we also might reign with you." Doubtless, it was with much anguish of heart that Paul wrote these words. Bad doctrine, as it always does, had produced bad practice they had forgotten that the Lord's pathway through this world was one of suffering, shame and loss, and that their's should be likewise; but for suffering they preferred surfeiting, for tribulation they preferred triumph, for the world's curse they preferred its Crown. The joy of the Christian in sharing rejection with Christ they knew nothing of, and the precious promise that "if we suffer we shall also reign with Him" (2 Timothy 2:12) had lost its charm for them. Paul waited in patience for the reigning time to share it with his beloved children, but they preferred to reign without him. The account he gives of his own manner of life, must have filled them with shame, though this was not his object (see verses 9-14). The last case for our consideration is that recorded in 1 Corinthians 5:1-13. It was a case of evil so heinous that it was not so much as named among the Gentiles, and the guilty man was a member of their own assembly. Instead of having mourned that he might be removed from their company they were "puffed up" and apparently quite prepared to tolerate his continued presence with them. It seems incredible that a company of believers who had been called into the fellowship of the Son of God (1 Corinthians 1:9) should display such disregard for the holiness of that fellowship. In Psalms 89:7, we read "God is greatly to be feared in the Assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about Him." But it is the Christian's privilege to know God in a far nearer and more blessed relationship than Old Testament saints could do. We know God as Father; we know Christ as Firstborn among many brethren; we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him; then surely our fear of God, and reverence for God, should greatly exceed that of the psalmist of old. But does it? As far as the Corinthians were concerned, both fear and reverence were absent. Hence the urgent entreaty of the Apostle to "Put away from among yourselves that wicked person" 1 Corinthians 5:13. The unholy idea that the evil of another is not to be judged, but that each must judge himself, means the destruction of God's glory in the Church. In recording these various phases of evil in the Assembly at Corinth, their carnal divisions, their exaltation of leaders, their acting as judges, their boasting in their gifts, their glorying in this life, their being puffed up, when evil was rampant in the Assembly; the writer's earnest prayer is that

the saints of God may be preserved or delivered from similar evils which abound in Christendom in this present day.

R. B. Wilson.

Speech.

"Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour: so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom."

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.

J. N. Darby.

Vol 11-20 - God's Purpose for Us.

God's Purpose for Us.

One great object of God in His approach to man in grace is to bring His people up out of this present evil world into the place that He had purposed for them before the world was. As Moses was sent to bring Israel out of Egypt into the land of promise, so Christ came into the world to bring His people out of it and to lead them to heaven. Our blessings are not in this world, nor are they given to us on this side of death: they are all in Christ. We are blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, and the work of the Spirit is to bring us in our hearts and minds to the place and Person where, and in whom, all our blessings are. Pardon, righteousness, redemption, salvation and eternal life are all in Christ, and in Him for all men; hence Christ is the Glad Tidings, and has been preached in the whole creation under heaven. If we are to possess the things that are in Him, we can only possess them in the power of the Spirit; and they are ours in Him as the One in whom the old order has been ended, and who in resurrection is the Head and centre of a new, heavenly, eternal system, which has no link with the old earthly order; and to Him we are attached; and in Him we live in the power of the Spirit.

(These words were found in the handwriting of a brother who was recently called home by the Lord.)

Vol 11-20 - Growth or Backsliding.

Growth or Backsliding. In all creation growth always indicates the presence of life, and whenever this ceases, the reason is certainly either disease or death. This is also the case with those who, in Christ, have part in new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). All the children of God are born of water and of the Spirit, and in this way enter into the Kingdom of God, as we learn in John 3:1-36. God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has chosen them in Him before the foundation of the world, having predestinated them unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto Himself. They are accepted in the Beloved, in whom they have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. Having trusted in Christ, they are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the earnest of the inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession. Thus, having been made children of God, they become His heirs, and joint-heirs with Christ, and members of the household of God. But as in natural life, in which all human beings commence their earthly career as babes, and gradually grow into mature age, so the believer is first seen as a babe in Christ. We read in 1 John 2:1-29 of little children, young men and fathers. This implies steady growth, "till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man" Ephesians 4:13. The apostle adds: "That we henceforth be no more children, . . . but grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ." On all sides the Christian is surrounded by the adversary and his servants, seeking to overthrow him, and thus bring dishonour on Christ: therefore the apostle bids him put on the whole armour of God, in order that he may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. As long as the Christian is in this world, warfare never ceases. To enter into a truce with the enemy is fatal; spiritual growth then ceases, for the soul never stands still, and backsliding inevitably takes the place of growth. This is a most solemn truth, and every believer should earnestly ponder over it, and take it to heart. A most important piece of the armour of God is the shield of faith, wherewith we shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. The young Thessalonian Church had taken earnest heed to this, since the apostle writes: We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly." Peter, writing to those who had obtained like precious faith, warns them lest any, being led away with the error of the wicked, should fall from their own steadfastness, and urges them to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Growth is always the proof of a healthy state of soul. John, writing to the well-beloved Gaius, says, "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth."

Seeing then that growth in grace should be the normal condition of every believer, and indeed the proof of spiritual life in his soul, let us see what the Spirit says to us with regard to our daily life, and how we should walk so as to avoid the terrible danger of backsliding. The Apostle Paul, writing to the Galatians, says: I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." Again, in Colossians we read: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above: . . . set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof"

(Romans 13:14). There are many other similar verses, but the great point constantly urged by the Spirit is occupation with Christ, so that the blessed Man in the glory may become the one object of the heart, even as the Apostle Paul says in Philippians: "But this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." And a little later he adds, Brethren, be followers together of me." Minding earthly things is one of the greatest dangers in these last days: it is indeed the very opposite of seeking those things which are above. And we can only be pre-served from this by constantly using the shield of faith. We have great need to "be sober, to be vigilant; because our adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour," but whom we must resist, steadfast in the faith. The words backslider and backsliding are not found in the New Testament, but as applied to Israel are frequently used in the writings of the Prophets. One verse, however, I think we should meditate upon, viz.: "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways" (Proverbs 14:14). Our blessed Lord Jesus specially craves the love of our hearts; has He Himself not proved His heart's love by laying down His life for us? Shall we then let our hearts be taken up by the things of this world which has cast Him out, and still despises and rejects Him? The time is indeed very short, and now only can we prove that our love for Him is true, by taking our stand faithfully by His side in the day of His rejection.

G. F. Barlee.

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