# BIBLE TREASURY VOLUME 5

by Unknown

*A collection of articles and writings from Bible Treasury Volume 5, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.*

251 Chapters

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Chapter 0

# Bible Treasury Volume 5

# Thoughts on 1 Corinthians 1:27-31

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

If a man sets up to be righteous, God will break that down as He did in Paul. We are easily satisfied with ourselves; a very little righteousness will do.

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

All that does not give rest to the conscience is folly and fades away.

Carelessness and boasting of sin and self-righteousness are both folly and vanity. The difference between them is that the self-righteous man is more proud than his neighbor; but there is not a single motive that he would not be glad not to have had in the presence of God. There is a way of deliverance open from the judgment. God speaks, “Where art thou?” You are naked in His presence, but there is a resource in Christ's love, and this is granted here, not when we get to heaven. There is heart enough in Jesus to open the heart of the vilest sinner. “Doth no man accuse thee? No man, Lord. Neither do I accuse thee.” &e. (John 13)

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

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

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

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

Chapter 2

## Thoughts on 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

THERE is nothing perhaps more striking in reading either the gospels or the epistles, the sayings of the Lord Jesus Himself, or what, in some respects, are more wonderful, the statements of the apostles, than the entire familiarity that appears in them, with the highest divine things. It is never, of course, nor could it be, that familiarity which, in human things, because of their imperfection, takes away reverence. But the nearer we are to God, the more we see His blessedness, while there will be the reverence that becomes His presence, at the same time there is perfect familiarity with the highest divine things. It stamps the one born of God—it stamps the divine revelation that we have. I can tell that the Father loves the Son—nothing can be simpler than the expression; but what a thing to know His divine affections in themselves! It is not merely that He loves me; that is true; but the Father loves the Son. So with the divine counsels. He hath “made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure, which He hath purposed in Himself?” It is all brought out; as it is expressed in that word, “Ye have an unction from the Holy One and ye know all things.” It is not that simply certain testimonies have come out; that was the case with the prophets; or that certain commandments have been given which are the most perfect expression of what man ought to be, as in the law; but God has revealed Himself, and that in the perfectness of His own love, that He might be known. Along with this, and specially characterizing Christianity, there is not only the perfect revelation of Himself in His own nature as God, as light and love, revealing the Father, Son, and Spirit; but He has given us the Spirit, has made us “partakers of the divine nature,” that we might be capable of enjoying what He is, and He has given us the Holy Ghost that we might know what He is. You get first our being set before God in perfect acceptance, “accepted in the Beloved.” And then beyond that, the truth that God has not only revealed Himself to us that we might have confidence in coming to Him in Christ, but that He reveals Himself in us after having set us in Christ there, that the conscience should be placed in His presence. At the same time we read of being “strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man,” it is also said, “that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.” So that He who is the center of all the thoughts and counsels of God, of all His glory as revealed, the Son Himself dwells in us, and sets us thus in the center of all this glory, that we should comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height. It is not only that there has been a revelation to us of the Father and Son, and the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, but that He has so associated us with Christ as dwelling in us, and that by the power of the Holy Ghost, that He sets our souls in the center of all these affections and of all this knowledge and glory. Therefore the apostle cannot exactly say what it is, but only says “what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height,” and adds, “and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.” He has been a man and dwelt among us, yet He dwells in us, and His love passes knowledge. This brings us into such blessed intimacy, though ever more adoringly; for the more we know Him, the more we shall see that He is God. So even with Christ Himself. We are there in the same glory with Himself, but this only brings us into the capacity to know the infinite blessedness of His person. We see this in the scene of the transfiguration. The moment there was the thought in the heart, “Let us make three tabernacles, one for thee, one for

Moses, and one for Elias," the Father says, "This is my beloved Son, hear him." He stands alone. Yet we now, by the grace which associates us with Him, are brought into that which is divinely blessed and perfect: it is the peculiar blessedness of Christianity. It is not now merely sending out a law to show what man ought to be, but it is eternal life and in the true knowledge of the Father and Son, and this in the power of the Holy Ghost. Therefore the affections of the heart are of the Spirit and are filled with the Spirit, and they have their play in all true Christian affection. Being brought into such a place, all our ways, the condition of our soul and our conduct, of course, are looked for to be conformed to that of which Christ Himself is the perfect expression. It is not merely that there is a certain rule of conduct, as in the law, but it is Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith; so that our thoughts, and feelings, and affections should flow from that source through the Holy Ghost. That is what is meant by being "filled with the Spirit." We all have the Spirit, but we are not all "filled with the Spirit." He is the one source of everything where the heart is filled with Him.

That which is here brought before us is not only the blessedness of the place we are put in, but the conduct of the Christian suitable to it in every respect. And it is that which suits the presence of the Holy Ghost dwelling in him. Whatever is not fit for His presence, is not fit for the Christian. It will come down to the most ordinary things of life; because there is a path which is pleasing to God in this world—there is one way for a person to walk and no other. Supposing a son has left his father's house, and has gone off to a strange country; he may not be outwardly given up to what shocks the conscience, but he cannot, as long as he is there, do right; he must go back in order to do what is right; until he does this, in all he does there is not one thing that is right. This is the way with man in the world. He has left God, and cannot do anything right, never can do anything positively right, till he gets back. If we are in our right place we do not want a way. Adam wanted no way in the garden of Eden; his business was to stay where he was. In the world where wickedness is, we want a way; but there is no way really, because we have departed from God. But when the Spirit of God has come into it, He has created a path for him that believes. For the Jews in the wilderness where the cloud went, there was a way directly. God can make a way for Himself, no matter how wicked the world. If I injure a man, it is wrong: and if be revenges himself, it is wrong; but Christ can make a way through it all. He can give me to walk with wisdom and patience in all circumstances. He can bring in motives and principles for every difficulty of this world: and that is where the Christian has to walk. "He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk even as he walked."

The life of Jesus should be manifested in us. Our life ought to be the expression of this new thing—that is, divine life in the midst of a world that is away from God. Nothing but Christ can do that, and it is Christ in us. The power of it is by the presence of the Holy Ghost acting upon "the new man which after God is created in righteousness and in true holiness." It is not the old thing corrected at all, because the old man never can have the divine motives. It has its motives; it may be corrected in an outward thing, for people are not all thieves and robbers; but it never can have the motives that belong to the divine nature, and therefore though it may be decent and respectable, it never can be right. It is the nature that has departed from God, and it cannot be right at all. We read that that which we have, the new man, is "after God, created in righteousness and in true holiness." And in another part it is said that it is "renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him," The measure of spiritual knowledge, as to the walk and affections, is the image of Him who created us: and where do I see this perfectly? In Christ. He is "the image of the

invisible God.” The power of that life was shown in the resurrection; the character of that life was shown in all His path on earth. He was “declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.” The declaration of the power of the life was in resurrection; the character of it we see in the Son of God walking in this world; and that is our life.

“Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own.” It is redeemed. “Ye are bought with a price.” Being redeemed by God the body, which is our servant and vessel of working, is the temple of the Holy Ghost. There I get power, and power by One dwelling in me, whose presence is that which must measure everything I do. Therefore He says, “Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.” That is the measure He furnishes us. He gives us intelligence, and affections, and objects, which the law could not do, but Christ does. He gives us a blessed hope too; but He dwells in us now. Our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost; and we are called upon so to walk, that in nothing, in word, or thought, or act, we should grieve the Spirit of God. It is a wonderful measure in this case. The Spirit has these thoughts and feelings, and produces them in us.

Mark then how Christ is connected with this: “Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ?” What sweetness there is in that! But it is not merely a fact; it is the principle by which I measure all conduct in His presence. How do I come there? I have it all of God. “Know you not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God.” What a thought God must have about me—to make a poor creature like me His temple—the dwelling-place of the Holy Ghost! To think that God's thought about such poor creatures should be that He would make me a temple of the Holy Ghost! that He has given me the Holy Ghost to dwell in me! Then there is absolute cleansing; for He could not dwell in a defiled tabernacle, and then He seals till the day of redemption. God has given me the Holy Ghost to dwell in me in virtue of having cleansed me, and He has given me the seal and earnest of it. God's mind has been, having cleansed me, to give me the perfect witness and testimony of His own infinite love. “He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God and God in him.” He gives us the Holy Ghost to dwell in us, the seal of this love and of the redemption that He has accomplished. He makes our bodies the temple of the Holy Ghost; and while this is the measure and test of all that is according to God by His own presence, that presence is the expression of God's perfect love; for His love is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us.

And here he appeals to them as to not sinning. How can you go and sin with a body that is the temple of the Holy Ghost? It is not merely breaking such a command or the like; but the motive here is, “What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?” And you are going to commit sin with it? All exhortations are founded upon the blessed place into which He has brought us. “Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God.” God Himself has given it, to put you in connection with Himself, and are you going into connection with sin and vileness? It is applied to everything. The body is the vessel of the presence and action of God by the Holy Ghost. We do fail; but that is what it is; and we are renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him. What a place we are set in! It makes us feel our own lowliness and our own shortcomings—and so much the better. If we are humble, we do not need to be humbled. If a man is not humble, he needs to be humbled; if he is humble, he is the recipient of grace; “for God resisteth the proud and giveth grace unto the

humble.” And wherever a person is really humble, he may have a great deal to learn, but at any rate he is in his right place with God. Instead of His having to contend with us, we are the recipients of blessing. If it is not so, humbling must come in. “What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God?”

Then comes the second motive. “And ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.” Here I get a positive motive—not simply power in the presence of God, but a positive motive from the perfect work of Christ: we are not our own. If we were, we were lost. If we are to have blessing, to be a blessing, it is in this—that we are not our own at all. Wherever I act in my own will in anything, I am wronging God of His own title through the blood of Christ. We are not our own. Christ is ours: but there is the second thing—not only that Christ is mine, but that I am His: and the heart delights to be His and not its own, because it has learned His love to us, who has loved us and given Himself for us. Therefore in the knowledge of this eternal love, our delight is to belong to Him, and this too as to practice. “Ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.” It is not merely saying, Do right; but He puts us at once in connection with God. Think of our glorifying God! Christ could do it as a man: but can I, wretched as I am, glorify God? Yes. If I am walking in His Spirit and having no motive but Christ, it brings in the power of God which the world knows nothing about. We are called to glorify God in our body: it belongs to Him—it is God's; and what a relief it is when I think that this body which was the wretched slave of sin, now belongs to God! It is His property. It has been taken out of its old condition entirely, and it does not belong to my corrupt will at all. I am not a debtor to the body, but it belongs to God. This is an immense joy, and it shows that everything has been done for one; for even this poor wretched body belongs to God, and I am to use it thus—to glorify God.

There we have the two great leading motives and springs of conduct which the apostle sets before us here as to our faith and conduct: namely, that our body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which we have of God; and that we are bought with a price, and belong to God. The power, intelligence, and all, is that which we have of God; it is the Holy Ghost, of which our body is made the temple; and when I look at the body in itself, it now, through the work of Christ, belongs to God. The Holy Ghost dwells in me in power and intelligence; my body is made His temple, and I must use it according to that presence which I thus have of God. I am not now my own at all—I am bought with a price—I belong to God.

The Lord give us in joy of heart, in unfailing, deep thankfulness of spirit, to know that, on the one side, our bodies are the temple of the Holy Ghost; and, on the other, that these bodies are bought with a price and that they belong to God!

Chapter 3

# Thoughts on 1 Peter 1:1-7

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

We get the character and path of the Christian—both these things. The blessed faithfulness of the Lord in keeping it for us and us for it, and at the same time the character of the Christian as passing onward towards it, and a little of the trials of the way. We first see that here. You will find it in the striking contrast with the law and the position that Israel had under it. Indeed this runs through the whole—constantly in the New Testament. He says, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father." He rests them on this blessed truth—their being elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. Not merely a people chosen out as a nation, but it was that foreknowledge of God the Father through which they had this place: and then the Spirit of God comes and sanctifies them, sets them apart. We get then what they are set apart to practically, as a present thing, and that is, the obedience of Jesus Christ, and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. These are just the two essential points of the life and path of Jesus, one running into the other; and, in this case, if I may so speak, the one completing the other. For us the great thought is the obedience of Jesus Christ and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ applies to the obedience as well as to the sprinkling of the blood, and both are in contrast with the law, whether as regards what the law required, or as regards the sacrifices of the law—the obedience and sacrifice of Jesus Christ are in contrast with both.

As regards our obedience it is essential for the true character of our path as Christians that we should get hold of what this obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ was. Legal obedience in us is a different thing. We have got a will of our own: that was not true of Christ. He had a will in one sense, as a man, but He said, "Not my will, but thine, be done." But we have got a will of our own;

it may be checked and broken down. But if the law is applied to us, it is as stopping this will, but it finds it here, and our notion of obedience constantly is that. Take a child, there is a will of its own; but when the parents' will comes in and the child yields instantly without a struggle, and either does what it is bid or ceases to do what it is forbidden, you say this is an obedient child, and it is delightful to see such an obedient spirit. But Christ never obeyed in that way. He never had a will to do things of His own will in which God had to stop Him—it was not the character of His obedience. It is needed with us, and we all know it, if we know anything of ourselves; but it was not the character of His obedience. He could not wish for the wrath of God in the judgment of sin, and tie prayed that that cup might pass from Him. But the obedience of Christ had quite another character from legal obedience. His Father's will was His motive for doing everything: “Lo, I come, to do thy will, O God.”

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

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

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

of piety with God, communion is uninterrupted, because the Spirit is not grieved. This is the obedience of Jesus Christ, to which we are set apart.

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

Such was the double character of Jesus, whether throughout His life or in death. Even in dying His obedience was His life in that sense. And that is what characterizes the Christian. This introduces us at once into the unclouded apprehension of an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, reserved in heaven for us. He has begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. I see His path down here—He has gone up there—death has no power over Him. And now through Him nothing stands in the way between me and the incorruptible inheritance. Death itself is totally overcome—so entirely, that if the Lord Jesus were to come soon enough, we should never die at all. In any case, we shall be changed and glorified; but I speak now as showing the way in which the power of death is set aside, so that instead of our belonging to death now, death belongs to us. All things, the apostle says, are yours, “Whether life or death, or things present or things to come.” Christ having come in and having gone down to the full depth of everything for us, He has gone through it all and has left no trace of it in the resurrection. It is not merely that the blood has been sprinkled, but He has left no trace of anything. Therefore, though we may die, it is gain if we do. It is to an inheritance incorruptible.

Then we come to a third point in the chapter, that is, the keeping through the way. There are difficulties, and trials, and temptations—it is well we should look them in the face. Everybody is not passing smoothly through this life, though some may be more so than others. There are plenty of difficulties and trials, and we have to make straight paths for our feet. Still, we are “kept by the power of God,” but, mark this, it is “through faith.” We have to remember that, and this is why the trials come in. We can count upon the whole power of God, but it is exercised in sustaining our faith in God, as the Lord says to Peter, “I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not.” He does not take us out of trial; on the contrary, it is said, “Ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations.” There may be this heaviness through trial; no such thing as doubting God's goodness, but the pressure, whether of sorrow or of that which might tend to make our feet slip, may produce heaviness of spirit. But after all it is “only for a season,” and “if need be.” Do not make yourselves uneasy: the One who holds the reins of the need-be is God. He does not take pleasure in afflicting. If there is the need for it, we go through the trial, but it is only for a moment. It is a process that is going on, and do you fancy that you do not want it? The great secret is to have entire confidence in the love of God, in the certainty that He is the doer of it—not looking at circumstances or at second causes, but seeing the hand of the Lord in it, that it is the trial of our faith, and that it is only on the way. When the day comes when God has things His own way, (He does His own work now, of course, but when He has things His own way,) these very trials will be found to praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. It is a process that He is carrying on now, it may be

even the putting into the furnace to bring out the preciousness of the faith. It is not a question of being cleansed, but He does cause us to pass through all that which He sees needed for discipline. He uses the things that are in the world: the evil, the sin, the of others, all the things that are in the world, He uses simply as an instrument to break down and exercise our heart, so that our obedience may be simple, and that our faith may be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus.

We see thus what a strengthening thing is the waiting for Christ. It is not spoken of here in the highest way, but it is the same general principle. I am waiting. I do not think much of an uncomfortable inn if I know that I am only there for two or three days on the way. I might perhaps wish it were better, but I do not trouble myself much about it, because I am not living there. I am not living in this world, I am dying here; if there is a bit of the old life, it has to be put to death. My life is hid with Christ in God. I am waiting for the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ—waiting for God's on from heaven, who is going to take us there, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, that fadeth not away; and all that we pass through here is merely this exercise of heart, which God sees to be needed to bring us there where the Lord Himself will have us with Himself, and that forever. And there is nothing more practically important for every day work and service, than our waiting for God's Son from heaven.

If you want to know what this world is, and if you want to get comfort for your soul, you will be waiting for God's Son from heaven. If I am belonging to the world, 1 cannot have comfort. The apostle says, “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.” And if we are getting into ease in it, we shall find His discipline. But the moment I am waiting for God's Son from heaven, my life is but the dealings of God with me with all object, and that object that it should be to praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. Let me ask you all, What would be the effect of Christ's coming on your souls? Would it be this? Here I am passing through in heaviness because of manifold temptations, but He will come and take me out of it to Himself. Or would it surprise you? Would it find you with a number of things which you would have to leave behind? As to your heart, where is your heart with respect to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ? Young or old, (there may be more to learn if we are young; but) would the coming of the Lord Jesus find you with plenty of things that you would have to throw overboard? or with this feeling, Here is an end of all the exercise of heart; He for whom I have been waiting is coming to take me to Himself. There is the difference between Christians. If my whole life is founded upon this, that His will is the motive and spring of it, I shall find the exercises and the needed trial; but the coming of the Lord would be simply this to my soul—He is coming to take me away to Himself.

The Lord give us to be of a true heart, and to remember that, if we are Christians, Christ is our life, and Christ could not have a portion down here. Joy and peace and quietness of spirit go with it, and real happiness: only we must have faith. Abraham found in the mountain a place where he could intercede with God, while Lot was saying, “I cannot escape to the mountain lest some evil take me and I die.” Unbelief always looks at the place of faith as the most awful thing possible—all darkness. The Lord give us to know what it is to live the life which we live “by the faith of the Son of God!”

# 1 Samuel 8-13

Saul is a solemn and sad illustration of the possession of a gift unaccompanied by life to God, a gift poured into an unpurged, unsanctified vessel. He was the fruit of the revolted heart of Israel. It was their departure from the Lord which called him forth. And accordingly the Lord Himself (if I may so speak) and Samuel were in the secret of what manner of a king this Saul would be. (chap 8.) He could not have been a man after the Lord's heart, because he was the fruit of the people's heart and desire. David is different; he is God's gift to the people, proceeding from Himself

Saul is, however, bestowed on the people according to men's desire—duly anointed, and endowed, and turned into another man, i.e., made a gifted instrument, or a fitted vessel, for the service of Israel. (Chap. ix.)

His appointment to the kingdom is verified in the mouth of witnesses, the accomplishment of signs, and then he has to do as occasion demands, to obey the word of the Lord. (Chap. 10:7, 8.)

Thus he is set agoing. But there is no exercise of conscience, no godly acceptance of his place as under God, nothing that bespeaks a change in the “scent” or “taste” of nature; all that we get is a filled vessel, or a gifted instrument.

An occasion arises to make a demand on Saul. This is the haughty challenge of Nahash the Ammonite. It was just such an occasion as calls forth the exercise of his gift. He heads an army under the energy of the Spirit, contends with the foe, and humbles the pride of the king of Ammon. (Chap. xi.)

The people are all enthusiasm. They are for taking vengeance at once on the men who had before despised the son of Cis. For the gift in his hand had now served them, working a great deliverance from a proud oppressor, and they rejoice in the king. They shelter under his shadow, indifferent, so that it shelter them, whether it be the shadow of a bramble or a cedar.

Samuel, however, is not of that mind. This mere exercise of gift, or display of power, is not what satisfies him. Of course he owns the deliverance, and the anointing of the hand which had wrought it. But he is not all joy as the people are. There is a chastened mind in him. He cannot but remember the rock out of which this king was hewn, the word of the Lord respecting him, and the whole complexion of the present moment. He, therefore, warns the people, and speaks as intimating that they would do well to moderate their exultation. Saul's gift had been indeed vindicated. But Saul himself had not been as yet proved. An occasion had tested the gift, but the commandment had not yet tested the heart of the king. Samuel's joy is, therefore, postponed. (Chap. vii.) But the time of the commandment came and “the word of the Lord tries him.” The obedience of Saul to the Lord, and not his gift in the Spirit, was now to be assayed. (Chap. viii. 8-12.)

It was a serious moment: I feel it to be so, as I write upon it. The vessel had disbursed the treasure committed to it; but what was the vessel itself? How was the king's heart before God? His hand, in

the skill and strength of the Spirit, had reduced the Ammonites; but is he himself reduced to the obedience of his divine Lord?

This is the question now. He had stood against the foe to the administration of the people, but the word of commandment has now to try how he stands with God.

This is solemn. Gift may pass beyond grace; as form may be without power. And Saul's heart toward God is found hollow, though his hand had exercised its talent to admiration.

The Lord give us to heed this!

In the times of the New Testament, the Corinthians “came behind in no gift;” but withal there was moral relaxation, and the need of a girding of themselves afresh in the life and vigor of personal godliness. Love of ease, self-indulgence in many ways, and the habits of a Corinthian nature, are much prevailing. The first epistle tells us all this.

The gifted Paul, however, was a different one from the gifted Corinthian. He kept his body under, while he preached to others. His gift was not in a Corinthian vessel. And as he says to Timothy, so we may be sure did he exercise himself, “take heed to thyself and to the doctrine, for in doing this thou shalt save thyself and them that hear thee.”

Balaam had the gift of a prophet, and so had Caiaphas the high priest, and Saul had the gift of a king. All were in the Spirit, or under the anointing; but the vessels were unclean.

It is all a serious story, and may find its moral uses now-a-days.

But further. In these chapters Saul also witnesses that there may be some attractive exercises of nature, which, however, are not to be trusted.

He owns himself as nobody when Samuel talks of the kingdom to him. He was little in his own eyes then. When the lot was casting, he hides himself in the stuff. In the day of his victory he will have none of his adversaries touched. But with all this, there was no principle of obedience in him, no heart subject to God.

It is, indeed, a solemn picture: a splendid gift in an unclean vessel, and much showy exercise of affection, without a subject heart!

Chapter 5

# 1 Timothy 1

One is struck in reading the two epistles of Paul to Timothy with the thought, how exceedingly practical they are. One cannot fail to see that God has a purpose in his heart towards His people, and that purpose is of conforming them to heaven and to Christ. And it is peculiarly precious the title the apostle uses of God. He speaks of the “glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust” —the “blessed” God, one who dwells in blessedness and love, and goodness, and who has nothing but blessedness, love, and goodness in His presence. With such an end in view of conforming his people to heaven and to Christ, the first thing he does is to put us in a cloudless title in his presence of blessedness; but before we see this unclouded title, we must see two things. First, the triumph of evil over this blessedness, over good: and, secondly, the requisition from God to man, where the evil had triumphed, as to what would be required of Him to accomplish perfectly, so as to stand in the presence of God, who was supremely good

As to the first of these things, the triumph of evil over good, we look back to the garden of Eden, and find that God had created man in innocence, surrounded him with every blessing for his enjoyment, and, while in such a state, He had given him the opportunity to show that he owned his blessings from the hand of God, and when alive in this state, he is told he may freely enjoy all the blessings around him, but that of the fruit of one tree he was not to eat; the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The result is known—man hearkened to the lie of Satan, too readily turned aside to listen to his suggestions, and received the doubt into his heart; the evil had triumphed over the good, and man fell; and God, the blessed God, had to drive him out of the place He had put him in. “So he drove out the man.” And thus driven out, he bears with him to the place outside of good and blessedness, a conscience, the knowledge of good and evil.

In the second place, we find that God gave a certain requirement to man, that he should fulfill perfectly, so as to stand in the presence of God; and this requirement was the law. It requires just what it ought to require from man; and tells him exactly what he ought to be: that he should love God with all his heart, and mind, and soul, and strength; and that he should love his neighbor as himself. That he should not lust, &c. It gave him an exact and perfect rule to that conscience he had received when he had transgressed, and bore with him when he was driven out of the garden: the law came to him and found him a sinner, and nothing else. The law thus given to him would have been unintelligible to Adam in the garden before he fell; if it came to him there and said,” Thou shalt not lust,” he would not have known what it meant: there was nothing to lust for, and no lust in his heart. It was a perfect standard, doubtless, and brought out definitely the lusts of a heart that had departed from God. It gave the true, just measure of what we ought to be, while we are not it; and “by law is knowledge of sin.” And when it brings the knowledge of sin, it leads also to two discoveries. First, that I had not only done this and that, which it condemns, but, secondly, that there is a something within, an evil root, which led to the commission of such things. Why is it that we have committed sin? Tremendous discovery! Because we liked it! And the perfect standard of God's law brought to light the fact that we loved sin in its nature and practice! It became thus the ministration of death to us. Useful, most useful, in convicting of such things, and bringing death to

the conscience, but it belongs to a child of Adam and to none else.

But when heaven is opened, I find something else. I find that I had been in Paradise, surrounded with blessing and goodness, and that I had lost it, and been driven out of it; and that I never can get back; that there is no going back there; that Satan had come in, and I had trusted him, and hearkened to him, and distrusted the God who had put me there, that the evil had triumphed over the good, and that I never can be innocent again; there is no going back to that state, no unlearning the knowledge of good and evil. Shall I then remain in that wretched place, far away from the God who is perfect, and goodness, and love, and blessedness? Ah! that will not do for my soul. How then am I to get there, to leave the condition I am in, and to be fit for that God who is perfect in good? To be it, and to enjoy it now? I must have “a good conscience” —a conscience so perfect that it can charge me with nothing in the presence of that God who dwells in light. And to this end I must for myself learn the triumph of good over evil; I must learn what the apostle speaks of in verse 5 of our chapter, “The end of the commandment (or, charge) is charity (love) out of a pure heart, and a good conscience, and faith unfeigned.” He speaks then of love out of a pure heart—a heart from which every motive and thought comes by the. Holy Ghost from a nature within capable of enjoying God in light; which loves to think the thoughts of God, to walk in His ways, to look forward to be with Him, and to enjoy Him even now; and, having such a hope, to purify itself even as He is pure. He speaks of a good conscience—a conscience that can know God in the unsullied purity of light and holiness in which He dwells; and, knowing Him thus, to have the answer of a good conscience in His presence, and that it stands on an unclouded title to be there. And he adds, lastly, “faith unfeigned;” full and perfect trust and confidence in God Himself, as One who is for him, come what will, One who knows no change, and that nothing can move Him from His love.

The apostle having thus shown the purpose of God, and the end of the charge which he had received, turns severely to the teachers of the law, who were seeking to subvert it; he takes up the question of the law. Whom is it for? It is for the “lawless and disobedient, for ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for men-stealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine.” Most useful, truly, it is in convicting of such things, and leaving those who commit them without excuse before God. But they must learn another thing about it: it can never make alive! “If there had been a law given that could have given life, verily righteousness would have been by the law” (Gal. 3:21). “By the law is the knowledge of sin.” It could not quicken, but it brought death to the conscience. It could not give strength to keep it, for “the strength of sin is the law.” It was not, therefore, the triumph of good over evil.

But when I turn to Christ in the glory, another thing comes in. I find One who was in the midst of the evil here, surrounded by it on every side, passing through it, and yet who never was defiled. I find in Himself personally the exhibition of the perfect triumph of perfect good in the midst of the evil of the world. Perfect in the holy calmness of divine goodness, surrounded by evil, and yet above it. Oh! I say, if I could be like that—if I could be what I see in Him! I behold Him with the leper who comes to Him and says, “Lord, if thou wilt thou canst make me clean” —a defiled and loathsome leper, whose very touch was pollution to me. He could have removed the leprosy with a word; the leper saw that there was power in Jesus to do this, and he comes to Him. “Jesus put

forth his hand and touched him, and said, I will, be thou clean." There was One there who could do this, and yet be undefiled. Again I behold Him at the well of Samaria, and see the patient grace of a heart adapting itself to the need of the outcast woman who met Him there; one poor soul before Him that He would save, and yet could not screen her sins. "Come and see a man that told me all things that ever I did," shows us that all was laid bare; herself was exhibited to her. One was there who does not hide her evil from her, but searches her heart and convicts her conscience; and the moment her soul is in the truth, as to its condition before Him, He is nothing, absolutely nothing but grace! Here I say there is the exhibition of perfect good in the midst of evil. He was there winning back the confidence of fallen man to the God against whom he had sinned. As if God had said, "There you are sinners, you have sinned away the blessings I have given to you; you have driven one away when I came to seek you, and now even as sinners you may trust in me!" Yes, beloved reader, the weary, sin-burdened soul looks around it in a world of sin for a hiding-place, a refuge from its misery and wretchedness, separated from and outside of the source and center of good, and it seeks in vain. Where am I to go? Where to hide my poor weary heart? But I turn to Him, and find (blessed be His holy name!) in Him, one who is perfect in holiness, perfectly good, and yet I find too that I can discharge my heart into the ear of One whom I have learned to trust when I could find no other! I find Him a God of perfect good to me, when He was compelled to drive me out of Paradise!

But I follow this perfect One, from whom all have received good, to the cross, where "He appeared once in the end of the world to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself; and as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment, so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and to them that look for Him, He shall appear the second time without sin unto salvation." I find Him there perfectly glorifying God to the utmost on account of sin; perfect in the act, as well as perfect in the person of Him who accomplished the act: perfect in His obedience unto death, even the death of the cross; One capable in His person of bearing the full burst of Divine wrath and judgment, and yet so fully alive to the suffering of that unparalleled moment, so as to say, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" I see Him sinless, and yet "bruised for our iniquities," and that "by His stripes we are healed." Thus I get the answer of a good conscience toward God. Perfect good had come into the midst of the evil, when it had risen to its full and awful height, and the good had triumphed over the evil, risen above it, and set it aside forever!

This is what He came to accomplish and what He has done; it is the "end of the charge." "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief; howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering for a pattern to them who should hereafter believe on him unto life everlasting." "By him we believe in God," and thus we get a good conscience in His presence—a conscience that can be charged with nothing that it sees not fully answered according to the light of God; and we learn to trust Him, to exercise faith unfeigned. This is the charge he commits unto his son Timothy, according to prophecies which went before on him; and to us also that we may learn to war a good warfare, holding faith—faith unfeigned; entire and unbounded confidence in God's unbounded love; and a conscience practically good, void of offense towards God and man.

NOTE. - The writer of the above paper is indebted to our beloved brother J. N. D. for many of the thoughts in it, having heard a discourse on this passage of Scripture from him in Guernsey, in July, 1864.

Chapter 6

# Fragment: 2 Corinthians 5:9

Paul labored to please Christ, whatever might be the class in which he would be found at the coming of the Lord, whether among those who have fallen asleep before, or among those who will be still remaining, living on earth, when he comes.

Chapter 7

# Adam and Christ

Rom. 5:19 speaks of Adam and Christ as two heads of races subordinated to them, in contrast with law, showing that we must not confine Christ to those under law, since death and sin reigned where there was none—between Adam and Moses—over those who had not transgressed any covenant like Adam. (see Hos. 6:7.) And Christ's work could not be limited within bounds short of sin and sinners. It is a contrast between sin and lawbreaking: the passage showing that it was not simply by law-breaking but by a disobedience which applied to those who were not under law, and an obedience which did the same, that evil and good came; and making, not individual law-keeping., but their state in their respective heads, the true ground of ruin or righteousness; and then adds, in direct explicit, contrast with this, "but law entered that the offense might abound; but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Rom. 5:19 is the summary of the argument of the obedient and disobedient, man in contrast with law; and not only so, but declares that the law came in by the bye, as a distinct thing. The verses 12, 13, 14, 20, show that the apostle diligently argues here against obedience, sin, or righteousness being confined to lawbreaking or law-fulfilling. But this is not all. In chapter 6 the apostle raises the question in practice; whether not being under law is a reason for sinning as is alleged "sin," he argues, "shall not have dominion over us, because we are not under law, but under grace;" and then shows that, though not under law, we yield ourselves up to obedience unto righteousness. He contrasts Christian obedience with law. Taking from under law might seem, as with our modern divines, to take away from obedience. The answer of the apostle is, "in no wise." we get from under the power of sin, because we are not under law; and we obey as servants to righteousness and to God, being not under law. In a word, the passage quoted to show that obedience is law-fulfilling is an elaborate argument of the apostle's to show, that, while doubtless Christ kept the law, as to him and as to us obedience is insisted on outside, and in contrast with, law.

Chapter 8

# Fragment: Adam Created in Innocence

It is often said that Adam was created in righteousness and holiness. This is all erroneous. He was created in innocence. The new man is created in righteousness and true holiness—Christ, not Adam. (Eph. 4:24.)

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Chapter 11

# Scripture Query and Answer: The Body and the Bride

Q. 1. Was Not the Truth of Christ and His Members—One Body—The Mystery Hid in Past Ages and Revealed to Paul?

2. Was the truth of “the Bride” a mystery? Was it hid in the Old Testament? Is not Rebekah a type of “the Bride?” Was not Eliezer forbidden to take a Gentile bride for Isaac?

3. Where is the Church—the body—ever spoken of as “the Bride?" W. S.

A. 1. The mystery hid from ages and generations consists of two parts (1), the supremacy of Christ over the entire universe of God, of all things, whether in heaven or on earth; and (2) of the Church, His body, composed of Jews and Gentiles baptized by the Holy Ghost, united to Him as head over all. It was revealed to the holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit, but in fact revealed by Paul to us.

2, 3. It is evident from Eph. 5, Rev. 19; 22, that the figure of “the Bride, the Lamb's wife,” equally applies to the Church. Eve, in Gen. 2, and Rebekah, in Gen. 24, &c, revealed nothing of the mystery. They told their own profitable tale of old, but nobody ever did or could draw from them alone the union of the Church with Christ in heaven. When the truth of the Church, Christ's body and bride, came to view, Unlit these scriptures yielded a further deeper meaning in God's wisdom, though even then the union of Jew and Gentile in one new man, the body of Christ, the head of all things in heaven and earth went far beyond any or all these types. But the reference is distinct in Eph. 5 to Adam and Eve on this point. “It is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the Church.” The point forbidden in Gen. 24 is not a Gentile bride, but a daughter of the Canaanites (i.e., the type of a wicked spirit in the heavenlies.) In Eph. 5 the point is the wife or bride as much as the body.

That there will be an earthly bride, according to the Psalms, Prophets, and Canticles, does not clash with the truth that there is a heavenly bride, married to the Lamb before the appearing of Christ and distinct from the blessed guests who are to be at the supper (the Old Testament saints, I suppose). Rev. 22:17 is conclusive to my mind that “the bride” of the Apocalypse is none other than the Church, now waiting for Christ with the Holy Spirit dwelling in her and prompting the precious word, “Come.” Far different will be the relation and attitude of the Jewish remnant, before the Lord appears for their deliverance.

Chapter 12

# Fragment: To Be Cast Down

To be cast down is not wrong, but it is so when the being cast down causes distrust.

Chapter 13

# Fragment: Children and Parents

If a man were to teach or incite the children of a family to do anything he knew was displeasing to the parent, how could he say he loved the children for the father's sake?

Chapter 14

# Fragment: Christ the Rule of Life

Law is a principle on which we cannot live to God, any more than we can be justified thereby. No doubt we cannot be justified by works of law; but there is much more than that. It condemns us positively if we are under it. It works wrath. It cannot give life; but that is not all. It is a ministration of death—is found to be under death—is the strength of sin.

What is the rule of life? Christ, I answer; Christ is our life, rule, pattern, example, and everything; the Spirit, our living quickener and power to follow Him; the Word of God, that in which we find Him revealed, and His mind unfolded in detail; but Christ and the Spirit, in contrast with law. (2 Cor. 3; Gal. 2:20; 5:16.)

Chapter 15

# Fragment: The Christian and the Law

The man who puts a Christian under law destroys the authority of the law, or puts the Christian under the curse; for in many things we offend all. He fancies he establishes law, but destroys its authority. He only establishes the full, immutable authority of law, who declares that the Christian is under grace, and therefore cannot be cursed by its just and holy curse

Chapter 16

# The Christian Walk

We find in Eph. 4; 5, a very remarkable unfolding of the principles of the Christian walk, of the height of the principles which ought to govern it, and of its moral elevation, to which I desire to draw the attention of your readers. In chapter 4 the apostle, after having developed Christian doctrine as to our relations with the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (relations founded on these two names, and afterward the relations of the Church with Christ), begins his exhortations to Christians with respect to their walk. They ought not to walk as the rest of the nations in the corruption which was bound up with the state of darkness in which they were found; they had not so learned the Christ, if they really knew what the truth is in Jesus; namely, to have put off the old man and put on the new man, which is created according to God in righteousness and holiness of truth.

For there is the truth such as it is in Jesus; not that we should strip off, but, inasmuch as we are risen with Him, that we have put off the old man and put on the new man. There then is the first principle of the Christian walk: we have put on the new man; and here is its character, created according to God; not only the absence of sin, which was realized in the first Adam, but according to God fully revealed to one who has already the knowledge of good and evil, and created according to the thoughts of God Himself as to good and evil according to the estimate which God by His very nature has of good and evil. What an immense privilege! The new man, born of God, is, in his nature, the reflection, and the intelligent reflection, of the nature of God Himself. Wherefore the Apostle John says he cannot sin because he is born of God. Also we find in the Epistle to the Colossians, which is parallel to this, “renewed into knowledge according to the image of Him who has created him.” Such is the first principle of the Christian walk, a nature which comes from God, created as an expression and reflection of what He is in righteousness and holiness of truth. Here it is a life, a nature, that which we ate.

The second principle is the presence of the Holy Spirit. “Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God by whom you have been sealed for the day of redemption.” It is God Himself who dwells in us by His Spirit. Nothing unworthy of such a guest, unworthy of God Himself ought to go on in us. Also, our walk should be characterized by that which characterizes God Himself, for His Spirit is active in us. Consequently we find here love also, and not only righteousness and holiness. We forgive one another, even as God in Christ has forgiven us. Christ being ascended on high and thus the righteousness of God being established, ourselves perfectly purified by the blood of Jesus, the Holy Spirit is come down, and the bodies of the believers are become the temple of God. It is the seal of God put upon their persons, the earnest of their entire redemption and of their part in the inheritance of glory.

The walk of the Christian ought then to be the manifestation of the divine nature, and of the ways of God in grace toward us. Such is the instruction which chapter 4 gives us; but chapter v. furnishes still more light. Who is it that has been the expression of this nature in man here below? Evidently it is the Savior, the image of the invisible God. Thus, Christ Himself becomes the

expression of this divine life in man, the model of our conduct. Let us examine this chapter v. in this point of view, that we may draw from it the instruction it contains.

“Be ye therefore imitators of God.” Have I not been right in speaking of the moral elevation of the Christian walk? Be imitators of God! Partakers of His nature and of the indwelling of His Spirit, we are called to imitate Him in the principles of His conduct. But then, as we have said, Christ is the perfect example of it; as the Holy Spirit goes on to say, “and walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor.” This adds a very precious element to the principles of the Christian walk. Here love has not the character of this divine love which pardons, being above evil, when a wrong is done us, as God pardons, in virtue of Christ, sin against Him. Here it is devotedness, an offering made of oneself to God. It is no more a law which would have one love his neighbor as himself, which would be blessedness without any remains of evil in the world. It is not loving God with all the heart, which supposes that evil is not there. It is a devotedness which supposes evil, a necessity which is the occasion for the exercise of love. One is given up for others, one is devoted. But for love in man, there must be a motive, an object. For this love to be perfect, the object, the motive of the love, must be perfect. If one is given up to a man, there may be a noble devotedness in it, but the motive is imperfect: love does not and cannot rise above its object. Just so, that there should be devotedness, there must be needy objects. These two elements are found in Christ. He gave Himself for us, for needy beings, objects of compassion on His part; but He gave Himself to God, infinite and perfect object, which could not have been, had He only given Himself to us and for us.

It is thus we ought to walk, ready to sacrifice ourselves for our brethren, always in self-abnegation to serve them, whilst offering ourselves to God Himself, to Christ whose we are. Thus the measure of our conduct is that of God Himself, Christ being our example in His life here below, in order that we should add love, the bond of perfect action, to brotherly kindness. It is not said that we are love, which is God's prerogative. He is love, and He loves, as to us, without any other motive than what He is; which could not be the case with a creature. We imitate Him in the matter of the wrongs that have been done us. But the love which acts from itself towards others, is of God alone.

Again, light is a quality in itself, a purity which also manifests everything. It is the second name that God gives Himself to express what He is. God is light. So Christ, when He was in this world, was the light of the world. We were darkness, we are light in the Lord. Thus in the Epistle to the Philippians we find respecting Christians that which might be said in every point of Christ Himself, “blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life.” In this pure nature we share, inasmuch as we have Christ for our life—purity in motives, in thoughts according to the divine nature; that which, manifested in this world, manifested the true character of all that is around us. We are light in the Lord.

Thus the two names, the only ones God gives Himself to express what He is, love and light, become the expression of what the Christian ought to be in his walk. He is even light in the Lord.

There exists another sort of motive and of rule, the relationships in which we are found, as father and children, husband and wife, master and slaves. We are in these relationships also with God and with His Christ. But it is another ground on which I do not enter at present. That of which I speak is the Christian character, as having divine life and the Holy Spirit in Christ; so that one has

to imitate the conduct of God and to take Christ for model on the earth.

Chapter 17

# The Christian's Nature and Relationship to God

There are two ways in which we may look at our relationship to God; and rightly. There is, first, our coming to Him; secondly, our souls may look at the counsels and dealings of God toward us. Of Abel it is said, God had respect unto his gifts—he came with his needed offering. We are looked at in the flesh as drawing near to God, I could not draw near, unless I could bring Christ as an offering. We must have that sacrifice in order to bring us near: consequently, in that case our relationship to God is measured by our need. We come near, because we find we cannot do without it, and we accept that offering as needful to accomplish t. In another way, the measure of God's blessing we never know until we look on our relationships, as measured by God's thoughts of us—by all that which He loves to display when He satisfies His own heart in grace, and by His way of showing it out. We never enjoy our true blessing unless we see how He feels and would act. My mind must rise above what I am to what God is: then my mind is formed by the thought of what God is. This is what we are called to. We must come in by our need, as the prodigal did. Man cannot by searching find out God. There cannot be any knowledge of God in grace by man being competent to know it. There would be no need of grace if he could know God otherwise. If I can claim His grace, I do not need grace at all. The way a sinner must come in must be by his need; in that way he learns grace, learns love. But when I have got to God, it is another thing. Then He would form our minds and hearts by what He is Himself. I came as a sinner because I needed it, just as a hungry man needs food, but when brought I have fellowship and communion with the God who has brought me to Himself. The measure is given in this epistle— “growing up into Christ, in all things.” It is a wonderful thing that God has called us to fellowship with Himself. It is wonderful to have the same thoughts, the same feelings as God, and to have them together: all flowing from Him, and we are brought into it by grace, and we enjoy it just so far as we are emptied of self.

First, He makes us partakers of the divine nature, the same nature as Himself. This gives the capacity, I do not say power. The new nature is capacity, the Holy Ghost is power. The new nature is entirely dependent and obedient. The Holy Ghost being there gives me power. In the Epistle of John this capacity is brought out in a remarkable manner. “Every one that loveth is born of God.” He has this nature, and he that loveth, is born of God, and knows God. Then, being partakers of His nature and by virtue of the blood being sprinkled on us, we have received the Holy Ghost which gives power. In order to communion there must be perfect peace as regards the conscience. There is no communion in conscience. I am alone as to my conscience, and so are you. In order to communion I must have far more than conscience, though a perfectly purged conscience is the basis of communion. We must know that God has settled the whole question of sin. The moment a child of God fails, communion ceases. The Spirit then becomes a reprover to bring him back, but there is no communion. Communion is the full enjoyment of God and divine things, having nothing to think of as regards myself. God can now let flow, into the heart that has a conscience purged, all that He delights in. He loves to communicate what He Himself has joy in. All that Christ is is for us to enjoy. You are called into this place of Christ Himself, He the head of

the body; so that the delight God has in Christ should flow down into your heart. How rich then the saint must be! but he is entirely dependent on the Spirit of God for power. There is no power to enjoy anything without Him. There must be an emptying from self to enjoy what He gives. The Spirit of God has no place to act where self and imagination are in exercise. It is not the glory, which is at the end, that is so much the object of the thoughts, as the source of it, God Himself.

There is more happiness in the fact of being in communication with Him than in the things He communicates; and I say again, because of its importance, a soul cannot have the enjoyment of the things of God without having peace which is connected with the conscience. The beginning of this chapter shows how we are presented to God. It is a test whether the judgment-seat brings any terror to your minds. Does it give you any uneasiness? How does the saint get there? Christ comes to fetch him. He said, “I will come again, and receive you unto myself.” Do you ever think of your coming before the judgment-seat being the effect of His having come to fetch you? He sends not for you, but comes Himself for you, because of His desire to have you with Him where He is; to be fashioned into the same image. You are to bear the imago of the heavenly as you have borne the image of the earthly. When you are there before the judgment-seat, you will be with Him and like Him. Every trace of God's unwearied hand, all His patience here brought out—we shall be like the One who is the Judge. You will never (I speak, of course, to saints now) be before the judgment-seat of Christ without Christ coming to fetch you in the same glory in which you are to be.

It is the knowledge of grace, of redemption, that leaves me at perfect liberty; and all my life should be a witness of the enjoyment of this blessedness into which we are being brought. The whole of this is through looking at Christ. He is the first-born among many brethren in the Father's house. We shall be with Christ and like Christ in the Father's house. There will be the blessedness of being with Christ in the presence of the Father, loved as He is loved. That is what we have in this chapter. We are set in the presence of God. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” We are blessed in Christ, and God is the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is “my God and your God,” Christ said. There is no measure of any relationship out of Christ: nothing but condemnation out of Christ. If I have known what it is to be condemned, if I have known what sin is, and how God hates sin, I know there can be no hope for me out of Christ. But God has put away sin. God does not look at my sin, but on Christ. Just as I know my condition in Adam, as ruined and condemned, so I know my place in Christ—accepted. How it throws us out of self-importance, self-dependence, self-glorying! We enter into the presence of God in Him who has perfectly glorified God. He is the God as well as Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is that wrought in Christ which was hidden from ages and generations, and He is gone back in virtue of what He has done to vindicate the character of God. We enter into the blessing in Him who has done all. We shall know God in virtue of what the Father bestows upon us. The Father brings many sons unto glory, and brought them back perfect through the efficacy of the work of Christ. “Blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ.” None can be wanting. Not an affection of God's delight but is there. He brings us into His presence without one reserve of the affection that Christ has. We are brought back in Christ; therefore all that Christ has we have.

How he goes on to unfold it! “That we should be holy and without blame before him in love.” He is not content with a mere general account, but brings it out in detail, that we may know it. Suppose I saw a person with an excellent character, and I felt I could never be like that person, I should not

be happy. The fact of the excellency of the person, without the possibility of being like him, would make me miserable; and to have him always before me would be all the worse. But in heaven I shall be with Christ and see Him without the possibility of being unlike Him. What divine inventiveness of love to make us happy—infinitely happy! What God is and does, is infinite: and it is so much the better that He will be always above us.

We shall have perfect freedom of intercourse with Him. Moses and Elias were speaking with Him of His death as we know on the mount of transfiguration. So by and by there will be communion with Him of all that He has.

“Without blame.” Released from all that which would hinder my loving Him; therefore, we are made “holy and without blame.” There is the proper joy of the heart— “before him in love” —but no thought of equality. Then there is another fact. “Chosen in him before the foundation of the world.” Thus we have the fact of His heart having been set upon us in eternity. The soul knows there is a personal love from God towards himself, and the heart delights in that. So with Christ. In Rev. 2 there is the white stone He will give, proof of personal delight. There is this individually rejoicing in the love of Christ.

How the Spirit seeks to draw out our affections by all this! He tells all this, and would have us know it and enjoy it. He would have us know we are going to heaven, and why? He would form our hearts by what He is doing, while bringing us in. “Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children,” (still in Christ and with Christ) “by Jesus Christ unto himself.” It is through Him, and by Him, and in Him I find it. It is having my heart fixed on God and the Father that my affections may be drawn out to Him, and all is because “accepted in the beloved.” God has not blessed angels like this. We are not servants only (we should be servants to be sure, but we are brought into the confidence of children): ought not a child to have confidence? “We have received the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry Abbe, Father.” Our heart should answer to God's outgoings of heart in grace, should reflect His grace— “to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he has made us accepted in the beloved.” He has done it all.

But another thing is to be remarked here—there is not a word about the inheritance. I dwell on that as showing how the affections of the saint are formed. If I speak of inheritance, it is something below me. All prophecy concerns the inheritance; but I am looking at what is above me, and my own blessedness is in what is above me. Subjects connected with the Church, blessed as they are, prophecy, &c., are below. He will exercise us about these things; but let me first get my relationship with my Father known. Do not talk to me of what I have, but what Christ is and what Christ has. My soul must enjoy the love that has given it all. The love that has saved is more then the things given. It is of importance to the saints to feel this in the presence of God. It is not mental power, but the heart right—a single eye that is the great thing; and unless the soul gets its intelligence directly from God, it never understands the ways and affections of God. His own affections must be known and valued. If I have not got my place in the affections of my Father, I am not in a position to have the communion of His thoughts and purposes. When we were “dead” in sins, His heart was exercised for us. The sinner is here looked at as dead, not “living” in sin as in Colossians and Romans. In Ephesians, sinners are “dead” —not a movement of life, and God comes and creates the blessing according to His own will. When our souls have known the value of Christ's sacrifice bringing us to God, we are seen not in ourselves at all, but only in Christ. Then

there is perfect rest.

Then afterward he can tell us of the inheritance, and then the prayer is that we may know the hope of His calling. His calling is not the inheritance. He has called us to be “before him in love.” (Ver. 2-6.) Then in verse 11 he begins about the inheritance. Now he will show us what Christ's inheritance is, and we are to have it too, I must know I am a child, and have the thoughts and affections of the child before I can have to do with the inheritance. The end of the matter is, that we are brought in to share the inheritance. The prayer embraces the calling, the inheritance, and the power that has wrought to give us both.

How far are your hearts confiding in God, not only for your wants, &c.; but how far is your confidence and deli tit in Him for Himself? The heart of a child will delight in the affections of the Father. Do your thoughts about God flow from what God has revealed to you of Himself, or are you reasoning about God—Will He or will He not do it? When it is a settled thing with me that I am a sinner, what have I to reason about? We want to be brought to this simple conviction—I am a sinner, and if I am a sinner, what am I to do? Can I look for anything from God on the ground of righteousness? No, when brought to God, I am brought to grace. What He is—is the spring and source of the whole matter. In Christ it could not be otherwise We stand there now, by virtue of the atonement, in that position which makes the sin the very necessity for God to bless. Christ died for my sins, and “God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.”

God is going to take us to heaven to be happy with Christ there; but He makes us happy out of heaven first. It is a difficult thing, but He does, and He would have the saints living up there, where God is, and where we are going, as being freed from this present evil world.

Chapter 18

# Fragment: Christ's Life Has Two Parts

There were two parts of Christ's life: man's obedience to God's will, nay, to the law, if you will, for he came under the law; but there was another, the manifestation of God Himself in grace and graciousness. This is not law: it is God in goodness, not man in responsibility

Chapter 19

# On Colossians 1:12-22

There are two ways in which we may approach the Gospel of the grace of God; first, the conscience convicted, and seeing how God has met the condition of man, as in Romans and secondly, the counsels of God from which it all flows. We may trace Him up from the poor sinner in his need, or we may see the grace from Him flowing down.

In this chapter we have much of God's thoughts about Christ Himself, as in Heb. 1, where He is presented to us as “Heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds,” &c., “upholding all things by the word of His power,” “when He had by Himself purged our sins.” It begins with this wonderful counsel of God in grace coming to meet the need, notwithstanding all He was in Himself. In the chapter before us in Colossians, we have the glory of this work in Christ, and its extent is shown; and what is so precious, is that when we begin at the other end (conscience and the sense of need) we reach the same point; but there is a fullness and a strength gathered in looking at the place and purpose of God from all eternity, beyond what we get from the need of the sinner being met. It is quite needful, in whatever way it is brought to us, that the conscience should be reached, because God cannot reveal His glory to unawakened man. Understanding must come through the conscience, as in the case of the woman of Samaria. Her spiritual knowledge was gained through the exercise of her soul with Jesus. Where there is not a living work in the conscience, there never can be a link between the soul and the living person of the Son of God. This always is the beginning. The word of God reaches the conscience, and sets it in the presence of the living God. He has made that one step essential to the sinner. This woman heard the Lord speaking to herself. That is the all-important thing, and there can be no truth in the soul till then. What is all the Bible worth to me if my soul is a stranger to God? If we bring in all the purposes of God, then, they must bear upon the conscience this way. A sense of God's love to the soul, &c., will never be truly realized till it is apprehended as flowing downwards from His glory.

We will look into these verses which succeed the prayer relating to the saints' growth in grace, &c., (ver. 12,) (for it is well for sinners to see the state of the saints, if only to know that they are not saints,) “Giving thanks unto the Father,” &c. Here is the certain, settled knowledge of being fit for the inheritance of the saints in light. Then we are fit for heavenly glory! This made us fit for that.

I. The extent and nature of this fitness—made light in Christ. “Ye were darkness, but now are ye light;” and there is the full consciousness of it, for there is thanksgiving. The saints themselves have that knowledge and apprehension of being fit. See the condition of the saints— “Delivered from the power of Satan, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son.” The Christian can say, I was darkness but am now in the place of Christ as to my standing before God.

II. The means by which we have been brought into this condition: “Through His blood;” and not only redemption, but the sins forgiven. I was a slave, but am now a redeemed soul in the kingdom of the Son. It is accomplished between Him and the Father; a settled thing in bringing a poor lost sinner and setting him in the presence of God. Had I any part in it? No. He did it through His blood. When we simply believe, we always know it is by Christ's blood we are saved. You may not be

sure you are a believer; I do not ask you if you know this, but do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God? If the soul rests on Jesus, there is not a cloud; but if on yourself, you may well be uncertain, because you have got into the mind of your own hearts. But in Jesus there is nothing but blessedness: light, nothing but light; every step of His path perfect light. Faith is believing what Christ Himself is; therefore, it immediately breaks out in this passage about this glorious object, “Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature.” There are distinct parts of Christ's glory here brought out. The Lord Jesus created all, and therefore He is the Head of it all; not only as Adam having dominion, and everything brought to him to name, but “by Him were all things created;” and He must be above everything and everybody: “dominions, principalities, powers,” &c. Then there is another character of Headship in verse 18: “Firstborn from the dead.” None could go lower than death, but we see Him going down into it, and rising up from it, and He fills all things. Everything is created by Him and for Him; and mark, He takes them as man. “What is man?” &c. (Psa. 8) Mark another thing also in this verse 18. He is Head of His Body, the Church; she is His helpmate, His Bride.

The next thing is, we find His inheritance defiled—God dishonored—the world ruined—and man guilty! The angels have not kept their first estate above, and man has not kept his state below—none have kept it. But He must be glorified in bringing it all back again, and the first thing was for God to be honored, for He has been dishonored; therefore, He must make peace through the blood of His cross. In making atonement, there were in the type two goats to be taken, one lot for the Lord, and one for the people. The goat on which the Lord's lot fell, was to be offered for a sin—offering; but the goat on which the lot fell on behalf of the people, shall be presented alive before the Lord, so as to let him go for a scapegoat into the wilderness; and that goat was to bear upon him all their iniquities into a land not inhabited; and he shall let go the goat into the wilderness. Has God been glorified then? Yes, fully glorified; God's requirements more than met. And who do I find has come in to repair the breach? It is the Son of His love. I find it all done. And where could God ever have been glorified as in the work of His Son? He glorified God. “I have glorified thee on the earth.” Could Adam have so glorified Him in Paradise? Such love for a sinner could only have been shown in the redemption of man. The mercy-seat is sprinkled with blood. God's lot, not the people's lot, is a token of perfect peace being made with God through the blood of the cross; yes, everything reconciled in heaven and in earth: it does not say under the earth, that is not mentioned here. Thus, we have the basis of everything ransomed to be with God, and for God, forever and ever. It can never stand on creation title; though heaven and earth will stand in the presence of God, but it will be in redemption title alone. “We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth.” (Ver. 21.) “You hath He reconciled,” &c. This is a thing to give thanks for now. If I am to return in heart and mind to God, I must be reconciled. God saw the need, and from the fullness and perfectness of His own love, He did it all. “We have known and believed,” &c. This is the condition of the Christian; and if you ask a proof of it, this is the answer—He laid down His life. “You that were sometime alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled.” Not only have we a wicked nature in us, ("children of wrath,") but more than this, we have done wrong, thought wrong, spoken wrong; and then, besides that, our hearts are alienated, the sure consequence of sin. Did you ever see a servant or a child do wrong, and glad to meet his master or parent afterward? Does not the sense of having done wrong keep them away from those against whom they have sinned? Yes. Alienation of heart there is, because we do not want God to come and say to us, as to Adam, “Where art thou?” There is

first, lust, then the commission of sin, then the mind turned away and at enmity. Then, in this condition, God comes to bring it back. How can He do it? Ruined, unhappy, wretched as I am, if God is for me, I can come to Him. Grace can come and make me happy. God comes in grace to win me back when thus alienated, and tells me He has dealt about my sine. That will bring me back. Law convicts, but never wins back—never. It is as though we said to God—My conscience makes me dislike you, makes me unhappy with you: take away my sins and I will come back. This, certainly, is in substance what the gospel of God says to us both about our sin and about His grace.

And will He half reconcile? No, He has completely done it: “In the body of his flesh through death.” There were you under your sins. Christ came as a real, true man, about these sins that are distressing you and keeping you away from Him. I see Him made sin, bearing to take this dreadful cup of God's wrath: all the sins laid upon Him like the scapegoat: Jesus Christ coming in a body, not with a message that it shall be done. No, the thing is done. God has visited sinners in love. I meet God by faith there where He had met me, and I see in the body of Christ's flesh through death, He has put sin entirely away. I have nothing to do with it. Who could do anything to add to such a work? Men may wag their heads at it in derision, but the work is done fully and completely. Christ is gone up! and He is gone to present you holy, and unblameable, and unreproveable in His sight. Was there any mistake, any uncertainty? No, the soul knows and feels that God has done it. If He has me in His eight, He must have me holy, and unblameable, and unreproveable, and He has made me so; and when He finished the work, He sat down. “After he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God.” Well then may it be said, “Giving thanks unto the Father who hath made us meet,” &c. The work is done; and now God sends “to declare,” as the apostle says, “His righteousness.” Did you accomplish it? Did you do anything towards it? Nothing, but by your sins. He has made peace. Our souls then can rest in this blessed peace. And it is not only that I have this peace: no, God has peace for me; and the nearer I get to God, the more I see the fullness and perfectness of this peace. It is God's peace, and I have peace in it. All there is according to His own perfectness. He rests in Christ's work for my sin. If He had nothing more to require, what can I require? All the ground of my connection with God is that His love has been manifested in putting away my sins; and I have peace in that. If you think you must satisfy God as a creditor, you do not know God. God is love, and He is known through the cross. If I own God as my Savior and Lord, it marks all my character. I have new objects and new motives. I may do the same things, harmless in themselves perhaps, but I have a different motive in doing them when I know God. It is not what a man does that marks his character, but why he does it. When I know God in Christ, I go and do right things because I love God. I may be outwardly correct and moral, but the spring and motive may be all known at once. A child may see if you say He has translated me from the power of darkness into the kingdom of His dear Son. If I have peace with God, there is nothing between Him and me. The peace is made. It is a thing accomplished.

Now, are you reconciled to God? Grace, and glory, and love then are brought before your soul by the Holy Ghost; and you will be changed into the same image from glory to glory, &c. If I know I am to be like Him at the day of His appearing, I shall be purifying myself, “even as He is pure now.” May the Lord work in our hearts by His own Spirit, conforming us who believe into the image of Jesus, soon to be conformed to the Firstborn in glory.

Chapter 20

# Fragment: Commandment

Some are afraid of the word, “commandments,” as if it would weaken love and the idea of a new creation; scripture is not. Obedience and keeping the commandments of one we love is the proof of that love and the delight of the new creature. Did I do all right, and not do it in obedience, I should do nothing right, because my true relationship and heart-reference to God would be left out.

Chapter 21

# Scripture Query and Answer: Comparison of Work Between the Persons of the Trinity

Q. Is this statement in accordance with God's Word?

“We must not conclude that more has been done by the second person of the Trinity than by the first or third. Can any one say that it was more for Jesus to say, ‘I will suffer for them,' than for God to give Him to the world, or than for the holy Ghost who condescends to dwell on earth so full of sin?” S. A.

A. I do not believe that it is in accordance with the letter or the spirit of Scripture not to give the chief place to the Son as to work done, and, above all, suffering for God and man. It is to make light, unintentionally, of the great fact of the Incarnation, and the still greater one of Atonement. Scripture never speaks thus, whatever place it may claim for the Father's love and counsels, and the Spirit's active operation in man and the Church of God. The relation of all three is admirably set forth in Heb. 10, as elsewhere also.

Chapter 22

# Scripture Query and Answer: Conferred Authority to Preach

3.

Q. What think you of the following note of T. Scott on Acts 8:4? “The difference between statedly and authoritatively as a herald, and by office and authority, preaching to regularly convened congregations, and simply declaring what a man knows of Christ and salvation, amongst relations, juniors, ignorant neighbors, or ignorant persons of any sort, without assuming any authority, seems of great importance. No doubt in this way a man's sphere will often gradually enlarge, till he appears something like an authoritative preacher; but would it not then be proper that pastors and rulers should send some Barnabas to confirm what has been done, and to confer due authority? And would it not be right in this case for the person himself to seek from the pastors and teachers of the Church their sanction to his labors, now become more public than he at first either expected or intended?”

- T.

A. The notion is quite unfounded, and directly at issue with the very Scriptures before the commentator's eye. Neither Barnabas nor any other man ever conferred authority to preach as a herald, or even in the most unpretending form. It is true that the word descriptive of the preaching in Acts 8:4 is ε■αγγελ■ξ. But this word is frequently applied to the preaching of the Lord and the apostles, as well as of others. (Comp. Luke 4:18, 43; 7:22; 8:1; 9:6; 16:16; 20:1; Acts 5:42; 8:12, 25, 35, 40; 13:32; 14:7, 15, 21; 15:35; 16:10; 17:18; Rom. 1:15; 15:20; 1 Cor. 1:17, &c.; Gal. 1:8, &c., &c.) The other word, κηρ■σσω, which means to proclaim as a herald, has not the smallest connection with office and authority, or regularly convened congregations, more than ε■αγγελ■ξω. It also is used of the Lord and the apostles, (Matt. 4:17, 23; 10:7, 27; 11:1; 24:14, &c., &c.,) but it is predicated, just as freely, of others too. So it is applied in Mark 5:20 to the delivered demoniac, and in Phil. 1:15 to the brethren at Rome, some of whom were preaching Christ of envy and strife, and some also of goodwill. Of both, however, it is declared, that they τ■ν χριστ■ν κηρ■σσουσιν. That is, the word employed about these unappointed brethren is the expression of authoritative proclamation as a herald. In short, the commentator in this note was supplementing and unwittingly corrupting Scripture, instead of fairly expounding it. When Barnabas and Paul visited and confirmed the assemblies, they ordained, not persons to proclaim the gospel statedly to regular congregations, but elders or presbyters in each assembly. But an elder was a local official whose function was to rule; it was needful that he should be apt to teach, but he might never preach the gospel in his life; and if he did, it was not in virtue of any conferred authority (which was with a view to government), but of the gift of evangelist, if he possessed it. Thus, Philip who was one of the seven was also an evangelist. In virtue of the one he discharged his diaconal duties at Jerusalem, in virtue of the other he evangelized or heralded, (for both words are used of his preaching,) in Samaria and elsewhere.

Chapter 23

# Fragment: The Cross and the Crown

The cross and the crown go together: and, more than this, the cross and communion go together. The cross touches my natural will, and therefore it breaks down and takes away that which hinders communion. It was when peter rejected the thought of the cross that Jesus said, “get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offense unto me.” it is with a rejected Savior we have to walk. The whole system of the world is a stumbling-block to turn the heart from God, dress, vain show, flattery, even the commonest things, which tend to elevate nature. All that puts us into the rich man's place is a stumbling-block. Heaven is opened to a rejected Christ. Remember this. God's heart is set upon carrying his saints along this road to glory. He would have us walk by faith and not by sight. Whatever tends in me to exalt the world that rejected Christ is a stumbling-block to others; in short, anything that weakens the perception of the excellency of Christ in the weakest saint.

Chapter 24

# Dead and Risen With Christ

(Col. 3)

If you examine the writings of Paul with a little care, you will find this principle at the root of all his teaching—that we are dead and risen with Christ. It is not only that He has died and risen for us, but that we are dead and risen with Him. He adds another thing; and that is our union with Him, now that He is ascended. “We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones.” These two principles are found here: our being dead and risen with Him, and our union with Him, now that He is on high. When he speaks of union, there is so far a difference that he looks at us as dead to begin with; and the whole power of Christ comes in to raise us. When he looks at people as living in sin, be brings in the doctrine of being dead to sin. On the other hand, if we are looked at as dead in sins, with no spiritual life, then the whole work is of God in raising us out of that state; as in Ephesians he unfolds the privileges of the child of God, from death to union with Christ. Here he lays as the foundation of his teaching, our being dead and risen with Christ. Thus he associates us with Christ in every respect, first by death, then by resurrection, and, lastly, “when Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory.”

The difference in the two epistles lies specially in this—To the Colossians he speaks of life or the new nature we have in Christ; whereas in the Ephesians, we have much more of the Holy Ghost by whom we are made one with Christ, “members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.” Here it is death and resurrection and association with Christ. Indeed, this is his doctrine everywhere. “If we suffer, we shall also reign with him.” “And you being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses.” His constant theme is, that as believers, our entire association is with Christ.

Now I repeat that, blessed as the full privileges are into which we thus come, yet the great doctrine, which lies at the foundation and root of all this, is the being dead and risen with Him. The true condition of every believer, that which from the very starting-point this doctrine teaches, is the utter judgment of the old man; the sentence of death passed upon it and condemnation altogether. There is no recognition of the flesh as to allowance or acceptance of it. But when I have found out that the old man is simply this evil thing, then I discover that it is a question of putting it off and of putting on something else. It is not a correction of the old nature, but the having done with it and having something else instead of it. I put off the one, and I put on the other. It is a figure, of course, but the figure of what is most real to faith. On the one hand, I have done with my Adam-life; and, on the other, the nature that I get or put on by grace, is the Christ life. But how can I put off a life? I can put off an opinion or a bad habit; but how can I put off a life? The only way of putting off a life is by dying. But here I am alive. How, then, can it be true of me that I have put off the old man? This is the great truth that the apostle brings before us. After having received Christ for my life, (the Second man He is called, the last Adam, the life-giving Spirit,)—after having received life from Christ, He Himself being in me, God has appropriated to me all the value and power of that in which Christ is, and which is in Him.

Here it is more particularly as regards life; but He has been crucified for us, not merely as putting away sins, but “in that he died, he died unto sin once. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” There is this great basis of truth upon which all the apostle's teaching is founded: that Christ comes, presents Himself to man as in the flesh, and man will not have Him. Man could not have to say to God as a living man in the flesh. But Christ dies for him; and those who receive Christ into their hearts now, live by Christ. “As many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus, were baptized into His death.” Such is the way he answers in Rom. 6, where the charge is made, “Let us continue in sin that grace may abound.” If it is said, “Christ by His death and resurrection has made me righteous before God, and so I may live in sin,” there is this doctrine in reply. The obedience of Christ is obedience unto death; and if you are dead in Christ, a dead man does not live. He strikes at the very root of the matter, and says, You have got this justification of life by Christ's death and resurrection, and you are denying the very thing that justifies you. It is death to sin and life to God; and therefore you who plead for sin are upsetting the very thing upon which your salvation is founded. If you have died with Christ to all that is in this world, you cannot be living in it. “How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” It is a sweeping conclusion to everything. If I take death, as I do in baptism unto Christ, I take it to all that which I was living in—to sin, flesh, the world, and the law itself. The law has power over a man as long as be lives. Put a man in prison for stealing; and if he dies, it is all over with him. The prisoner is no longer there to be dealt with. The law has not lost its power; but it cannot touch a dead man. And if I say as a believer, I am dead with Christ, my life is over in that sense. It is the same thing as to sin. Obedience becomes obedience to God. Death closes necessarily the connection of the living man with all the things to which the old man had to say. I am crucified with Christ, I am dead with Christ, and risen with Him.

On the other hand, we get the positive side, “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God.”

I have received Him who is risen, as my life. Nothing can be more important in its place than a distinct and definite apprehension of this; not only that Christ has died for us, but that we can say we have died with Hits). How it cuts at the root of everything that flesh seeks! What can a dead man seek? We are to reckon ourselves dead—not to reckon that we must die, which will not give us power; but we are to reckon ourselves dead. Supposing a person comes to tempt me—how can he tempt a dead man? He tells me to come and amuse myself in something. But I say, I am dead; and the reason I can say so, is that my life is another kind of life altogether. The old stock may spring up and show itself sometimes; but I learn to treat the old life as not the tree at all. We may fail to do this, and then it will produce the old bad fruit; but inasmuch as Christ is my life, and I am but a grafted tree, I have a right to take that which I am grafted into as the real tree, and have nothing to do with anything else. “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.” What are the things that belong to a risen life? The things down here in this world? No. What can a risen man seek in this world He has nothing to do with the things of this life. That is the position in which He puts us. But, blessed be God, the risen man, supposing we are actually risen, has objects; his life belongs to another world, even to heaven. “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above.” If I am risen with Christ, and Christ has become my life, where is Christ? Up at the right hand of God. He does not say, you are there; but speaking of life he says, “If ye are risen with Christ, seek those things

which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."

Mark how distinctly he here associates us with Christ. He says, Christ is hid in God; well, He is your life, and your life is hid there too. But Christ is going to appear; and when He appears, ye also shall appear with Him in glory. There is complete association with the Lord Jesus now for life; so that my life is hid with Him in God, because He is my life; and when He appears, I also shall appear with Him in glory. It is not union, but complete association with Christ. It is this which gives its character to the Christian, and shows what his life is: "that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal bodies." It is the reproducing Christ in this world: and we get, in the verses that I have read, the complete description of what this life is in a practical sense. The life itself is Christ. "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." But what a truth this is, that if I am a Christian at all, it is Christ that is my life. It is not the old tree dug about and dunged; that was done with. When He cursed the fig tree, it was pronouncing upon the old stock its everlasting fruitlessness. There was no fruit to be found on it; and He said, "Let no fruit; grow on thee henceforward forever." The old man, the flesh, is a judged, condemned thing; it is the second man, the Lord from heaven, that is the spring of everything which is good or blessed. It is the great principle that is thus laid down. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God."

Now mark one thing very distinctly of this life. If Christ is my life, in that sense Christ and heavenly things become the object of my life. Every creature must have an object. It is God's supreme prerogative not to want an object. He may love an object; but I cannot live without an object any more than without food. This life has an object. The law wanted this; it gave no object. It said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength;" but it told me no more about the matter. It is very blessed in our life as Christians, that, while Christ is our life, yet I am crucified with Christ; and "the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God." That is, I get now an object which acts upon and feeds this life, and makes it to grow. "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." There is the life; and this life has got a perfect, blessed object which it delights in and contemplates; and this object the Lord Jesus is, not in His humiliation but in His glory. Therefore what is looked for is "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." There is nothing accepted short of what is seen in Christ. Where He is the life in me and the object of this life, the point is purifying myself even as He is pure. Getting more and more of His grace by thus looking at Him, we have to reckon ourselves dead, not having to die. You may ask the flesh to die, but it never will. We talk of having to die to the flesh, because we have not got the consciousness of the positive distinctness of the two natures. The old man will take good care not to die. But being alive in Christ, I have the privilege and title to treat the other nature, the old one, as dead, because He died. It is never said that we have to die, but that as Christians we are entitled to, and do, hold ourselves for dead; because we have this new life. The moment I talk of dying to sin, I am holding myself to be alive to sin. The moment I say I found myself ruined but now I have got Christ for my life, I can say I am dead to sin. There is never the slightest varying of scripture with regard to this.

That point being thus settled, with this blessed object before us, we seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. I have got a life formed and fashioned in this very nature delighting in these heavenly things, causing us to grow up into Him in all things.

But now comes the actual unfolding of this life. He begins with the lowest things and goes on to the highest, and gives the whole principle and development of this life. He says, “Ye are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God.” He will not own the old nature as a life; but he says “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth,” and if I look at these members on earth, what are they? Gross sins. All these members upon the earth are lusts. “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness which is idolatry: For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: in the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.” But that is not all. He adds, “But now ye also put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.” If I get angry, it is a proof that the will of the old man is not broken.

Anger is not a lust; but if you are living in grace, you do not get into a passion. It is the power of a life which does not do these things, and which masters that which does them. We find anger and violence in Satan who is a murderer; corruption and violence in men. We get all the negative parts here. He says, “Lie not one to the other.” He is speaking of that which would be produced by the flesh where it is not kept in check. I am to put off the movements of the old nature. “Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds.” We have “put off the old man with his deeds,” but we have also “put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.”

Mark here what we are brought into. I have put off the old man with his deeds; and I have put on something. What have I put on? The new man, which is Christ. I have put on entirely another nature. And what is the measure of this? Christ is the image of the invisible God: and I am renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created me. God has created this new man, and what is the measure of it? Christ is the source of it and the measure of it; Christ in all His perfection above is the image of Him that created it; and what the Christian sees now in heaven is what he is to be practically—it is Christ. “He that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself also so to walk even as He walked.” He is “renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him.” The measure of it is the revelation of God in Christ. If I am looking at a legal character of right and wrong, I am looking at something in my conduct as a man, and that is not the measure. “Be ye imitators of God, as dear children.” But am I to be a sacrifice to God? Certainly. “Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” That is just the very fruit of all that we are. Wherever the power of divine life comes down and takes possession of a man, it manifests itself in his giving himself up to God. The love of God came down in Christ and how did it show itself in practice? By giving Himself up to death. “You are bought with a price.” Then “present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.” Therefore he says, “Be ye imitators of God, as dear children, and walk in love as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor.” So again here, “Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another and

forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye."

I must begin, then, by treating the old man as dead. We shall soon feel our shortcomings. But that puts us in the blessed place of being dead with Him, and calls us to show the power of the life in which we are called to walk. "Ye have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him: where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all and in all." If I am speaking of myself as an Englishman or a Frenchman, I forget that I am dead and risen again, and that Christ is all. He is the only object, the only thing that the mind is right in resting on and looking at. "Christ is all." Looked at as the object, it is Christ and nothing else for the one who is dead and risen with Him, be he who he may. What do I want? Christ. What am I to follow? Christ. What is the object that my heart has to think of? Christ.

The other truth is this: He is in all Christians; He is their life. "Christ is all and in all." He is in us as our life; and, being in us as our life, Christ lives in me; and "the life which I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God." He is all to me. There is the Christian depicted in a few words. Having positively put off the old man with his deeds, and having put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him, Christ is everything to him, and Christ is his life in him. Christ is everything as the fullness of this object, and Christ is in him as his life. Most simple, but wonderfully full! He does not say what a Christian ought to be; it is what a Christian is that we have here. Christ is his life and Christ is everything to him as having this life. He knows nothing else. We may find our shortcomings—that is another thing; but this is what we are as Christians— "Christ is all and in all."

We see then how blessedly the apostle refers to this for power and practice. He takes now the positive side—the spirit and path in which I walk. "Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another and forgiving one another, if any have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." That is, walk like Christ. Having now Christ as my life, and Christ as my object, Christ gives me power over the motives that were mine before, and things that are around me have lost their force. I speak of what the life is in its character and principles. The one object that the new life has is Christ that which alone forms and governs this life is Christ; and the soul of the believer being filled with that, the things of the outward world have lost their force: his mind is filled with something else. The life that is in him is occupied with Christ. The consequence of this is that outward things have no longer their influence over him. "The eye is single, and the whole body is full of light." Hence what excites the old man is not working now in that way, and the thing manifested is the effect of Christ as revealed to the new man, the new man living on Him. The apostle puts it thus: "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved," &c. He does not say, You make out that you are "elect of God, holy and beloved." He says, That is your place: I want you to live in the consciousness of this; and you are now as such to do so-and-so. That is the truth of all blessed affections. If I, as a child, doubted that my father were my father, how could I have the affections of a child? I should say, I wish I were sure of it; but I could not have the full flow of affection that follows from having no doubt about it.

The apostle, then, says, “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved,” &c. Now I am walking in the consciousness of God's delight in me. Is there not love, joy, peace in the soul? That is the place the heart lives in: and now I have to put on all these things. But the way of putting them on is walking in the blessed consciousness of the truth of my place in Christ. If a man is quickened, there will be the desires of that new nature, though he may not be able to enjoy it. There are affections and duties which flow from the place I am in. “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved.” Oh! if my heart can live in that—in what I am—the elect of God, holy and beloved, I can put on anything then! It flows from the blessedness of the place I am in. If I live in the consciousness of my relationship, in the consciousness of what God is to me, these are the fruits that will follow. The first-named fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace; then there will be long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. But I must have love, joy, and peace first. If I am perfectly happy in God, I do not mind if a person insults me; but take it patiently. I am perfectly happy, and have got my soul in the place of these blessed affections. Hence other things will not have the power to turn me from it. He says therefore, “Put on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved.”

So with Christ. He is above all: He is the blessed object, elect, precious—the Holy One, the beloved One above all. And He is our life. When I can act as being in this place, my heart is true in its affections. There we are in this blessed relationship; and we must seek to have the abiding consciousness of what we are before God, that we may, in the enjoyment of this, produce the fruits suitable to this state. Put on these various things which are the life of Christ in this world—“Bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another and forgiving one another even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God [or, Christ] rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called to one body, and be ye thankful.”

But now, having spoken of its practical character, he goes on to another step in this life. He looks for the word of Christ dwelling richly in us, in all wisdom: and he calls us to live in the largeness of heart and understanding that belongs to a person that has this place in Christ. He says, I want to have your heart and mind enlarged to live in these things: I want the word of Christ, this full revelation which God has given to us of His thoughts and mind as revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ, to be dwelling in you richly.

Let us now stop and ask ourselves, What has my mind been occupied with today? What has it been running after? Could you say, The word of Christ has dwelt in me richly? Now, perhaps we have been occupied with politics; perhaps with the town talk, or with something of our own. Has the word of our own heart, the work of our own mind, filled up the greater part of our day? That is not Christ. “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom.” All knowledge is in Him, and all practical wisdom. They are distinct things; but if they are real, they go wonderfully together. Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God. This, then, is what is looked for; that in this condition there be the unfolding and development of the blessed knowledge of Christ. The Spirit of God takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto us. We live in that sphere in which God unfolds His own mind.

You may mark along with this, that it is not merely knowledge or wisdom of which he speaks, but he adds, “Teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,

singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." It enters into the affections, because that is the character of hymns and spiritual songs. It is not so much knowledge written down like a sermon, but it is where the heart answers in its affections to the revelation of Christ, perhaps something that I have heard in a meeting when Christ has been unfolded: it is the Holy Ghost raising up the affections in answer to the revelation of Christ that has come down. Then there is the expression of the heart that has received it in the affections of the new man, answering to this in the praise and adoration that it produces. It may not be the reproduction of the same ideas, but it is the adoration of the heart that is drawn out towards the person that has been revealed.

"Whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him." Here I get the whole course of every day life. There are constantly difficulties that I find in passing through this world. I say, Ought I to do this thing or that, or not? I am uncertain as to the right course, or I may find great hindrances to doing what I think to be right. Now if ever I find myself in doubt, my eye is not single; my whole body is not full of light, therefore my eye is not single. God brings me into certain circumstances of difficulty until I detect this. It may be something that I never suspected in myself before which hinders me from seeing aright; but it is something between me and Christ; and until that is put away, I shall never have certainty as to my path. Therefore he says, "Whatsoever ye do in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." This will settle 999 cases out of 1,000. If you are questioning whether you should do a thing or not, just ask yourself, Am I going to do it in the name of the Lord Jesus? It will settle it at once. A person says, What harm is there in my doing such and such a thing? I ask, Are you going to do it in the name of the Lord Jesus? Perhaps it may be something of which you will answer at once, Of course not. Then it is settled at once. It is the test of the state of the heart. If my eye is single, if the purpose of my heart is all right, I get here what settles every question: it tests my heart. I wanted to know the right path, and it is as simple as A B C. If my heart is not upon Christ, I shall endeavor to do my own will; and that is not God's will. There is the constant uniform rule which clearly judges every path and circumstance—Do I simply do it in the name of the Lord Jesus?

But what do I get with it? "Giving thanks to God and the Father by Him." In another place it is said "In everything give thanks." Where my heart can take Christ with me, my mind is on God and I can say He is with me—even if it is tribulation. I have got the path of God; I have got Christ with me in my path; and I would rather be there than in what is apparently the fairest and pleasantest thing in the world—as it is said in Psa. 84 "in whose heart are the ways of them."

Thus closes this unfolding of the life of Christ. It begins with the great truth that we are dead and risen with Christ—the judgment of the old man absolutely and completely, and our reckoning it practically to be dead. People have talked about dying to the flesh, and of its being a slow death, &c., which is all nonsense. It is a simple fact that is true already. And if I died with Him, I shall live with Him. It is the power of this that works in my soil. The root of all Paul's doctrine is that we have been crucified with Him, and have died with Him; and it is not now we who live, but Christ that lives in us. Then Christ becomes the object of this life. Having laid that ground, that the old man is put off and the new man put on, which is Christ, he draws the consequence of the blessing in which we stand, and the fruits which spring from Him; and then there is this simple but blessed rule for him that is in earnest—I do nothing but what I can do in the name of the Lord Jesus. One great thing here that is practically put is this Christ is all. He is in all; but this is the great thing we have to

look to, Is He practically all? Can you honestly say, I am a poor, weak creature: notwithstanding, I am not conscious of having a single other object in the world but Christ? You find many difficulties—you are not watchful enough—your faith is feeble—you know your shortcomings; but can you, notwithstanding all this, honestly say, I have no object in the world but Christ?

First, the root of all is Christ as the life. Then I pass over to the outward conduct in the man's walk. And here let me remark that while a person may be walking outwardly uprightly and blamelessly, it may be very feebly as a Christian and without spirituality.

You will find many a true Christian, who has Christ as his life, and nothing to reproach him with as to his walk, but who has no spirituality whatever. If you talk to him about Christ there is nothing that answers. There is, between the life that is at the bottom and the blamelessness that is at the top, between him and Christ, a whole host of affections and objects that are not Christ at all. How much of the day, or of the practice of your soul, is filled up with Christ? How far is He the one object of your heart? When you come to pray to God, do you never get to a point where you shut the door against Him? where there is some reserve, some single thing in your heart, that you keep back from Him? If we pray for blessing up to a certain point only, there is reserve. Christ is not all practically to us.

Chapter 25

# Difference Between Two Greek Prepositions

'Εκ has the force (not merely of “out of” but) of “from,” as well as ■π■. The difference, however, is according to the meaning of the words: ■κ, out of, i.e., from going into; ■π■, aloof or away from. Thus, ■κ, in John 12:27; Heb. 5:7; James 5:20, &c. It is a question of saving from, or from going into, this hour, death, &c. Again, ■π■: in Matt. 1:21; 6:13; Luke 11:4; Acts 2:40; Rom. 5:9. The former supposes a state of circumstances, a condition, into which the person might come, but into which he did not come; while the latter supposes some persons or circumstances adverse to their interest, not allowed to act upon them or produce the effects of their malice, or which took them away from them. With ■π■ they are looked at as hostile existences; with ■κ it is a state, as even ■κ νεκρ■ν ■ναστ., from among the dead. They are not hostile persons or things; being among them is a state. So (■π■ το■ πονηπο■ is a hostile power. Luke 1:74 is a state in which they were or might be. So Rom. 7:24 is the state in which he was: not a hostile power apart from himself. Rom. 15 means hostile persons. In 2 Cor. 1:10 ■κ is used again because it is evidently a state: so Col. 1:18, though “out of” the power of darkness might be better here. In 1 Thess. 1:10 it is ■π■ τ■ς ■ργ■ς, as wrath is not a condition but a hostile power of another. In 2 Thess. 3:2 it is from unreasonable and wicked men. This is evident. In 2 Tim. 4:17, I believe it would have been ■π■ το■ λ■οντος., but ■κ στ■ματος, into which he seemed to be getting—a state be would have been in. 2 Peter 2:9 is more directly out of it when they are in it; at any rate, it is a state of πειρασμο■. So in Rev. 3 the faithful are kept from getting into this state, preserved from getting into it, or, as we say, kept out of it. For the words here answer fully to the English “out of” and “from.” “From,” as to place, is the creation of distance from a distinct object, as they went from Jerusalem to Jericho; they put a distance between him and the city. “Out of” means ceasing to be inside and into. With ■π■ it is always a distinct object from the speaker or person spoken of; while ■κ implies a state he is or might be in.

Chapter 26

# Fragment: Three Things Necessary to Fellowship

Three things are necessary to fellowship:-

1st. There must be the knowledge of sin forgiven; the certainty that faith alone imparts, that we are righteous before God. Any doubt or fear about this hinders.

2ndly. There must be the new nature or life in Christ.

3rdly. That nature must be strengthened, brought into exercise, by the powerful actings of the Spirit of God to quicken into such communion.

Chapter 27

# Discipline: 18. Elisha

THE first notice we have of Elisha is 1 Kings 19:16, when the Lord, rebuking Elijah for his despondency and self-importance in thinking that all testimony had failed, and that he himself was God's solitary witness on earth, directs him to anoint Elisha, the son of Shaphat, in his room.

Elijah being set aside because he was despondent and discouraged, we may conclude that the prophet in his stead, will be one gifted with a character and purpose quite the contrary—even bold and enduring. We constantly find in Scripture that the notice of a man's secular employment conveys to us an idea of the man's adaptability for future service, and an intimation of the nature of his course. Elisha is found plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and “he was with the twelfth;” and doubtless a vigorous and a patient husbandman. Elijah passes by and casts his mantle on him, thus intimating, I should suppose, that he was to take the place and calling of the owner of it. Elisha evidently so understood it, but, yielding for a moment to his natural affection, he craves permission to return and kiss his father and mother. The prophet's reply is one fitted to throw him on his own responsibility. “Go back again, for what have I done to thee?” It was for him to judge whether Elijah's action towards him had been a divine call or not. That it was divine, Elisha's spiritual instincts told him; and though his response to it did not rise to the height it might, and which immediate following would have indicated, still his faith, so far as it rose, is followed up by true and suited action. His return to his home is not to remain in it, but to celebrate his surrender of it. “He took a yoke of oxen and slew them, and boiled their flesh with the instruments of the oxen. and gave unto the people, and they did eat.” He converts the instruments of his occupation into a repast for his neighbors; he disposes of his possessions for the benefit of others; at one and the same moment declaring his readiness to surrender for the Lord, and his benevolence for his people; he, in a measure, sold what he had and gave to the poor, and “then he arose, went after Elijah and ministered to him.” The first answer to God's call in the soul is very indicative of the order and character of that life throughout its course, and we shall find it thus with Elisha. Though he hesitates at first, he eventually determines and follows Elijah, and that not grudgingly or of necessity, but as one who celebrates his deed with a hearty good will. And thus it is that he enters on a course where he is to be a minister and a witness of the most remarkable of God's ways and works.

The word of the Lord had been that he was to be prophet in Elijah's room; i.e., to fill up Elijah's ministry, and the two ministries were not to co-exist at the same time; so that it is quite fitting that we should not hear of him again till Elijah was about to quit the scene, and then he is presented to us in the high character of the companion of Elijah and the witness of his rapture. As the one retires, the other is brought prominently before us, and therefore deeply significant is the education accorded to him on this the last day of the one, and (in respect to his ministry) the first day of the other; for on this day is he installed into office. The sons of the prophets with one accord tell him that this is the last day for his master, and as he walked with Elijah throughout this his last day, he is taught the zeal and duties proper to God's servant, as well as God's glorious way of removing His servant from the scene of his labors. The scene which closed Elijah's service inaugurated

Elisha's. If Elisha was naturally strong and qualified for robust work here on earth, he derives from the rapture of Elijah a strength and an idea of God's ways and grace which must remain with him through all his course, because his course dates from it, and his mind is endowed, and his conceptions of God formed there from. His ministry must be characterized by the communications and admonitions of his installation. In all his course Elisha could not forget that the power he had received was in consequence of that union of spirit with Elijah which concentrated his attention on him, as he was carried up into heaven. “If thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so,” was Elijah's reply to his request for a double portion of his spirit. “And Elisha saw it,” we read lower down. Here was the spring and source of all his subsequent power. “The spirit of Elijah cloth rest upon Elisha” was the immediate testimony of the sons of the prophets, and according as the Spirit of God acted in him, must be ever afterward have been carried back to this fine beginning, just as Paul was. No doubt the dawn of God's grace on our souls and its effects on us indicate the best traits of it which shall characterize us subsequently, and we all find that the manner in which the gospel is presented to and received by any soul at first, presages the manner and character of its course.

Elijah having disappeared, Elisha's career is begun; and the first opportunity for the test of the grace conferred on him is Jordan, the type of actual death, not of the power of death, but the last barrier between the wilderness and Canaan. A very suited test was this to be encountered by one endowed like Elisha; and the first because he must know at the outset his ability to enter God's inheritance, and that Jordan is the portal to it. Unless we pass Jordan we are not in the land; and unless we pass it, we have not learned how God would sustain us there, and how He will drive out before us all our adversaries. Elijah had crossed Jordan, leaving the land in testimony against its evil, heaven being then open to him as his own personal portion. Elisha re-crosses it, and re-enters the land in grace, and in the power of God's Spirit, which was to bear down every difficulty. Very blessed are the exercises to which he is subjected. Even as the Spirit in double power descended on the Church in consequence and in virtue of her union with her ascended Lord, so is it with Elisha; as his eye traced the glory of God's grace in removing His servant unto Himself, and witnessed the same power on earth in opening the waters of Jordan as a commencement of his course, thereby learning as he enters his appointed service, that through God every barrier would be broken down. Like Stephen, he had seen how God raised man to His own glory, and like him, be proved that he himself was, through the power of God, victor over death. This Jordan expressed.

Elisha's first sphere is Jericho, and the first opposition he has to encounter is that of those who, by their very calling, ought to have co-operated with him. The sons of the prophets, though they had seen and owned the power which slave the waters of Jordan, refuse to believe in the rapture of Elijah, and raise questions prompted by unbelief, until Elisha suffers them to do as they would, merely to expose their own folly; for when people will not heed the warnings of the Spirit, they must be left to learn by their own mistakes. Elisha learns on the other hand that no help or cooperation is to be expected from the sons of the prophets—the ordained ministry of the day—and that he must be prepared to encounter their ignorance and inapprehensiveness of the mind of God; a very necessary discovery for the servant of God in an evil day and in the times of declension, such as Elisha was called to serve in.

His first sphere we have said was Jericho. Having learned the range of God's grace, its bright blessedness in the rapture of Elijah into heaven, and its power on earth in making a way for him through Jordan; he must, like Saul of Tarsus, be a minister of it in the place judicially at the greatest distance from God in the land of Israel—the place of the curse. The men of the place ask him to tarry, but in their invitation they sum up, in a few words, the history of the whole world. “The situation is pleasant, as my lord seeth, but the water is naught and the ground barren.” What a picture! Fair to look upon, but unproductive of anything to meet the necessities of man! Elisha is enabled to respond to their prayer, and meet their need. It is a fine moment, and one of deep edification to his soul, when be is thus allowed to be the instrument of God's grace. A new cruise and salt with the word of the Lord, “I have healed these waters,” effect the desired cure, and the “waters were healed unto this day.” Now this service, which in must have established the heart of Elisha in the very grace which he ministered was brought about by very simple though deeply effective education. He who had learned for himself the grace and power of Jehovah in heaven above and on earth beneath, knows how to act for God in Jericho, in scenes morally most distant from God; and thus was it that our Lord acted so pre-eminently on the earth. But if Elisha be the minister of mercy, he must experience what it is to be rejected, and that in the place most distinguished by the favor of God and the revelation of His goodness. Bethel, the house of God, furnishes youths to mock the ascension of Elijah, crying out as they do to Elisha, “Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head.” But the truth of God must be vindicated, and Elisha, though he be the minister of mercy, is the one to invoke judgment on the gainsayer of it. “He turned and cursed them in the name of the Lord, and there came forth two she-bears out of the wood and tare forty and two of them.” Thus in Jericho and at Bethel be learns two very different lessons. In the one, the mercy of God meeting the pressing need of man; and in the other, the recklessness of man (when God had shown most favor) and the consequent and terrible judgment inflicted on them.

Elisha goes from thence to Carmel for retirement, I should suppose, but ere long returns to Samaria, the scene of service. We must remember that be is properly filling up Elijah's mission, which began with prayer (necessity on the earth looking to God) and closed in the rapture. And from this (the manifestation of the power of God in opening heaven for the reception of man) Elisha began; and therefore in studying his history we should expect to learn how the Lord conducts and uses one who thus begins from above and is not of the earth. In Samaria he is introduced into a scene which discloses to him the political and moral state of all Israel. (Chap. 3.) Moab has rebelled, and the king of Judah is found in unholy league with the kings of Israel and Edom; and the destruction of all three is threatened, not from the power of the enemy but the failure of water. What a condition and association for Jehoshaphat, the Lord's anointed, and one who was usually a godly man, to be in! It is he, however, who at this juncture institutes the inquiry; always that of a heart knowing the Lord but wandering. “Is there not here a prophet of the Lord?” And this brings Elisha on the scene. An important moment is it to him: important as to the testimony of God which he bore, and as to the personal instruction with which it was fraught to himself. Standing in the midst of the moral ruin of Israel, of which the scene before him was the witness, he, like the blessed One in later times, on the one hand, denounces its apostasy; and on the other, links himself with the little that remained for God. “What have I to do with thee?” he says to the king of Israel; “were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, I would not look toward thee, nor see thee.”

But though he can both feel the desolation of Israel, and recognize the remnant, he finds that he is not in a moment ready to enter into the mind of God concerning a state of things so discordant to the spiritual mind. He must pause and send for a minstrel. And it came to pass when the minstrel played, that the hand of the Lord came upon him." That is to say, his mind must be diverted and separated from the confusion and despair around him, before it could be duly in tone to be used of the Lord. His ministry was from above, and therefore, whenever there was danger of his falling into the current of things down here, it was necessary that he should be not only diverted from it, but so guided in the midst as to be free to receive and convey God's mind and purpose. Music is used to accomplish this in the soul of Elisha; and the effect produced typifies that calm, unperturbed state of mind in which one must be to receive the mind of God above and beyond all that is passing around. If I would know that which is above, even the counsel and mind of God, I must in myself be calm as to the circumstances around me; otherwise I shall not be able to see and act on it. In prayer we learn it, and know what practical and necessary discipline it effects for us. Elisha had now properly commenced his public ministry amid the apostasy. Hitherto be had been the minister of grace and judgment in a more private way; but now, the widespread moral desolation of Israel is before him, and he learns to be calm in the midst of it, ere he announces the signal interposition of God on behalf of His people. This is education of the utmost importance. A great moment is it to the soul when it can stand still and see the salvation of the Lord; and especially so with Elisha; for we must again remember that he comes in contact with the ruin and destitution of Israel, after having started from the glorious manifestation of God's grace. He had seen first what God is, and now be is learning down here how ruined and necessitous are the people of the same God, because of their apostasy and unbelief. And it is in meeting these varied distresses of God's people, and being exercised in his own soul as to the way God would meet each, that he himself is enlarged in the power and resources of God.

The next scene in which we find Elisha (chap. 4:1) is as appealed to by a certain woman of the wives of the prophets who cries to him, "Thy servant, my husband is dead and thou knowest that thy servant did fear the Lord, and the creditor is come to take unto him my two sons to be bondmen." Here what is noticeable is not so much the nature of the distress; but that a widow of one of the Lord's prophets in His own land should be reduced to such straits reveals to us how entirely the nation must have forgotten and neglected the care of God, when such a case could be found there unrelieved. Elisha is here from God to be a witness of this misery, and at first he is quite unprepared for such a case and says, "What shall I do for thee?" The extremity of it doubtless astonished him. Here was he, knowing the greatness and power of God toward His people, yet cognizant of the existence of distress peculiar and unprecedented, and it would seem at first as if it were beyond him. He had never before encountered such a scene of misery, but it is in such scenes that the true servant is taught to trust in God, and so trusting, to know what to do. Now the first thing for the heart that is simply resting in God, is to take into account every provision of God personally possessed; and this is what Elisha does. "Hast thou anything in the house?" is his next question, and when he hears that she has a pot of oil, he directs her to borrow of her neighbors empty vessels, to be indebted to them only for empty vessels; for these were to contain God's abundant supplies; and Elisha is vouchsafed the privilege of knowing that there was enough oil, not only to satisfy the creditor, but that from the largeness of the supply there was a provision for the widow and her sons. So ample and generous are God's mercies when they flow; and this is the most interesting and invigorating knowledge which can be communicated to any servant of

God.

And not only was Elisha to witness these things, but he was to experience them himself; not only was he to see things here in striking contrast to that manifestation of glory from which he started, but he must feel the contrast; and if he ministers to God's people in their necessities out of His fullness, he must feel the necessity and suffer himself as without place or association in God's inheritance; in spirit with Him who had not where to lay His head on earth. He, the Lord, on His own earth, was indebted to a few women who “ministered to Him of their substance,” and Elisha is here found in somewhat the same circumstances. (Ver. 8.) A woman, a Shunamite, provides bread and lodging for him, and in this association he is to pass through the history of the hopes and sorrows of God's people. God often leads His servant into a small circle of service, wherein the principles of the circle of His purpose are practically made known to us. It was so with Noah in the ark; so with Abraham on Mount Moriah; so with Paul, with regard to the Church; so with Elisha here. Israel at this time was like the Shunamite, her husband was old, and there was no child for a continuation of their name. The nation was growing old and ready to pass away, and there was no heir to carry it into new life and hopes. Gehazi, who, I suppose, represents Israel after the flesh, sees and tells the prophet this state of things. Elisha promises a son, and a son is born. But before the harvest, before the feast of ingathering, the child dies, the hope of the family is no more, and the mother flies to the prophet in her distress. He is in Carmel, in retirement, and the depth to which Israel is reduced, as typified in this woman, is as yet unrevealed to him by the Lord. (Ver. 27.) But now he was not only to learn it, but the wondrous way and manner of God's deliverance of His people from this, their low estate, was to pass through his soul. This is quite new experience to Elisha, and only step by step is he brought into it.

He must be taught that Gehazi and the prophet's own staff will not do; that no intervention will repair the disaster in a case of death; that nothing but life can meet death, and this Elisha learns in his own person. It is he who is, through the power of God, made to communicate life to the dead child; a simple and distinct type of Him who brought down eternal life from the Father into the world; but a wondrous place for a man to be set in, and a wondrous display of God's grace to him, ignorant and unacquainted as he was with the sorrow that he is now empowered to relieve. In all the exercises which Elisha here passed through, as he walked to and from the house and went up again and stretched himself upon the child and prayed, he is taught, though in a comparatively feeble way, what our Lord passed through so fully; on the one hand, the terribleness of death; and on the other, the blessedness of life.

We next find Elisha at Gilgal; and here he has to meet the dearth of the land; the sons of the prophets sitting before him. The one who has learned the power and grace of God, as the life-giving God, can easily, trusting in Him in the face of all professors, direct the casual distresses which afflict us in passing through this evil scene. He says to his servant, “Set on the great pot and seethe pottage for the sons of the prophets;” but what Elisha as the servant of God is preparing, is spoiled by the intermeddling of the unbelieving. The wild gourds, though supposed by the one who gathered them to be an acquisition, only added death to the pottage; and in the same way, morally, do all additions to faith and God's way bring death. Elisha, still trusting in the life-giving God, is equal to the emergency. He casts in meal, and the deadly element is destroyed. A soul that is simply trusting in God, will ever be able to carry out its purpose; for it is of faith, though it may meet with interruptions and hindrances when it least expects them. Faith always increases by

exercise, and its sphere or work is enlarged when used; consequently, we next find Elisha feeding the people (an hundred men) with only “twenty loaves and full ears of corn in the husk thereof,” and notwithstanding the objections of the unbelieving servitor, he replies, “Give the people that they may eat, for thus saith the Lord, They shall eat and leave thereof.”

We have come to chapter 5. of 2 Kings, where Elisha is to act as the prophet of God outside the limits of Israel. He has been practically educated in the power of God, and therefore is prepared now to say to Naaman the Syrian, “Let him come now to me and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel.” And when Naaman obeys the summons, Elisha only sends a messenger to him, saying, “Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again unto thee, and thou shalt be clean.” Although quite ready to succor the Syrian leper, he is no respecter of persons, and preserves the dignity of sod's servant. He is there to send him forth for his salvation and cure, but he makes no account of him as captain of the host of Syria. And hence, when Naaman is healed, Elisha refuses to take anything from him, in the true independence of the servant of God. He would help the Gentile, but not receive from him. And in principle we learn by the judgment passed on Gehazi that if we grasp at and acquire the goods of the world, we shall inevitably involve ourselves in its leprosy.

We should note, that in the history of Elisha there is less apparent need for discipline than in other servants. He is before us as endowed from above, and when we follow him, we see how aptly and beautifully the grace of God flows from the vessel according to the need it encounters; and though we do not see the discipline through which he learned to yield himself to God, so as fully to display his mind, yet we know that it must have been so; and also that the best evidence of true effective discipline is the meekness and simplicity of heart with which I act according to the mind of God in the various and distinct cases occurring to me. In this light no history is more interesting than Elisha's; the easy and divine way with which he meets every variety of difficulty. It is instructive to us to follow him and see how the servant acts in each varied circumstance, and how the Lord used him to expound that grace which should be so supremely set forth in eternal power by the great man of God—the Son of His love. To be ready as God's vessels for every emergency that arises is the result of all discipline.

Chapter 6. Here we have a circle of wondrous action reaching from a personal to a national calamity; embracing, I may say, in principle, every shade of human sorrow. First, the sons of the prophets feeling the straitness of the place, they propose to Elisha to go unto Jordan, and dwell there. He goes with them; and as one was felling a beam, the ax head fell into the water, and he cried, “Alas! master, for it was borrowed.” Elisha immediately enters into his sorrow and distress, which was not merely the loss, but the man's credit was at stake, because it was borrowed, and the prophet's tender consideration for his distress is very touching; there is in him both tenderness and power to meet anxious human sensibilities. “And the man of God said, Where fell it? and he showed him the place. And he cut down a stick, and cast it in thither, and the iron did swim; therefore said he, Take it to thee; and he put forth his hand and took it.”

We next find Elisha bringing about the defeat of the king of Syria, by warning the king of Israel of his approach. (Chap. 6:9.) And the king of Syria, being apprised of this, and consequently exasperated against Elisha, sends spies to find out his abode; and, having discovered it to be Dothan, he sends thither horses and chariots, and a great host, and compassed the city: all this

warlike array being thought necessary to secure the person of one poor unarmed man. A striking evidence (even as it was in a later day, when a company with swords and staves was sent out to take the blessed One) that the ungodly instinctively feel their own helplessness in the presence of the power of God, even when only acting on their fellow-man. The magnitude of this Syrian host was such, that Elisha's servant is terrified, and says, “Alas! master, what shall we do?” And Elisha, in the power of that faith which had quieted his own soul, replies, “Fear not, for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.” “If God be for us, who can be against us,” was the experience of his soul; and every anxiety of his own being disposed of, he can intercede for others; he prays that his servant may be assured by that vision of faith which his own eye rested on. “Lord, I pray thee open his eyes that he may see.” It is not enough for me to rest myself by faith on God's succor, or to ask others to do so, but I must seek to establish them in the power of it. Readily the Lord grants his request. The eyes of the young man are opened, and he sees the mountain full of horses and chariots about Elisha. And now he prays again with a different request. When this host had terrified his servant, he had prayed that his eves might be opened in a remarkable way, and was heard. Now he prays that the eyes of his enemies may be closed, and he is heard again. “The Lord smote them with blindness according to the word of Elisha.” And now, completely in his power, he leads them away from the city into the midst of Samaria; and then, with touching and instructive kindness and mercy, he will allow no revenge to be taken of these captives, but says, “Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink and go to their master.” How simple and wonderful for a man to be thus led into the mind and resources of God, meeting every contingency in the mind and strength of God; treating the servant with all the attention and interest that he does the king; attaching as much importance to the loss of the borrowed ax-head, as to a city compassed about by armies; thus proving that the circle of God's power and grace embraces the smallest as well as the greatest contingency!

Verse 24. We next find the king of Israel reduced to great straits, (there is a famine in Samaria,) and, imputing it to Elisha, vows vengeance against him. Now this proves that no amount of mercy conferred can be remembered or appreciated by the human heart if the fear of death be still impending. Elisha had been the witness and minister of God's grace and power in averting from the nation manifold calamities, and instead of there being respect or favor for him from the king for the past, his life is threatened unless he continues to succor them. At this juncture the prophet sat in the house and the elders sat with him, I conclude, waiting on God; and he gets intimation from the Lord of the king's evil intention. When the messenger enters, he says, “Behold, this evil is of the Lord; what should I wait for the Lord any longer?” The time was now come to announce the word of the Lord, and he does so. “Thus saith the Lord, To-morrow, about this time, shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria.” And so it came to pass.

This, the greatest is the last recorded public service of Elisha to Israel. He had been used of God to show forth His power and grace, from the smallest to the greatest, in the whole circle of human necessity. And now it is over; though with him, a with his great Antitype, it might truly be said, he had “labored in vain, he had spent his strength for naught.” He now sends to anoint Jehu to be king over Israel, (chap. 9.,) and be is to smite the house of Ahab, and avenge the blood of all the servants of the Lord.

The last recorded event of his life is his interview with Hazael at Damascus. (Chap 8:7.) The Lord had spewed him that Ben-hadad, king of Syria, was to die, and Hazael to reign in his stead; and as he looked on Hazael, he wept, knowing all the evil that be would do to the children of Israel. And with this last public act, we lose sight of our prophet on the earth. He had started as the witness of God's supreme power over death, and glory beyond it, and be had pursued his course down here, showing forth how, according to the revealed power of God, would be the manner and fullness of His mercy and succor to man. He now passes from our view, mourning for what he foresaw should befall God's people, though it was but the consequence of their own sin and folly. In the same way did the greater than Elisha wind up the history of His association with, and unrequited service to, Israel. He wept over the city which had refused to know the things that belonged unto her peace, and which was to pass under the judgment of God, because she knew not the time of her visitation. And from thence He passes from that perfect lifework of grace which Elisha had feebly foreshadowed to that work of death, in which Elisha could not follow him.

Yet when Elisha was “fallen sick of the sickness whereof he died;” (2 Kings 13:14;) when no longer able to be a public witness; when Joash the king of Israel came down unto him and wept over his face, applying to him the very words which Elisha had used to Elijah at his rapture, “O my father, my father; the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof,” because the sun of Israel was setting in the person of this great prophet; even then, in this moment, when sinking into death, be is strong and mighty in the power and the grace of God. He tells Joash to take bow and arrow; and when at his direction the king had put his hand on the bow, Elisha put his hands on the king's hands and said, “Open the window eastward and shoot; and he shot and he said, The arrow of the Lord's deliverance.” The Lord's grace towards His people was not yet exhausted. It was not only the arrow of His deliverance from Syria, but the direction to shoot eastward toward the sun-rising told of coming glory. Elisha was passing away from the scene, going westward as it were; but glory and power would come as the bright shining of the sun after rain. And in the confidence of this he directs the king of Israel to take the arrow and smite upon the ground. And the king smote thrice and stayed, and the man of God was wroth with him and said, Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times; then thou hadst smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it; whereas now thou shalt smite Syria, but thrice.” In his very last moments the dying prophet has to meet with disappointment from the people whom he served, for they were unable to embrace in its full extent, the grace offered to them. The king had no energy to be an instrument of that grace. True energy always shews itself in cheerful abounding obedience, and the heart, sensible of its possession, indicates its consciousness of it. Where there is faith, and according as there is, so is there the manifest expression of it, for the outer acts are always in correspondence with the inward power. How blessed and how in keeping with his life does our prophet pass away! In his death, full of coming glory and deliverance, and only protracted by the feeble faith of those he served.

Elisha dies, but so great is the power of life by which his whole history is characterized, that mere contact with his bones restores to life a corpse which was thrown into his sepulcher. Grace, in the power of God, and resurrection-life, were connected with him; and not only is he here a voice from the dead, but a pledge of that power which will yet restore Israel to life.

The Lord give us to understand and learn of Him how we may be so meek and lowly of heart, doing His will, that He can use us for any expression He chooses of His grace, be it little difficulties or great exigencies, to the praise of His name. Amen.

Chapter 28

# Fragment: Disproportion of Truth

Disproportion of truth is the thing we suffer from. Competency to judge of truth is the portion of every child of God. (1 John)

Chapter 29

# Jacob in Egypt

In conflicts, as one has said, not only is Satan defeated, but the tried saint learns fresh secrets about his own feebleness and the resources and grace of God. So, I may add, in the wanderings of the heart, in departure from the power of faith and hope, not only is the soul chastened and exercised, but it learns, to God's glory, that it must come back to that posture in which the Lord first set it.

These thoughts may introduce us to the closing period of Jacob's history.

At the beginning Jacob had a title to the inheritance in the grace and sovereignty of God. “The elder shall serve the younger” had pronounced the decree of God in his favor. The rights of nature in the person of Esau were not allowed to stand in his way. The purpose of the grace of God secured everything to him, his only but all-sufficient title, as it is ours. From simple confidence in this he departed. He sought to get his brother's seal to this title (Gen. 25:31), and then, in guile, to get his father's also. (Chap. 27)

This was a fraud; and twenty years' exile endured in the midst of wrongs and oppressions was the divine discipline.

But this was also “confidence in the flesh.” It was Galatianism—a seeking to get our title to blessing, or to birthright or to inheritance from God, sealed by some other hand than His.

In the end, however, his soul is found in the exercise of the simplest confidence. He is about to die, and the sons of Joseph, which he had by the Egyptian, are brought before him. He at once adopts them. They had no title—at least none to the rights of the firstborn; but Jacob adopts them and puts them in the place of the firstborn, giving them a double portion, treating them as though they had been Reuben and Simeon.

In all this there was the stern refusal to confer with flesh and blood. His own bowels might have pleaded for his own firstborn. But no: Reuben must give place to Joseph, who, in his sons Ephraim and Manasseh, shall have one portion above his brethren. Grace shall prevail. Faith shall read its title to birthright, blessing, divine inheritance, and all things, to the full gainsaying of the claims of flesh and blood, or rights of nature.

But further, Manasseh the elder shall yield to Ephraim the younger, as Reuben the firstborn has been made to yield to Joseph the eleventh, and this, too, in despite of the most affecting pleadings and struggles of nature. In the bowels of a father, Joseph contends for the rights of Manasseh. Jacob feels for him in those yearnings. In answer to them he says, “I know it, my son, I know it.” But he must pass on till he get beyond the hearing of the cry of nature, and publish the purpose of God and the title of grace, setting Ephraim above Manasseh. (Chap. 48)

Thus is he brought to occupy the very ground where the hand of God had set him at the beginning, and from which, through confidence in the flesh, he departed. He now learns that those whom God blesses shall be blest, that His grace needs not the help of flesh, nor His promise the seal of man.

Nay, but that rather, in spite of flesh, and in independence of man, God will make it good. Had it been needful, to the securing of the divine inheritance to him, to procure his dying father's blessing, Jacob now sees in his setting Ephraim above Manasseh, in spite of Joseph, that God could and would have brought it about. He had desired Isaac's own seal to his title under God; but now he learns that God can vindicate the title He confers, and make good the undertakings and promises of His grace, in spite, as it were, of even earth and hell, the reluctance of nature, or all the struggles of flesh and blood.

This was a striking witness of his soul recovering its early and right condition. But there are others.

The call of God was to a resurrection-hope, or to an inheritance in the heavenly country. The patriarchs so apprehended it. (Heb. 11:13-16.)

Abraham testified to this hope through his life and ways, failing though he did in some incidental matters, as in the denial of his wife before Pharaoh and Abimelech, and in the taking of Hagar.

So did Isaac, though failing also and betraying the ways of nature.

Jacob, likewise, testified to it, dwelling with Abraham and Isaac in tents, as heirs of the same promises. (Heb. 11:9) But he departed more directly from this faith than they had. He built a house at Succoth—he trafficked in land with the Shechemites—he carelessly allowed his sons to join in affinity with the daughters of Canaan; all these things betraying the departure of his heart from the call of God, and the resurrection-hope in which his fathers had walked. The present world, in its possessions, occupations, and alliances, seems to have become an object with him. (Chap. 33:17-20, 37)

But in the end we have the witness of a beautiful recovery in his soul in this particular also.

This begins to manifest itself at Beersheba. (Chap. 46:1-4) He pauses there, on his journey from Mamre, afraid to approach Egypt, as mindful of Abram in chapter 12, and of Isaac in chapter 26:2, 3. This was beautiful. It showed the sensitiveness of a freshly quickened soul, of one that was learning the lessons of God under a fresh impression of His Spirit. And the Lord immediately honors this by a visitation of His servant, such as he had not had since the day of Bethel in chapter 35:9.

And this recovery of his soul is again manifested when he reaches Egypt, in his fine confession before the king. He talks of his pilgrimage, and yet, in blessing the king, assumes to be the better or superior. (Heb. 7:7.) And all this tells us that his soul was exactly in the consciousness and element which the call of God had set it in—that he regarded himself as having nothing “in this present evil world” but a stranger's tent and a pilgrim's fare, but that he was anointed of God to a better inheritance than even that of the kings of the earth. (Chap. 47:7-10.)

This is a beautiful witness of the health of the soul of this pilgrim-father. But the same is still further declared. He lives for seventeen years in Egypt, but there is nothing of building or trafficking there, as before at Succoth and at Shechem. And at last, in his dying hour, with great zeal he testifies his resurrection-hope according to the call of God. He requires a promise from Joseph that he would not bury him in Egypt, but take his body to the burying-place of his fathers in the land of Canaan. He makes him swear to this; and again charges all his sons to do the same with him, describing to them particularly the very spot in Canaan where his bones were to lie, “as in sure and certain

hope.” (Chap. 48, 49) His whole soul seems engaged in this, that he might tell it out, that all his expectations were linked with the promise of God, with the hope of his fathers, with the objects and inheritance of faith, with the portion to which the call of God summons the soul—the heavenly country beyond the grave.

These are different manifestations of the recovered and healthful condition of the patriarch's soul. I will, however, notice another.

In earlier days he had been careless as to the ways of his children. When Reuben defiled his bed, no grief or shame on his part is recorded. When Levi and Simeon shed the blood of the Shechemites, it is only a sorrow to him as it endangered him with the people of the land. (Chaps. 34, 35) But, at the end, a very different mind expresses itself in him.

In the course of his prophetic words upon his sons, now and again his own heart is allowed to utter itself, and such utterances are full of spiritual affection, expressing, as we may see, a very improved condition of soul. Thus, Reuben's history is, it is most true, drawn by the hand of the Spirit, but in the midst of it the patriarch utters the horror of his own soul over the remembrance of Reuben's iniquity. While awarding their several destinies to Simeon and Levi, his heart in like manner is given space to declare its abhorrence and full rejection of their sin and bloodguiltiness. And so, in earlier days, he had been careless of the apostate ways of his children, marrying the daughters of Canaan; but now, in the course of the same prophetic words, contemplating the apostasy of Dan, in sickness of soul over such a sight, he breathes out a longing after the promise— “I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord.” (Chap. 49)

This, among the other witnesses, tells of the recovered, healthful, spiritual condition of the soul of Jacob while in Egypt, or in the closing period of his checkered and eventful life. Breaches which the world or the flesh had made are repaired, and by the hand of his Shepherd is he surely led in paths of righteousness.

Chapter 30

# Entrance of Death

The skeptic examines the present condition of man's body, which Scripture declares and every one knows to be mortal; and states, that as it is constituted it must be so, and hence argues that it must have been so in a state which he knows nothing about. And that is called logic! Is it impossible that it should have been in another state? Of course, as it is, it is mortal. But could not God have sustained it? All things subsist by Him. An animal that lives a century or two, or an insect that closes its life with the evening of its birthday, are all constituted so by Him with whom are the issues of life. Could He not have ever sustained the life of him whom He had made in His own image? A heathen, Callimachus, will tell him, that in Him we live and move and have our being. The skeptic will tell us that the earth could not have held them. Who told him they would have staid there? All this is mere gratuitous supposition. One thing is certain, that some dire and ruinous confusion is entered in; and, whatever the skeptic may dream in his closet, the misery, the violence, the horrors of the four quarters of the globe proclaim an unintelligible Deity, or a desolated and ruined, because a sinful, world. He must be as hardhearted as the god his imagination would content itself with, or admit that sin has brought in desolation and misery. Death is but the seal and stamp that characterizes an existence over which it casts its fear, if thought allows anything but a willful folly which is worse, and extends its power and gloom over man in spite of folly, so as to make a Savior weep, though he that denies Him can look at it with indifference, because he can hide it from his heart, till it meets his eye, or—which God forbid—too late, appalls his conscience.

But the skeptic will teach us more than Scripture. Man is like the brutes that perish, and must have always been so. Death could not have come upon animals. Geology, he says, tells us so. Now I do not pretend to judge this absolutely! The apostle, in speaking of death entering into this world, says nothing whatever of what has happened in others, or with other creatures. He does not even speak of beasts. Now man has not been found in any ancient fossil remains.

What the apostle says is this: “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” Now here he evidently is entirely occupied with the effect of sin in bringing man under death, as the beginning of death declares. Neither in Genesis, nor in Romans, is anything said of the beasts. In both, men alone are spoken of as the specific subject. In Genesis, and to that the apostle refers, it is a sentence previously pronounced on man. When man was created, God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, a thing never said of beasts. Death was pronounced in case of failure. As far as any other testimonies go, the New Testament rather speaks of beasts, as indeed does the Old, as perishing beings. “The beasts that perish.” Peter says, “Natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed.” Now I grant this does not positively prove anything, because the Psalmist and Apostle may refer to their present condition. But it shows how little ground there is for the objection; for with a holy wisdom, the word of God does not answer our curiosity, but leaves beasts as they are before our eyes. We are told, indeed, that the creature has got into misery and ruin by our fall, and, as a system, will not be restored till we are manifested in glory; and this is true even of our bodies. This was morally

important for us to know, that we might be humbled by the sense of the way in which we had dragged down subordinate creation with us, encouraged by the thought that our glory would be the occasion of the restoration of the blessing. But no further curiosity is indulged.

To talk of physiology is mere nonsense, because physiology can only examine man as he is—a state which Scripture and all men pronounce to be that of mortality. What he was is the question; and of that I apprehend a dissecting infidel surgeon is about as ignorant as his neighbors; and more so than many, if he supposes that the God who created man could not sustain him in a present immortal condition. No creature can subsist per se, that is, independently of God. God had constituted man not dying, and then sentenced him to be a dying creature as he is. Why is “wear and tear” essential to life? Now it is, no doubt; but this is not essential to life, but to man's present state of life. The Paradisiacal state is mentioned by Plato in a curious passage; he says: “They lived naked in a state of happiness, and had an abundance of fruits, which were produced without the labor of agriculture, and that men and beasts could then converse together. But these things we must pass over, until there appear some one to interpret them to us.”

It is certainly remarkable, how everything in the Mosaic history is preserved, at least as dijecta membra, bits of truth amidst masses of error and superstition corrupted into a mythological system by Egyptians, a fabular system by Hesiod and Homer, a monstrous system by Hindus, but preserved; while Moses, who certainly did not derive it from extracting it by morsels from Hindus, Egyptian, Grecian, and Mexican fables, or from Plato, who lived centuries after him, has given a concise, simple account of immense moral import, infinitely elevated above the whole range of the heathen fables which pervert its elements, placing the Supreme God—man—good—evil—responsibility—grace—law—promise—the creatures—marriage—all in their place; which short statement accounts for all that we find dispersed over the whole world, of traditionary notions of the primeval history of man; so accounts for it, that with a little pains, we can trace all the fables to their source. How comes this? It is God's most brief, but divine account of the whole matter; preserving, by its very brevity, its true character of the moral seed, so to speak, of all that has been afterward developed of good and evil. It was meant to be such and not more. The germ of all was there in that form. It is divinely given. With further details it would have lost this character. It would have had only its own moral consequences for the parties concerned, like other acts of individual men. But in the Mosaic account, creative goodness, the knowledge of good and evil, conscience, judgment, the way of the tree of life closed, and promise in the woman's seed given, all involving immense principles are brought out. We see ourselves that the whole world is concerned in it: the immense drama of which angels and principalities and powers are the wondering spectators, and the conflict of good and evil, the moral of the tale, is opened with those in whose persons it was to be all developed, and the suggestion of His coming in grace and power, who would close in the glorious triumph of good, putting down evil, what had begun in the solemn lessons of a lost paradise. But the drama was a reality—and all was involved in that one man and his failing companion. Yet from her who failed recovery was to spring; for grace was to be brought out and magnified; that is, God in His dealings with man. And these things angels desire to look into.

Chapter 31

# Remarks on Ephesians 4:12-16

Although we have already dwelt upon the more remarkable forms in which the grace of Christ has displayed itself in the way of gift—apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers—we have not yet touched upon the object that our Lord had in view, that is, the general aim of ministry. This is said in verse 12, to be “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” Now you will observe, in the very first expression of the Spirit of God, that which corrects one of the most prevalent fallacies of Christendom at this moment: and not merely of Christendom in its darkest forms, (for I am not speaking so much of Latins or Greeks,) but where there is the orthodox light of Protestantism and even strong evangelical sentiments. No one who is acquainted with the state of feeling, that is now so general, will doubt but that, even among Christians, the prominent notion of ministry is the bare calling in of souls to the knowledge of their own salvation in Christ.

But this is not the Lord's ultimate design in ministry. The winning of sinners to the Saviour is a necessary part, but is only a part of the blessing. Evangelists, like the rest, are given for “the perfecting of the saints,” which goes much farther. It is clear that they must first become saints; but that which the Holy Spirit makes to be the proper end in view is the forming the saints according to Christ; adjusting them according to the Lord's call and sovereign will touching them; the bringing them out adequately and rightly and freely, so as to find their proper action toward God and one another. This seems what is implied in the perfecting of the saints. Then we have rather the mediate forms which this great end assumes, “unto the work of the ministry, unto the edifying of the body of Christ.”

God always makes of prime moment His saints individually considered—their right condition before Him, their being thoroughly fashioned according to His standard. Their being gathered together and working as an assembly, important as it is, comes after. Thus, the subject of the body, the Church, does not appear till the close of chapter 1. What is the early part of that chapter filled with? That which is necessary for the perfecting of the saints. God Himself reveals His truth precisely in the same order, and to the same primary end. Here again the gifts of Christ are found to be just after the pattern of His own dealings. The perfecting of the saints is the nearest object to His heart; and then follows the means used to bring into the knowledge of common privileges, and the working of the Spirit in the assembly, which is bound up with His glory in the earth. Thus, whatever may be the condition of the Church, whatever the blessed ways of God in dealing with the Church, whatever the affections of Christ towards His body, after all God makes His saints of most immediate account, makes their perfecting to be the first and most prominent object. And this He always holds to. Whatever the fluctuations of the work, whatever the character of His testimony at any given moment upon the earth may be, the perfecting of the saints is the unceasing object before Him.

There is something exceedingly sweet in this. Come what may, God will accomplish the perfecting of His saints, and turn even the things that are sorrowful and afflicting into a means of blessing for

them, if not always to their credit. Where we need humbling, it is plain we are not humble; where we are not low in our own eyes, God must Himself make us so. The process does not give room for our importance; but God keeps His own blessed end in view, and never fails to accomplish it. So that we may always adore Him for His goodness; though it may be in that which is distressing for the time, still God never fails; He is bent upon the perfecting of the saints; He is faithful and will do it. He puts this forward before His saints as the practical object of Christ. There we have ministry taking these different forms according to His own sovereign disposition.

But the Lord has to do with ministry, directly and immediately without the intervention of the assembly. There is no such thing in Scripture as a ministry flowing from the Church, though there is ministry directed to the Church. Paul speaks of himself as a minister of the Church: that is, not as derived from that as serving it: for the Church is formed by ministry instead of ministry flowing out of the Church. The gifts are for the perfecting of the saints. The ministry may fail, but the Lord never fails in accomplishing His end. It may be in a slower way, and there may be that which is utterly weak and even afflicting, but He accomplishes His purposes. He gives these gifts “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” These two later clauses come in as subordinate to the first. It is most blessed to see the saints acting together; but however the work of the ministry may fail or be impaired in man's hands, the great end to which the Lord commits Himself, and for which He has given these gifts, is carried through spite of all. And more, this is true, “till we all come 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 fullness of Christ.” The “perfect man” here does not refer to resurrection, but to our being thoroughly grown up into the knowledge of Christ.

This is observable in Paul. Although his great work was unfolding the redemption of Christ and the counsels of God's glory founded on redemption, yet he cannot but bring in this full growth of the saints in connection with the deepening knowledge of the Son of God. It is the person of Christ that rises up before the soul; and this is very much more a test of spirituality than any acquaintance with His work. It is with Himself as a divine person that we become more and more intimate through the truth that God ministers to our souls. This is what He puts before us— “Till we all arrive at the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, at a perfect man.” Knowledge of the past ways of God would not do now. The Old Testament saints did look to the Messiah in the way of hope; but the present form in which the Spirit of God presents the object to us is the knowledge of His person, as the Son now revealed for our joy, and praise and worship. So that we have here the great Christian object and form of knowledge that God has in view with all His saints now. The comparison with verse 14, gives the force of the expression “a perfect man;” it is in contrast with being children, “the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we henceforth be no more babes, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine.” What God designs for us is that we should be full-grown, and this “in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” It is in contrast with this condition of weakness and exposure to all the craft of men and their changing, scheming tactics of error.

Then we have the opposite, practical way in which our growth is carried on. “But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.” The expression seems deeper than what we have here. It is “being truthful in love,” not merely “speaking the truth in love,”

though, of course, this is a very important part of being truthful, but it is not everything; and we all know that it is very possible not to be truthful in thought and feeling, where the words are quite correct. “Being truthful in love,” implies truth in the inward parts.

We find here the two essential features of godliness of course were found in Christ in infinite perfection. He was the light. Whatever He might say, He exactly reflected the full truth from God Himself; nay, He was it. We find a remarkable expression when our Lord was dealing with the Jews and bringing Himself out as the light of the world, in John 8. They asked Him what He was, and He says, (according to the English Version,) “Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning.” But the true meaning is, “Absolutely what I speak unto you.” There should be neither “at the beginning,” but “absolutely,” nor “what I said,” but “what I am speaking.” If these words are weighed you will find the force of them. Our Lord is exactly and absolutely what He utters; His words convey with infallible certainty what He is. He certainly was truthful in love. Our Lord's words so completely gave out the inner man, He was so perfectly transparent, that not one thing in Him deflected from the truth; nothing seemed to be but exactly what He was. And this because there was no sin in Him, neither was guile found in His mouth. There was no object but God before His soul, as He says Himself: “I do always those things that please him.” And you may rely upon it, that it is having Christ before us as the object of our souls in everything practically, which alone gives us power of truth. The moment we have anything of our own as an object, so far we slip aside, and there is that which is not the full truth, for Christ alone is the truth, and He alone gives us the truth in perfect love; and it is only in proportion as we are filled with Him, and have Him to the exclusion of all our own evil, that we ourselves walk in the truth. Let us have our hearts fixed on any one thing or person save Christ, evil slips out, and it is good for us to know and own this. It was never so with our Lord. He could say, “I have set the Lord always before me.” And He has given us Himself always to set before us.

Our Lord's meat and His drink was to do the will of His Father; still there was the meeting God about our sins in a manner that we are not called upon to do. We start upon a redemption accomplished by Christ, which has brought us into the presence of God, and which calls upon us to walk according to the grace which has brought us there, and which keeps us there. We may not all realize it, but we have done with ourselves by virtue of the work of Christ; we are brought near to God, brought to be at home with God, and from that place we are called upon to take up everything that becomes us here below; and here we have to judge what is the will of God, for we are absolute weakness if we are not doing His will distinctly. It is not only that God will have us conformed to Christ by and by, but that is what He has in view now. And in spite of all, wherever the heart is true and Christ is before the soul, though there may be immense differences, yet this is God's delight with His children. The child does not remain always a child, but becomes a man: and so should it be with the family of God. He would have them grow.

This then is the object in the gifts of Christ. He is bent upon blessing souls even now in the world, and that is the object of all ministry. It is not something left for our thoughts and arrangements, but it is all in the hands of the Lord. It is He who loves His saints, who will bless them, and who makes His individual servants, that have to do with the saints, to be immediately connected with Himself, and to have His objects before their eyes in that which they have to discharge to Him and not to them. For directly the Church becomes the great object before the soul, the blessing is of a lower character altogether, inferior in all its spiritual lineaments. There may be right feelings toward one

another, but there is that which is much higher than loving one's brethren, divine though it be; and if you know nothing above brotherly love as the object, you will not walk in love. God is higher than love, and that is precisely the point of difference so much needed for this moment. One of the main things that we have to guard against is, Satan's endeavoring to persuade people that, because God is love, therefore love is God. But it is not so. If I say that, God is love, I bring out what He is in the active energy of His holy nature. But this is not all that God is. He is light as much as He is love; and I must own His love without the denial of His light. What prevails among many now, is the deifying of love in order to strip God of His light. But where we have it clearly before us, not that love “is God,” but that “God is love,” love will not be the less, but in fact more true and pure. While it will be the active spring of our own hearts, it will not be found at issue with His character, but will leave room for God to display Himself according to all that He is. God is truthful in love. Take it in the case of His dealings with my soul when He is converting me. Is faith the only thing produced by the Holy Spirit? What is the first effect of His breaking in upon a sinner? It is making nothing of him. Is not this love? Yes; but it is God's love that deals with me in the truth of what He is, and of what the sinner's awful condition is. So the effect produced on the heart of him that is renewed is not merely faith in Christ, but repentance toward God; it is the judgment of his whole moral condition in His sight. And as you find it connected with God's dealings with a soul from the first, and in the moral answer produced in the soul of the saint, so it is true all through. Where there is the healthful action of a saint in the presence of God, the room will not be less full for divine love, yet there will be the maintenance of the holiness and majesty of God. We would not wish to be spared pain for the purpose of slipping through at God's expense. There never has been one trial of heart gone through with God, but we have been blessed by it. We might have the blessing in a still fuller way without so much failure or letting out of what we are. But supposing we do not so lay hold of Christ as to be lifted above ourselves, then we must learn painfully what we are. But God turns it all for blessing. This is the great thought of the chapter. He has brought us into this blessed place. First of all, we are in Christ before God, and, next, God is dwelling in us: the one is our great privilege, the other is our solemn responsibility, which flows from the fact that God has made us His dwelling-place.

At once all contracted ecclesiastical notions are shut out by the truth of His dwelling-place. If we merely meet as a Church, such a connection with God disappears. But if it were only two or three, I must meet on the ground of the Church or it has no truth in it before God; and two or three Christians thus gathered would be with God and would have God dwelling in them. There Christ is, and there God dwells in a special way. God can bless where He does not sanction; He can bless in Popery. The grace of God is so rich and free, and above all the wicked ways of men, that He can use the name of Christ in the most untoward circumstances; but that is very different from God's putting His seal to what we are about. In order that He may Himself be associated in it, we must be in the truth of things, and acting according to the divine mind. I believe that only in our own days has this great truth been brought out by the Holy Spirit so as to bear upon souls according to God. I am not aware of any adequate testimony to it since the ruin of Christendom. There were in abundance efforts of men to improve the present and imitate the past; but either is a very different thing from God's provision in the Word for saints in a fallen state. If you see a man who is striving simply and ever so earnestly to get better, you say justly, he is under law, and does not understand the gospel. Just so, when a number of Christians are trying to ameliorate Christendom by new plans and efforts, I should say that if they understood the nature of the

Church of God, and the Holy Spirit's relation to it, they would feel that mere union is a poor substitute for unity; they would humble themselves in the sight of God because of the state of the Church, and would fall back upon the word of God to see whether there is not a real and lowly but divine direction for the actual state of things in the Church. May God deliver His saints from the unholy as well as unbelieving but very general notion, that we are obliged on account of present circumstances to go on in sin! To men of spiritual discernment, the thought is just making God such a one as us. If I give up His holiness in one thing, how can I stand up for it or trust Him in another? Contrariwise, let us maintain that there is no emergency as to which God can lower His holiness, or sanction the lack of it in us; and if His will be perfect in other things, is it less in that which so deeply and nearly concerns the glory and name of Christ as the Church? People argue from the fact that things are not in order and beauty now; they go so far as to deny the responsibility of saints, as if Christians were not in one way or another connected with these public departures from God. Will it be urged that they are to be adhered to because they themselves or their fathers have been brought up in them? Surely the one question for us is this: Do we desire to learn and do the will of God? Is that our great object? Or is it merely, Where can I get enough comfort or blessing to keep my head above water? Of this, too, I am fully assured that if you are found doing the will of God, you will get the most and best blessing; but it is not the true Christian motive, and it is an unsafe one. We may go here and get a little blessing, and then go there hoping to get a little more. But, as it is said here, growth is “that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine.” He would guard us from all the cunning craftiness of men whereby they lie in wait to deceive.

Is there, then, no means of having certainty in the midst of the confusion that reigns? Assuredly there is; and where the soul is sufficiently broken down to feel what is due to God, He will make all plain. We never ought to join in a single thing that we know to be wrong, whether privately or publicly. Of course, there may be everywhere things done or said that one may not be able to approve of, but this individual failure is different from joining in public acts of worship, the order of which is known beforehand to be systematically unscriptural. There I am identified with the guilt of what is done contrary to the word of God and so fixed by human authority. But this shows us the importance of nothing being done in the assembly but what will carry the weight of the whole assembly along with it. Hence, too, the evident desirableness of keeping out of the assembly all debatable questions. We may speak of them to a servant of God or a brother; but even that which I may individually enjoy is not a thing that I am entitled to involve the assembly of God in, unless I believe God would have me say it, especially when I know there is room for a just doubt on the mind of the simplest believer there. Minor matters of discipline never ought to be brought into the assembly. When there is anything of fundamental false doctrine or of a grossly immoral character, let it be what it may, there it is plain that all saints must be assumed to have the very same judgment. All would feel that they could have no fellowship with blasphemy or drunkenness, or any fatal manifestation of evil of one kind or another. Then we have cases which claim the united judgment of the whole assembly. Supposing a saint were what is called a Churchman, or a Dissenter, and little versed in Scriptural thought or action ecclesiastically, still, if he were really born of God, there could be no material difference of judgment about such matters. The power of the Spirit is mighty; the Lord knows how to work; and the common spiritual instincts of all the children of God, guided by His word as to such matters, find their expression in the renouncing and judgment of all such evil. But public discipline in the Church is so serious a matter, that it

ought never to be resorted to till the evil rises up to such a height that all unbiased believers would be united about it. There is a tendency among righteous and active minds to make, out of every matter of difference, questions for the Church to decide on and deal with. This is a grave mistake, fraught with ill for all concerned, and to be resisted with all possible earnestness. Even saints are apt to be prejudiced or prepossessed in what concerns one another, especially in small things which can at all admit of party-feeling. Besides it would become an instrument of torture for many souls, if every private matter were liable to be brought into public. Thanks be to God, He has made His own landmarks for our guidance, and has shown us clearly that to bring anything into the open arena of Church discipline, ought never to be till every means has been taken to hinder it. The desire of our hearts ought to be the glory of the Lord in the blessing of one another's souls; and we all know that needless publicity must add largely to the shame, pain, and difficulty. But when it is needful, let it be done, so that it be to the Lord, with the utmost gravity and real love. The destroying the true notion of the Church, and of its action, has tended to reduce it to the level of a mere club.

But when we lay hold of the truth that the Lord has that on earth with which He links His name, although only two or three souls may have gathered unto that name, renouncing their connection with what is of the world and of man; when we have come to learn from God that He who saved our souls is the only One competent to form and keep and guide the Church—if we know that He has made us members of His own Church, all we have to do is to act upon the ground of the Church that God has made. If we now belong to God at all, we belong to His assembly, and we are bound to follow it out practically. If I know ever so few that act upon the word of God which applies to this, I am free, yea, bound in the liberty of Christ to meet with them. Of course, it would be matter of thankfulness, if there were hundreds of thousands meeting thus, though this might in other ways entail more sorrow and trial; but the trial will not be mere trouble of flesh; it will be, if we walk with God, the exercise of grace and patience; it will call out the real love to Christ that seeks the good of others, and that is always drawn out into intercession by the pressure of evil on all sides.

Supposing then, two or three come to this point—that they cannot acknowledge a human church, any more than a human salvation; are they to sit still, dishonoring God and ruining their conscience by persisting in known evil; or are they not in faith to meet in the Lord's name? By all means let them come together, following the word and trusting the Spirit of God. They will find trial, but true liberty and the Holy Spirit working in their midst. He is given to abide with them forever; let them believe it and not fail to count upon it. They may be very weak, but the Holy Spirit is not weak. On coming together, perhaps there is no one to speak at length, with profit, to them; but the assembly of God does not come together for sermons. Much or little speaking, their object is to do the will of God, to remember Christ, to act scripturally on the faith of God's objects in His own Church. If there were twenty thousand Christians round about them, meeting on human principles, what believer can maintain that these two or three would not have the special presence of God among them in a way the others would not? The more we have the sense of the ruin of the Church, the fuller our confidence that God's principles always remain intact and as obligatory now as on the day of Pentecost; the more happy the soul in the Lord, the more it will be drawn out in love to all saints. May it be ours thus by grace to “grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ!” This does not depend on the number of communicants, nor on the form and means

of ministerial power, but far more on our own souls being with God, and doing His will, not only in individual service and life, but also as His assembly, which ought to come together according to His word.

There are, then, these three things—first and prominently, the perfecting of the saints individually; next, subordinately, the work of the ministry, where other persons act upon me; and, lastly, the building up of the body of Christ. The full aim and desired result of it all is the growing up into a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; “that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.” Allow me to show a practical proof of it. You are aware that at an early date, false doctrines and heresies of all kinds came in. What was the resource of good men in those days? They invented creeds and confessions by which they endeavored to try suspected persons. But where was the authority for this course? Was it found that these bulwarks kept the evil out? In no wise, time or place. There is only one power of maintaining truth and love—even Christ; and where Christ is really held up and to, without the devices of men, there may be weakness, and ignorance at first, but the result will be that Christ's strength will be made perfect in their weakness. The power of Christ will rest upon those who, feeling their own weakness, cleave to Him alone. On the other hand, while you often stumble weak consciences, in good men, by imposing creeds, you can rarely, if ever, thereby shut out bad men; nor would spiritual men, alive to the honor of God's word, and aroused to see their unscriptural character, if ever so correct, deem it right to own them. Thus you hamper the weak and you exclude the strong among the children of God. You have a crowd of thoughtless or bigoted subscribers; and as to dangerous men, what thief or robber cannot leap over a creed? Human restraints are able to dishonor the work of God, but avail not to hinder the evil of man or Satan. What you find in Scripture is the saints led on, and the body knit together by the different joints and bands, and thus having nourishment ministered. This is the exercise and fruit of ministry exercised in all its extent; but there may be the Spirit of God giving a word by one who has not a permanent gift. God ordinarily makes a man an evangelist or a teacher; so that a stated ministry is a truth of God.

But exclusive ministry, I am bold to say, is an interference with the rights of Christ, and with the action of the Holy Spirit. God has caused to be felt in these last days the ruin of the Church more than at any epoch known to me in its past history; but He has also made souls learn and feel that no ruin of the Church destroys a divine principle. What was the truth for the Church is the truth for the Church. The original principle of ministry ever abides the only principle which He sanctions or we ought to follow. If there was nothing like modern practice in apostolic times, it is a human thing (and why should a saint bold to or justify it?) in our days. It is absolutely due to the Lord, that the Church should not interfere with those who are scripturally doing His work; and also, that all should leave room for Him to raise up others as He pleases. No workman, skilled or blessed as he may be, has all gifts in his person. There might be some member of Christ in the congregation qualified of God to edify by a word of wisdom occasionally, or able to preach the gospel, to exhort, or to minister in some mode and measure, according to the word of God. What we find in Scripture is the door kept open in principle and practice for all that God gives. Surely this is not to disparage ministry; it is, on the contrary, to assert it, and the rights of the Lord in it. But the ground on which

ministry is exercised at the present time is so wholly, certainly, and transparently human, that the effect is inevitably to accredit a number of persons as ministers who are not even Christians, and to discredit all real ministers, who for the Lord's sake refuse their unscriptural forms. This is an evil that no godly saint, who desires to be obedient, ought to tolerate, or even make light of, for an instant. For my own part, it is one reason why it is wrong to become a minister of any denomination that follows (as all do) these baseless traditions. If you are a minister at all, you are a minister of Christ, and of no body else. This the word of God makes as plain as light. The action of the assembly, as such, is entirely distinct. While the minister is of course a part or member of the assembly, yet must he act, if he act rightly, from Christ, and from Christ alone. He may seek to edify believers by discourses, exhortations and so forth, addressed to them; he may seek earnestly the conversion of unbelievers; but ministry or no ministry, (in which last case there would, of course, be loss, yet) the assembly goes on, competent and bound to perform its own functions in subjection to the Lord. Again, not ministry but the presence and operation of the Spirit constitute the power of the assembly. This is as important for the assembly to bear in mind, as it is for the servants to remember that they have immediately to do with Christ as their Lord. Of course, abuse of ministry, like any other sin, necessarily brings him who is guilty under the judgment of the assembly. No man can ever be beyond the Church's judgment, where he gives occasion for it by the allowance of evil in his conduct. But the Church's interference never ought to appear, save in the case of known evil doctrine or practice.

This may help to show the practical bearing of the passage. What God does and Christ gives, the mutual service of the various members of the body, joints and bands—all is that we should “grow up into Christ in all things; from whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.” There we have the theory of the Church, because God, in laying down these blessed principles, does not bring in the mere accidents of evil. There is no such thought as a screw being loose here, or something else being wrong there. All is supposed to be moving on harmoniously for the great end for which the Lord has established it.

There is a difficulty that people often bring forward—that you cannot have a perfect church on earth. What do they mean? If it be a church where there will not be a soul ever doing or saying anything but what is quite according to God, they are asserting, doubtless, a mere truism, if it be not rather, mere foolishness. But what is insinuated is, that you cannot, on earth, get any association of saints according to the will of God. I deny this, believing that you can readily find the path of His will, and that every believer ought to find that path. You are responsible to learn the will of God about His Church if you are a member of it, and to be doing nothing else. If I know two or three Christians in a place, seeking to walk according to the Scriptures, there should be my lot. One may be a forward man naturally, another might have strange notions and ways. There might be something faulty in each of the individuals. All this is not to deter me for an instant, because my owning them as being that part of the Church which is acting where they are according to God, does not depend upon an immaculate ideal in this or that. The question is—are they doing the will of God according to His word? God's will at least is perfect, and he who does it, abides forever. Is not His will about His Church as absolute as about anything else? If this be allowed, there, I say, is the ground of action. Must we not be about our Father's business as to this? So that the one

question for all who desire to please God is, what is His will? Not surely to meet as the flock of Mr. So-and-so, (for where do we read anything of the sort in Scripture?) but to meet as Christians who are simply cleaving to Christ, and counting on the Holy Spirit to teach all the will of God? Is not this, and this alone, the true basis on which Christians should corporately act? Where, then, shall I find believers so meeting? Are there any who have had the faith to come out of that which is merely human, so as to stand on the ground laid down in God's word? The same Scripture that tells me how I am to be saved, tells me how to walk in His house, the Church of God. Neither the assembly nor ministry is left to human wit or caprice; as to both, we must search, and be subject to, the word of God. God's system (for He has one, as revealed in Scripture,) is what we have to find out and act upon; and though we may have very great trial and difficulty, and find ourselves in the same straits the early saints experienced, yet, even this confirms the truth to us, and we shall have joy and strength if simply dependent and obedient to the Lord. The very trials will become a means of fresh blessing; and we shall prove how truly God will give us to use for His own glory much of His word which was once practically useless to us, and which we supposed merely referred to apostolic times. We thus begin to find a present application of the word of God in our corporate position, just as much as in meeting the wants of our souls day by day. If this be so, may we have the happiness, not only of knowing these things but of doing them steadfastly unto the end!

Chapter 32

# Remarks on Ephesians 4:17-27

The reader now enters upon the general walk of Christian men, as suitable to, and connected with, the doctrine of our epistle. Indeed there was already an exhortation in the beginning of chapter 5 to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called. But the apostle here descends to particulars. And, first of all, there is a solemn injunction to the saints that they should not henceforth walk, as other Gentiles walked, in the vanity of their mind. The Spirit of God guards us against what we perhaps might think needless—the walk of those who surround us—the walk that was our own before we were brought to Christ. And yet, the moment that we reflect, the wisdom of such an exhortation is apparent; for Christians are ordinarily liable to be much influenced by the tone of thought and feeling current in the world outside. The ruling passion that carries the world on for the time being, is always apt to be a snare to those at least who shrink from the cross day by day, and so much the more because they do not suspect themselves. Whatever be that which occupies its energies, especially if philanthropy, moral progress, or religion be the form that it takes, there is always a liability to be thrown off our guard. Besides, and this is the immediate point here, old habit is strong; so that the apostle does not hesitate to warn these saints who stood out, not only in the fresh joy of faith, but also in outward position, very separate from the world, and, the lines were at that time strongly defined; and yet, in this opening word of exhortation, the Holy Spirit very solemnly guards the saints against being drawn into the ways and practices of the Gentiles. There is often a danger of this with Christians, because they do not like to be singular. There may be peculiar people among the children of God. But the apostle does not speak of eccentric individuals, to whom it would be no difficulty, but a pleasure, to differ from everybody else. They affect originality in word and deed, and in their strain after it are only odd. But he is guarding against the common moral danger, when faith has lost somewhat of its simplicity and freshness.

On the other hand the apostle has shown elsewhere—and we should always endeavor to remember it—that it is a wise and important thing to meet souls in grace as far as possible, not to impose upon others what they have not strength to bear. In writing to the Corinthians, the apostle had insisted on this, as his ministry exemplified it. He had become a Jew to the Jews that he might gain the Jews. He was made all things to all men that he might by all means save some. There was no kind of pressing points. There was the hearty desire for the good of souls; for we may have this without the pressure of our own particular thoughts and feelings, however right they may be. It is the elasticity of the Christian if established in grace. We rarely can pull the cord too tightly in dealing with our own souls, or be too stringent in our vigilance and prayer against slipping here and there. But it is a totally different thing in having to do with others. We have to bear their infirmities, if, in truth, we are strong; it is for their good that the Lord lays them upon our hearts. We find that, even with His own disciples, He did not go beyond what they were able at that time to bear. But the very desire to meet souls, and not to raise questions that would gender strife, would expose a gracious Christian to be taking the color of those outside himself, and giving up his own principles.

There is no doubt, then, of the forbearance in which we are called to walk with one another; nevertheless, we need to beware of turning grace into levity or licentiousness. “This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their minds, having their understanding darkened; being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.” Here he begins with the inner thing. You will find that our tendency is to occupy ourselves and others with something outward. But the apostle goes to the root of the evil walk of the Gentiles. Their minds were vain and empty, as all must be, who have not God distinctly and positively, and intelligently before them in any matter, whatever it may be. As to these Gentiles in nothing had they God before them; they were “without God in the world.” Consequently, there was nothing but the empty vaporing mind and mouth of man, imagining one thing and expressing another. What was the effect? The understanding was darkened. “They were alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that was in them, because of the blindness of their heart.” These are various descriptions, not of the outward walk, but of the root of all the evil fruit they bore. God was not in all their thoughts. They were “alienated from the life of God.” How indeed could it be otherwise? The life of God is only found in His Son and Him; and, consequently, it they had not. Far from having relish, or a just sense of need, they were alienated from good; and this on account of the blindness or hardness of their hearts. So far is the evident tracing of what the evil walk of these Gentiles sprang from; the sum and substance is that it arose from their ignorance. And their ignorance was because their hearts were hardened and blinded. What a solemn and practical truth for every soul of man, converted or not! Our conduct flows from our judgment, and our judgment from our affections. Thus, the state of our heart becomes so important in practice. We find here that all the outward man finds its source in the inner man, and the inner man is formed by that which governs the heart.

Hence the all-importance of having Christ for the heart's object—yea, exclusive object. For nothing is more common than to have divided affections. Indeed, it is the great thing against which we all have to watch. Had we an eye more single, and a heart more thoroughly and self-judgingly devoted to Christ, what would be the consequence? The heart always gives direction, color, and energy to the judgment. There never would be a waver individually, and there would be nothing but peaceful walking together in the light of God, without slip or stumble of any kind. And this is the theory of a Christian. (Compare Philippians 1 and Colossians 1.) Practically there are difficulties. Who of us has not had to confess grievous failure and sin? Who has not had to say, I do not know what the mind of God is as to this or that? In a word, the understanding has been too often darkened, and the walk unlike Him whose we are. Of course they differ from what we have described here. But is it not a solemn thing that the Christian has to watch against the very same evil which denies and outrages the character and will of God, in souls that know Him not? And yet this is what we all have to feel and confess as to ourselves. How often we have been without divine light! This ought never to be in a saint. It never was so with Christ. He was the light; so that it would utterly fall short of His glory to say that He was always not only walking in the light, but according to the light. Consequently He never knew what it was to have a shade of doubt. If He waited, it was never doubt, but further knowledge of His Father's will, as in John 11 It may be our path to wait; and it is well to do so, when we have no such assurance. The development that follows is a description of the awful depravity of the Gentiles; as he says in the next verse, “Who, being past feeling, have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with

greediness.” No doubt it is the lowest moral degradation of which the life of man is capable. But the wholesome thing for us to see, and to apply for our own souls' help, and guidance and guard too, is that all the excesses of this outward evil were the result of the heart being darkened, and this because it was without God. There was nothing but what Satan drew from a man's own mind, and the consequence was the falsifying of his judgments and feelings. Hence men became a prey to every kind of evil. They had given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

But now comes the Christian in contrast. He says, (although we are in danger of all this, and the very sense of our danger is what God uses to keep us from falling into the danger) “Ye have not so learned Christ.” As all the practical evil of the Gentiles arose from their ignorance of God, the heart, the mind, the walk, all wrong, and increasingly evil; so now God's deliverance from all evil, root, branch, and fruit, is Christ. And what a blessed, simple, holy, God-glorifying deliverance it is! It is not that He enters into anything of the various processes He may use in leading to this result. Besides, Christ is the way, as well as the truth. The one grand means that applies to every case, and that gives the surest deliverance, is Christ Himself. “Ye have not so learned Christ.” He purposely makes Him to be the person who has to do directly with the soul. It is a remarkable way of connecting us with our Lord, though common in John, “My sheep hear my voice.” But here, where the union of the members with the Head and not life only, is the point insisted upon, we approach closely to the teaching of the elder; it is as if we listened to Christ ourselves. “If so be that ye have heard Him” —not about Him; they were taught by Him “as the truth is in Jesus.” Is there not great emphasis in this expression? It is not as the truth is in Christ. We all know that Jesus is Christ, and Christ is Jesus. But God never uses one word in vain. And I think that the difference is the greater because both are used. He first of all puts the word Christ— “Ye have not so learned Christ,” because there he brings the whole mass of my privilege before the soul. Christ is the special name, when I look at Him as the risen, exalted Man. In Him I have got my blessing. The word conveys to my mind the thought of One in whom all is concentrated as dead and crucified in heaven. Jesus is the personal name that He bears upon earth. The Spirit had been revealing, in previous chapters, the great name brought before us in Christ. But when he is about to speak of the practical knowledge which would apply to the duties of their walk here below he says, “If so be ye have heard Him and been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus.” There, I apprehend, he is more speaking of Him as that person who, in the eyes of men, as well as before God, was the blessed example of all light and purity in His ways here below. Thus, I conceive, any spiritual mind will at once appreciate what a blessed way it is of bringing it before our souls. He brings us to the living presentation of all that we have in Him; but we see it in the ways of that blessed Man, Jesus, here below. By the “truth that is in Jesus,” does he not mean the truth that we see and hear and know carried out in every word He said, in all His ways and obedience, and service, in every kind of suffering that He passed through on the earth; in His patience, in His earnestness, in His zeal for the glory of God, His tender care for those that belonged to God, and in His compassion for perishing sinners? And yet, look where you will, behold His intolerance of that which is contrary to God. All these, and infinitely more, we find in Jesus, and no where else in perfection.

It is only in the person of Jesus that you get all truth fully out. I may learn truth through the Holy Spirit, and He is the only power of my knowing the truth, and is therefore, I suppose, called “truth”

in 1 John 5:6. Neither God, as such, nor the Father is ever called the truth; nor could it be. When you speak of the truth, you do not mean merely either the divine nature in its perfectness nor His person, “from whom cometh down every good gift.” But why is it that Jesus should be emphatically the truth? Jesus is the One who objectively has presented to me that which shows me the bearing and relationship of everything to God as well as to man. If I want to test any one thing, I never can arrive at its full character till I view it in connection with the person of Christ. The Holy Spirit is the truth subjectively, because no man can behold Jesus, to find the truth in Jesus, without Himself. The Holy Spirit is the revealer of Jesus; our own mind cannot see Him. Even the new man cannot of itself understand Jesus, or enter into the things of God. And you will observe how strikingly this was shown when the disciples themselves, already born of God, had to wait till the Lord opened their understandings to understand the Scriptures, and after that for power to act on them. After they were converted, they needed the power of the Spirit to enable them to apprehend the Scriptures. After that again they must wait for power to testify the truth from the Scriptures to others. They needed to have the power of the Spirit, distinct from the new nature, for the purpose of entering into the things of God. Mere human nature never understands the things of God, the new man does. But in order to do it, it must be led of the Spirit. The new man is characterized by dependence. The Holy Spirit acts in His own power. So that we do not merely need dependence upon God, but power from God in order to enter into the truth. I am not now speaking of being converted merely, but of the practical entering into the mind of Christ, and the ways of God as brought out in the ways of Jesus. Let me illustrate the value of the truth as it is in Jesus. Take any truth you like, as, for example, man. Where shall I learn the truth about man? Shall I look for it in Adam? a man that listened to his wife after she had listened to the devil? a man who, when God came down, ran away from Him, and even dared to insult God by laying the blame upon Him? Shall I look at his sons? at Cain, his firstborn, or at Abel whom Cain slew? What was so beautiful in Abel was what was of God, not what was of himself. If you pursue the history of man as such, you only find evil and pride and presumption increasing upon him, till you give up the whole tale in shame and disgust. And so it would all end, but for the Second Adam. I find here in every step that He took, in every word that He said, in everything that flowed from His heart and was reflected in His ways, One that never did His own will. Now I learn the beauty and the wonder of a man subject to God upon the earth—the only One who ever walked in perfect, moral dignity, though He was despised of all, and most of all hated by the religious leaders of the world of that day. But how did not God delight in Him? Here, then, the humbling truth is told. Man has shown himself thoroughly out. Jesus, the cross, tells the tale.

But supposing another instance: if I look up and think of God, where shall I, of a surety, find Him? In creation? It is all ruined; besides, to read Him only in the book of nature, is but to have glimpses of power and beneficence. But in the midst of all these large and shining characters of divine majesty, and wisdom, and goodness, scattered up and down through everything that He has made upon the earth, I should also have to face other characteristics of weakness, decay, suffering, death. The question arises, whence do these come? They are as crooked as the others were straight; the latter as full of misery as the former wore the impress of wisdom and power. The result of all is that for the mere reasoner in the vanity of man's mind, the understanding gets darkened; and all that can thus be learned even from the consideration of that which comes from the hand of God, completely fails to give the knowledge of Himself. I see the effects of another hand there as well as His own—the hand of a destroyer and liar; and instead of rising up from

nature to nature's God, as poets vainly sing, you are apt to sink from nature to the devil that has ruined it all; you fall into the snares of the enemy by the effort to find out God in your own strength. I want some other way wherein to learn what God is. To gather an evidence of His being is one thing; to know Him is another. I can delight in anything that He has made, but what are His thoughts, feelings and ways, especially to a sinner?

If you talk about providence, Is there not an Abel suffering, and a Cain prosperous? Great deeds were done in the family of the proud murderer; while those who had whatever there was of the light of God, were disliked and scorned by the world; often weak in their own eyes too, but suffering and cast out wherever there was faith, by those who had it not. This is an impenetrable enigma to man. How can he, in the face of such facts, discern the superintending power of a God as conscience tells there is? Constant difficulties arise; and the reason is very plain—it is not in circumstances around, any more than in my own mind, that I can get the truth. Not that there are not traces and indications in providence as in creation; but I want the truth and cannot find it in either.

Then I may come down to the law. Does it give me the truth? In no way. It is not that the law was not good and holy, but it is never called, nor in itself could it be, the truth. Its design was more for making the discovery of man than of God. Its operation was that man might thereby learn what he is himself. It runs like a plowshare, when directed by the Spirit, into the heart, and lays bare many furrows, and discovers what man never knew was there before. But none of these things show what God is to man in grace. Not even the law can give the truth as to this. I cannot at all learn by it what a Saviour God is, nor even fully what man is. At the best it shows what a man ought to be, as well as do; but this is not the truth. What I ought to be is not God's truth but my duty. It was the standard for man in the flesh; and hence it never was given till man was a sinful man. The law was given by Moses, and not to or by Adam. The commandment laid upon Adam is never called the law, though, of course, it was a law.

Further, you will never find truth, even in the Bible, if you sever it from Jesus. But the moment the same blessed One, who has shown me in His own life and death, what man is, has also shown me in the very same what God is, then all the clouds break and the difficulties vanish. Now I know God, beholding Him in Jesus. New thoughts of God dawn on the soul, and, submitting to Him, I am made perfectly happy; perhaps not all at once, but as surely as my soul has received Jesus, and learned what the true God is in Jesus, I have eternal life, and shall find unbroken peace; but in Him I receive all that I want, all that God intends for my soul, because the truth is in Jesus. Thus, then, as a believer, I know God; I know that which the heathen never did nor could reach. Their understanding was darkened. Having no knowledge of Jesus, they had no full or saving means of knowing God. But this is precisely what the gospel brings close to every poor, needy soul that hears it now. And what is it then that I learn of God, when I look at the truth as it is in Jesus? I learn first this—a God that comes down to me, a God that seeks my soul to do me good, a God that can follow me with love, selfish as I am, and pity my ignorance, and not this only, but One that can instruct me, and is willing to do it, spite of my wilfulness and stupidity; in short, a most gracious and faithful God. He makes Himself known in Jesus. I find One who, after using other means, spent Himself in love upon me, that I might know Him; One who undertook to bear the judgment of my sins. For Jesus came and took all sins upon Himself for every soul that believes upon Him. I learn now that even the hateful self which has so refused and slighted Him, for this He has suffered, and

completely dealt with it. It has been judged in the cross of Christ; and if my soul believes that God is good enough to do all this for me, to suffer all this for me, to take and bear the whole consequence upon Himself in the person of His beloved Son; if I see this and bow to it, and receive it from God, what can shake or harass my soul more? My sins? Certainly if anything ought to trouble my soul, they most of all. But what is the cross for? What has God done there? What has He told me in the gospel? If it was God revealing Himself in His beloved Son, if it was Jesus the Son of God that was made sin there, why should I have a single doubt or anxiety upon that score? All depends upon this: Have I bowed to what God has wrought and given me in the cross of Christ? If I am despairing about sin, it is in effect making the cross of Christ of none effect, and the work of Christ a vain thing. He has perfectly done His task, and I am entitled so to rest upon it, as to know that my sins never can come up against me more. Ought I not to be a happy man, and to rest in the most perfect peace because of what Jesus has done and suffered? Here faith can repose. Christ's death has such value in the mind of God that He loves to give this peace in consequence. Such is the truth as it is in Jesus. What a wonderful depth and breadth of truth there is, if you look at it thus! What a poor thing my own experience is, compared with the truth as it is in Jesus! Spiritual power is much more proved by discerning Jesus in others, than by measuring or comparing what people are in themselves, which, indeed, is far from wise. But yet what a disappointing thing it is to see Him merely as He is reflected in others! I must look at the truth as it is in Jesus: in what He was here below, as One who has shown me all through His life and up to His death what God is and man too, Himself the model-man.

In the same person of Jesus I alone see the full truth about anything at all. And you will find the value of this not merely in the great lessons of what God or man is, but if you have to do with any particular trial or difficulty, what is the one test of anything right or wrong? The truth as it is in Jesus. It is the power of using Jesus to meet that difficulty, and of seeing how His name bears upon it. He has expressed His will about it—where I am to be quiet, where I am to act, how I am to walk, and how to bear. He has given me an example that I should follow in His steps. And the greatest power of being like Jesus, depends upon the measure of spirituality we have in applying His name. I am still assuming that there is honesty of purpose, and that we desire to walk before one another as we are walking in truth before God ourselves. It is in proportion as we turn to Jesus and use Him, and view things in Him: this is the rule and spring of real spiritual power. It is this which constitutes a man a father in Christ. It was not the amount of zeal or of overcoming the world, or any great knowledge of this thing or that, but it is found in knowing Him. “I have written unto you fathers, because you have known Him that is from the beginning.” Who is that? Jesus. The knowledge of Jesus, then, is the practical power, strength, and wisdom of the Christian, and that which shows advance in the things of God. This, then, was what they had to learn, more or less. But to know it deeply, and so as to apply it and bring it out, was what specially characterized the fathers. Everybody talks in his own tongue. The dullest soul can use intelligibly the words of his vernacular language. But there is an immense difference between the capacities of different persons wielding their own tongue. It is not every one who can speak according to what the subject calls for. A man who has a mastery of the language proves it by applying it appropriately to all variety of subjects. So all saints must have laid hold more or less of the truth in Jesus, but then the power to use it well, to use it rightly, to bring it out on fitting occasions and turn it to profit for ourselves and others—this is the true secret of our progress in the things of God, and what tends to the blessing of souls and the helping on of the cause of God; so that the importance of it cannot

be over-estimated.

Then we have stated to us the practical object of this: “That ye put off concerning the former conversation, the old man which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts.” It is not a question of improvement. There is no bettering our old man. The heart may be purified by faith, but in itself it is “deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” Faith may work the new life, and the Spirit; but the flesh never can be changed or renewed. And here we find what is to be done with our old nature: “That ye put off.” The apostle is speaking to Christians. They have the old man, and need practically to put it off. I must beware, remembering that I have still this incurably evil thing; accustomed to indulge its bad ways before conversion, and still tending to drag one, if unwatchful, into evil.

But now begins the positive part. “And that ye put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness.” There is, first, the putting off the old man, the moral judgment of it, grounded on God's judgment in the cross of Christ definitively done with. Then comes the renewing of the mind, which we cannot have unless there is the judgment of the old. “And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; that ye put on the new man which, after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” They had the new man of course; but it is the putting on the new man practically, the outward manifestation of the new man that was already within them. It is well to bear in mind that this is righteousness and holiness of the truth. It is the truth that produces it again. That is the full meaning of the expression.

Righteousness and holiness differ in this respect. Righteousness is the true perception and, of course, the walking in our relative duties as men of God; holiness is rather the rejection in heart and way, according to God's nature, of what is contrary to Him. Holiness, therefore, is a far more absolute thing than righteousness, which takes up what we owe relatively to God and man. It is in contrast with the first man. Adam was good as a creature, but there was no perception of what God was, and what evil was according to God. He did not then know sin; there was no evil to know. If you had talked about lust to Adam in the Garden of Eden, he must, I believe, have avowed his ignorance of what it meant. Therefore if the law had been given to Adam, “Thou shalt not covet,” he would not have comprehended its meaning, having no experience of it till afterward. We have hearts which like what we have not got, but Adam had not He was just a sample of creature—goodness in a man. It was not after God, created in the righteousness and holiness of the truth. God made man upright; but uprightness is a different thing from being created in holiness. Upright he was created, and innocent; but the new man is much more, knows right well, through the Spirit's teaching, what evil is and what God is. Adam only learned what good and evil are when he fell, never before; that is, he became conscious of a good that he lost, and that he was not; and of an evil that he had fallen into, which God hated and must judge. So when a man is brought to the truth as it is in Jesus, he knew good and evil before with a bad conscience, but now he knows it with a good (that is, purged) conscience. There is nothing that could make a conscience so good as the sacrifice of Jesus. Supposing that any of us were able to live without iniquity to the end of our days, would this make our conscience good? Not in the least. There would be always a bad conscience, because of the consciousness of past, unremoved, unforgiven sin. No human process, no giving us a new nature, can get rid of the evil we have done. The sacrifice of Christ has done it perfectly. My evil is there judged according to God. The evil of the old man is dealt with and gone before God. Christ rises from the dead and gives me His life, which

is the new man. Christ in resurrection is the very source of the new man in my soul. If this be so, we must put off the old man. It is to faith a thing done with. Jesus has shown me it as a judged thing in His cross, and I must judge it, and must not allow my old pride and vanity and folly. I have it still within me, but I must not allow it, else I shall grieve the Lord, and bring myself under His hand. We have each of us to watch earnestly against the former conversation; but then it might be that a person might be enticed by an evil never fallen into before, because he imagined it was impossible for him so to fall. There is nothing so exposes one to fall, as the notion one could not so turn aside. It has often been the ruin of a Christian Man, as far as God's glory is concerned.

Thus, the new man is spoken of so as to bring out its contrast with what man was even in his best estate. Yea, Adam, when he came from the hand of God, could not be described in the terms of blessing which are true of every believer now. There is no such thing as restoring to an Adamic condition. A soul when converted now has the place of the Second man; and as He, the Lord, cannot fall, so the Christian has a life that never can be touched. It is as impossible for a Christian to be lost, as for Christ to be removed from the right hand of God; because He is the life of the Christian. If you say that people can fall away from grace, nothing is more certain than that they may. But if you mean by this, that the life of the Christian can perish, you flatly contradict the Word of God. It is a question, then, of understanding the Scriptures.

Christ Himself is the life of the Christian: can He fall? Thus it is a virtual denial of Christ Himself, that there should be a doubt allowed about it. All these exhortations are based upon this; that they had learned Christ, and knew the truth as it is in Jesus. They were already in this relationship, and upon this ground all Christian exhortations come. Is it even or ever a reasonable thing to talk about fruit till the plant has thoroughly taken root? It would be no use to talk to a baby about the duties of a man. The man must be there, as such, before you can expect to see the discharge of the duties of a man. And so with the Christian, before you can rightly insist on the duties of a Christian. But, now that the truth as it is in Jesus is known, you must not allow the old man. He is speaking of practical fruit and walk, because of already being in Christ, and knowing the truth in Him. This ought always to be a great encouragement to a soul. Even if God is exhorting me to self-judgment, it always supposes my previous blessing as a possessor of life everlasting. It is on this ground that God, as it were, thus addresses us; Is it possible that when I have done so much for you, you can be so careless of My will? It is to touch the spring of grace in the soul, in order that we may go on with Him and do His will.

Now He presses upon them some of the results. “Wherefore, putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.” As they had learned the truth in Jesus, the shame of falsehood was the more manifest. What is the ground that we have here? We are too apt to take falsehood rather upon the human basis of honor. Many a man would not do it on moral grounds; or he would be too proud to tell a lie; and he that had a certain sense of the fear of God before his eyes, would not do it, because it was a practical denial of God. It is as good as saying that God does not hear. So that whether you look at a mere man in his natural pride, or at a godly man, like a Jew, there you have the ground on which each would act. But this is not enough for a Christian. It is of great importance for our souls, not only that we should walk well and righteously, but that the motive, character, and extent, should be according to God too. Not only is this exhortation necessary, but there is that coupled with it which we rarely think of in our intercourse one with another: we are here exhorted to speak truth every man with his neighbor,

“for we are members one of another.” It is looking at Christians only. None but such are members evidently. He wants to connect with Christ the most common duty, which we are in danger of putting upon a lower basis, and the ground be takes is this—that it is as preposterous and uncomely for a Christian not to tell the plain simple truth to a brother Christian, as for a man to deceive himself. They are part of ourselves. “We are members one of another.” Do we realize this? If we did, what would be the effects? Assuredly, one would be perfect plainness in dealing with that which is wrong; another would be a real, hearty desire to set right those who are wrong. It is evident that we could not wish to injure ourselves. And if I regard another as a part of myself, I ought to act towards them accordingly. In the same way, also, we ought to feel what is contrary to God in another. And as one would greatly desire, if awakened to feel one's own sin, to go to God about it, and have our souls set right there, so it should be in having to do one with another. The deeper realizing of this truth would give a stronger desire for the well-being of our fellow Christians. And yet if it is to be in accordance with God's glory, it is not merely that we should judge what is wrong, but that we should seek to get what is right and according to God. We are apt, where persons have been, for instance, put away from fellowship, to think only of getting rid of the evil; but I do not find this where the membership one of another is felt and owned in the presence of God. Even where it comes to the extreme degree of so dealing with one whom we had believed to be a member of the body of Christ, the end of all discipline is to remove the evil, in order that that which is of Christ may shine forth.

“Be ye angry and sin not; let not the sun go down upon your wrath.” I take this to be a most important and holy intimation for our souls. There is a notion often that it is wrong for a Christian ever to feel displeased or angry. This and other Scriptures show it may be right. But we must take care what the source, as well as the character, of the anger is. If it is merely about something that affects self, and it therefore takes the form of vindictiveness, this is, of course, beyond a doubt, contrary to all that is of Christ. We find in Him, (Mark 3,) that He looked round about upon certain persons with anger, and showed clearly He had the strongest feeling of that which was contrary to God. It was not merely that He denounced the thing, but the people who were guilty of it. I find the same analogy in the epistles. We are told not only to cleave to that which is good, but to abhor that which is evil. Man's thought is that it is not for a Christian to judge and to be angry with what is wrong. The word of God tells us there are certain things we ought to judge and others we ought not. I am not to judge what is unseen; I am to judge positive, known evil. There we have plainly and clearly the line drawn by God. You will find that men say, if you speak strongly about the wrong of this thing or that, you are uncharitable. But not so; it is real charity to denounce it, not to let it pass. True love as to this consists in always having the feelings of God about what comes before us. That is the one question. What God has fellowship with, we can have fellowship with; and what God hates, we are not to love or allow. But we must take care that we are in the intelligence of God's mind. “Be ye angry and sin not.” There is the greatest possible danger of sinning if you are angry, and therefore is this added. The simple emotion of anger toward one who has sinned, may and ought to be a holy feeling, provided it rests there. And so it is if felt in God's presence.

But how am I to know that I am not sinning in my anger? “Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.” If there is irritation kept up in the spirit, impatience, dislike or scorn betrayed, who cannot see that it is not of God? When the sun goes down, it is a time either for your peaceful communion

with God, or your indulgence of resentment away from Him. Therefore it is added, “Neither give place to the devil.” Where there is the nursing of wrath, the keeping up of grievances in the mind, Satan easily comes in, and is not easily dislodged.

Chapter 33

# Remarks on Ephesians 4:28-30

In these exhortations, as in the doctrine of the epistle, there is no notion of bettering the nature of man. A new nature is shown to belong to the Christian—Christ is his life. The practical aim follows that this should be exercised and manifested.

Nevertheless, there is a serious hindrance, for the old man remains, the flesh is still in the Christian; and as the new creature is in no way the result of improving the old, so the old nature is incapable of being absorbed or exalted into the new. They are irreconcilably opposed. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” The only course, and comfort, and duty open to the faithful, is to deny and mortify the flesh, so that the new man may be left free to do the will of God.

On the last portion which occupied us, we saw the danger of yielding to anger; it easily degenerates into hatred, and this gives occasion for the devil to enter. We have now another exhortation, which to some might seem hardly called for among Christians. “Let him that stole steal no more.” It is not exactly “him that stole,” but “the stealer.” “Thief” would be too strong; and “he that stole” is too weak. The apostle was led to choose a term so large as to take in every shade of such dishonesty. Do you think the caution needless? Beware lest your self-confidence, and the slight of any word God has written, ensnare you. There can be no doubt that the Spirit who inspired the epistle judged the admonition necessary for us all, as well as for the Ephesian saints; yet nowhere do we find an Assembly more happy, flourishing, and blessed of God, than the Church in Ephesus. Yet even for them, quickened and raised with Christ, and seated in Him in heavenly places, the Holy Spirit saw its suitability. God knows us better than we know ourselves; and let saints be ever so instructed, devoted, or earnest, in none of these things, apart from the enjoyment of present communion, apart from actual dependence on God, is there any adequate safeguard. Besides, if a soul through unwatchfulness had slipped aside into that which is so degrading even in human eyes, we can readily conceive the force of such a word to the heartbroken and ashamed, in danger of being swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. How little the heart felt its perils or knew either its own weakness or the power of Satan! Now, restored to judge itself according to God, it owns the value of words like these, which it had once deemed well-nigh useless for the saint. Now, too, it feels how exceeding broad is the Spirit's appeal, comprehending every kind of worldly, professional, or trade custom (no matter how respectable) that is fraudulent, as well as the grosser forms of dishonesty. God is training the new man according to His own thoughts.

How strikingly also such a precept shows that the Christian is on larger, higher, firmer ground than that on which Israel after the flesh stood or rather fell. Never do you hear the law say, “Let the stealer steal no more;” its voice must rather be, “Let him die.” The law is good if a man use it lawfully; and its lawful application is expressly not to form, guide, and govern the walk of the righteous, but to deal with the lawless and disobedient, ungodly and sinful, unholy and profane, and, in short, with whatever is contrary to sound doctrine. Sin, we are told in Romans 6, shall not

have dominion over Christians, “for ye are not under the law, but under grace;” and this in a chapter where the question is the holy walk of the saint, not his justification. Yet in the face of this, the clear and uniform teaching of the New Testament, the tendency of most in Christendom habitually is to go back to law, especially where there is feeble separation from the world. But it is easily understood. For the world does not receive or understand the grace of God, whereas it can appreciate in the letter the righteous law of God. Hence, where the world and the saints are mixed together, the will of man soon takes the upper hand; and as the saint cannot elevate the world to his standing, he must sink to that which he holds in common with the world; and thus both meet once more on Jewish ground, as if the cross of Christ had never been, and the Holy Spirit were not sent down from heaven to gather believers out of this mixed condition into the assembly of God apart from the world. Even for the individual Christian, as well as for the Church, and most of all for God's truth, grace, and glory, the loss has been incalculable. For the ordinary walk has been reduced to a string of negatives, save in public acts of philanthropy, religious activity, or ritual observances, which the Christian shares with any and everybody that will join him. It is not occupation with good according to God's will; still less is it suffering for the sake of Christ and of righteousness from a world which knows them not This is not Christianity, though it is the state and the system of most Christians. Did Christ ever obey from the fear of judgment? Was not His life a surrender of Himself to the holy will and pleasure of His Father? So our souls must be occupied with God's grace in Christ, if we are to find strength in pleasing Him. The mere avoidance of evil, the not doing this or that, is below our calling. Do we indeed desire to know and to do His will as His children? Are we zealous in learning to do well, no less than careful to cease from each evil way If not, the day will come when we may begin to do evil again, and with a conscience the less sensitive, because we have learned truth which we do not carry out.

Very beautiful is the apostolic exhortation on the positive side. “But rather let him labor, [idleness is neither right nor safe,] working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to distribute to him that needeth.” Thus does the Spirit cheer and direct the man whose hands were once put forth in unworthy ways; thus does He open a happy path where grace can vindicate its power, spite of a dishonest nature and habit; and he who was the stealer before he knew the Saviour's name, may now have fellowship with the spirit and practice of the great apostle (Acts 20:33-35), yea, and of the Master Himself, remembering His words, how He said, It is more blessed to give than to receive. To live is the worldly man's object in labor; to give is the Christian motive. It is not a mere question of chance surplus, but an express object, especially for him who has the consciousness of the mercy that delivered him from covetous sin and its shame and judgment. Only the toil must be about what is good and honest. In vain will you plead a benevolent or religious use of ill-gotten gain. No employment that is contrary to God's will is good for the Christian, but should be given up at once. The covenant of Sinai never enunciated such a motive for toil as this. To talk about the ten commandments as the rule for the Christian's walk now, is to go back from the sun which rules the day to the moon which rules the night; it is to eclipse Christ by Moses under the delusive profession of doing God service. In general, what the law exacted from those under it on the principle of right, the Christian is responsible on the principle of grace to exceed in every possible way. The scope of obedience is immensely increased; the inward motives are searched out and laid bare; the very tendency to violence, corruption, and falsehood is judged in its roots, and suffering wrongfully and withal in love takes the place of earthly righteousness for the disciples. Such is the unquestionable teaching of our Lord and of His

apostles; it is darkened, undermined, and denied, by those who insist on Judaizing the Church by putting the Christian under the law as his rule of life. Truly they “understand not what they say nor whereof they affirm.”

Next, it is not our deeds only that have to be considered, but our words. “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers” (vs. 29). Worthless language is to be eschewed as one rejects good-for-nothing fruit; if it were on the tongue, let the unprofitable word proceed no farther. Unclean allusion we shall find specified and forbidden in the chapter following. Here I conceive the circle is more comprehensive. Many who would neither utter nor hear impure conversation may often have to bemoan the utterance and the sanction of unsavory discourse. Better to be silent if there be not (such is the force) something good for needful edification. The need measures the service, and love builds instead of puffing up as knowledge does. It is equally true that “in the multitude of words there wanteth not sin,” and that “the lips of the righteous feed many;” they “know what is acceptable,” and those who hear are refreshed and blessed.

Hitherto we have had grounds of holy action, as well as guards against sin, found in the features of the new man. But this we know does not give us the full character and power of the Christian man. The holy Spirit of God dwells in him. This blessed but solemn truth is now pressed in its practical bearing. We are said (ch. 2:22) to be built together for an habitation of God in Spirit; and therefore do the apostles exhort us (ch. 4) to walk worthy of the calling wherewith we have been called. But there is an individual indwelling of the Holy Spirit, as well as His relation to the house of God. We have been sealed by the Spirit, appropriated thereby to God on the ground of accomplished redemption. The precious blood of Christ has washed away our sins; in Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of offenses, according to the riches of God's grace. Thus, His sacrifice has effaced before God and to faith all our evil, and a new nature is ours in Christ; so that the Holy Spirit can come and dwell in us, and seal us for the day of redemption, when our body shall be transformed into the likeness of the glory of Christ, as surely as our souls are now quickened into His life. In presence of this infinite present privilege and pledge of glory forever the apostle adds, “And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.” He is the spring of energy to strengthen the saint unto all that is well-pleasing to God. But this supposes that there is self-judgment and dependence on God. Otherwise we grieve Him, and are made to feel, not His power, but our own wretched unfaithfulness.

Again, it seems strange that any Christian should be so unintelligent as to confound the word here with “quench not the Spirit” in 1 Thessalonians 5:19. The context (vs. 20) there shows plainly that it is a warning not to hinder the smallest real manifestation of the Holy Spirit in a saint, no matter how feeble he might be; and the history of Christendom to the present hour proves how much the precept was needed, and how little the apostolic injunction has been attended to. But the passage in Ephesians 4 is a personal concern for every saint and his own conversation every day.

Another thing to be noted is the difference from the language of Psalm 51: “Take not thy Holy Spirit from me.” But the apostle, even when he presses that we should not grieve the Holy Spirit, never hints at His being taken away. On the contrary, he in the same breath assures us that we were sealed by Him for the day of redemption; and there can be no fuller way of intimating our personal security than such a sentence. To what are we to attribute this difference? Not, I need

hardly say, to a higher inspiration in Paul the apostle, than in David the king; but to the necessary and revealed modification of the Spirit's relation to the saint, since Jesus died and rose and went to heaven. Till then there was no such thing as the Spirit given to abide with the believer forever. He blessed souls then, wrought in and by them, filled with joy and power betimes; but indwelling as the Christian has and knows now, there was and could not be till the glorification of Jesus, because of sin put away by His blood. Hence we are told not to grieve the Spirit, but are never, since He was given, supposed to deprecate His departure. Unquestionably, this aggravates the sin of a Christian and imparts poignancy and bitterness to his self-reproach in that case; but even this is intended of God for the graver warning of His child. The verse, therefore, clearly proves, on the one hand, the danger of sinning and thus of grieving the Spirit; and, on the other, the security of the saint even in and spite of such sorrowful circumstances. He is brought to God, reconciled, washed, sanctified, justified; he has eternal life and shall never perish; he is sealed of the Spirit, and that seal who can break? If he fall into sin, assuredly God will see to it and chasten, yea, unto death; for He will neither make light of his evil nor condemn himself with the world. So Peter exhorts the godly to walk in holy obedience, and while they called on Him as Father who, without respect of persons, judges according to each one's work, to pass their time of sojourn in fear; at the same time, far from weakening their confidence, he proceeds, “forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold…but with the precious blood of Christ.” Thus, the truth of God has the effect of attracting and strengthening the affections, even when it sets us with our faces in the dust; while human error, as it weakens the full grace of God, so it fails thoroughly to humble the soul. But what a truth it is for the believer, that he has within the constant presence of a divine person, the Holy Spirit, the witness of all that passes there! How careful should we be that we grieve Him not! But it is not a truth for conscience only, but pregnant with consolation; for He dwells in us evermore, not because we are worthy of such a heavenly denizen, but in virtue of the worth of Jesus and the perfectness with which His work has cleansed us in God's sight from our sins; and He is in us for our joy, and strength, and blessing evermore, through and in Christ the Lord. May we be enabled, always confident, always to pray, and not to faint!

Chapter 34

# Remarks on Ephesians 4:31-32

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit's presence in the individual believer, sealing him for redemption-day, has been already seen, and seems to be bound up in the closest way with practical holiness, as a motive and a guard, no less than as the power. For what more solemnly affecting than the remembrance of such an inhabitant ever dwelling in the believer's body? And what more certain than that He is the Spirit not of fear, but of power, love and a sound mind? We may be utter weakness, and the natural heart deceitful and treacherous beyond human conception. But this is not the only truth. The Christian is characterized by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Is He weak? Or if all might is His, is He in the believer the passive, inactive witness of every fault and infirmity? Is He not, on the contrary, within him to associate his affections with Christ, to glorify Christ, taking of the things of Christ and showing them to him? Doubtless, He may be and is grieved by allowed folly, and carelessness, and evil, and as to this we have just been seriously cautioned; but it would be well for such as speak incessantly of the good-for-nothingness of the flesh (which is most clear and certain) to bear in mind that the believer, the Christian, is no longer in the flesh but in the Spirit, seeing that the Spirit of God dwells in him. Meet it is, therefore, that sin, all and every sin, should be confessed and judged; but it is neither genuine humility nor the faith of God's elect to ignore the blessed and encouraging as well as serious fact, that the Spirit of God is in us to give all strength in revealing Christ to our souls. It may be wholesome, unquestionably, to learn the painful lesson of Romans 7:7 and following verses; but to rest there is to prove that it has been ill learned. For the proper place of the Christian is, as to this, the end of the chapter, ushering him into the stilt deeper exercises and the more unselfish sufferings of chapter 8, with the liberty, and power, and hope, and security which it so abundantly shows to be our portion through grace. The redemption of our body and of creation outside is not yet come; but, He who is its earnest is within us.

This being so, “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil-speaking he put away from you with all malice” (vs. 31). The very nearness into which the family of God is brought may become a snare unless there be watchfulness and a simple looking to Christ. But the Holy Spirit gives quarter to no evil feeling whatever. These are the breaches of our nearness; in the next chapter (vs. 3 and following verses) we shall find the abuses of it.

If we come to particulars, “all bitterness;” I think, denotes every form of the sharp, unsparing mood which repels instead of winning souls, and makes the most of the real or imagined faults of others. The “wrath and anger,” next following, refer to the outburst of passion and the more settled, vindictive resentment, to which the indulgence of acrimony gives rise, as “clamor and evil speaking” are their respective counterparts in words: all flowing from the deep-seated fountain of “all malice,” which is finally condemned in our verse. Thus, as we were warned against dishonesty in word and deed, before the allusion to the Holy Spirit's seal, so now, after it, hatred in its various parts and expressions is denounced. It is alas! natural to the first man Adam—the same corruption and violence which brought the flood on the world of old but renewed itself, spite of God's judgment, and will, till Christ deal with man and Satan in person.

But, as was observed in the previous verses, barb abstinence from the mind and workings of the flesh suffices not. There is the activity of good in Christ, the Second Man, and this the Spirit produces, as well as demands in the Christian. Hence He adds, “Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ hath forgiven you.” Clearly, therefore, it is a question of showing grace; and the pattern of it all is God in Christ, not in the law, holy, just and good as the commandment is. But good as the law was and is, Christ is the best of all, the genuine and only full and perfect expression of what God is. And leaving the law to deal with the wicked, (1 Tim. 1,) as the Apostle expressly declares is its lawful use, we who are dead with Christ are not under law but grace, which, by the power of the Spirit, Strengthens us according to its own character and gives communion with Him who is its source.

The reader will notice that there is a departure from the Authorized Version of verse 32. It is done advisedly. Why King James' translators deserted the Greek, followed by Wycliffe, Coverdale, and even the Blemish, it is hard to say, especially as Beza, who influenced them, is here accurate. The erroneous rendering obscures the very grace of God which is set before us as our spring and pattern, and tends to countenance the error that Christ was the procuring cause of His love, instead of being the blessed and infinite channel of its communication to us, the only possible means in which even His love could holily and justly avail for us. It is a part of the same error to think of God as “our reconciled Father,” or to say that Christ “died to reconcile Him to us.” Atonement was necessary beyond a doubt, the expiation of our sins by the blood of Christ. “He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities.” But God was in Christ reconciling; it is we (not He) “who have now received the reconciliation.” “And you, that were sometimes alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled.” Such is the uniform doctrine of Scripture. How blessedly all is put and kept in its place! The atonement is that aspect of Christ's work, which is toward God, to put away sin by suffering the divine judgment of it in His own person; reconciliation, contrariwise, is toward us, to bring us back in Christ unto God. Both are most true: to confound them is to weaken and lose much; and what is more serious, it is more or less to misrepresent the character of God, as if he were turned by Christ from an angry judge into a loving Father.

Chapter 35

# Remarks on Ephesians 5:1-6

WHAT a mighty principle opens here on the saints! “Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children.” What limits can there be if we are exhorted to imitate God Himself! Nor is it in any way now an assertion of claim, as the law was, on man, standing on his own responsibility before God as a creature. God has revealed Himself in grace; still He is God and none other; and if He has communicated to us His own nature, a lesser, lower standard there could not be. It would dishonor Himself and the very grace He has shown us, and nowhere more fully than in the earlier parts of this Epistle. It would be, too, the most grievous loss to His children beloved, whom He would train and bless yet more and more even in this scene of evil and sorrow, turning the most adverse circumstances into an occasion of teaching us what He is in the depths of His grace and filling ourselves with the sense of it so as to form our hearts and fashion our ways, as we forget ourselves and live above our own habits and the conventionalities of men in the truth of Christ.

Neither law nor even promise ever opened such a field as this. The very call so to imitate God supposes the perfect grace in which we stand: indeed it would be insupportable otherwise. No doubt, it is most humbling to reflect how little we have answered to His call; but even the sense of our previous shortcomings where it is deep, without losing sight of this grace, is turned to precious account, and we are growing and going on with Him when we may little think it. The law demanded what man ought to render to God: to love Him and our neighbor is no more than our plain and bounden duty. The promise held out the hope of a seed of blessing, not to Israel Only, but to all families of the earth. But now after promise was despised and law was broken, God has displayed Himself in Christ, and while accomplishing all in Christ, has brought out higher counsels in infinite grace to us in such sort that His own character, thus displayed, becomes the only suitable pattern to which He would conform His children even now. “Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children; and walk in love as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor” (vss. 1-2).

To forgive one another, even as God in Christ forgave, is blessed; but this, though after His own heart and ways, is not enough. It is surely divine in its source, and impossible in its full character and extent to flesh; but it is in view of man and man's failure, and the outbreaks of an evil nature. He would cherish this in us. It is the fruit of His grace, and most needful, in such a world as this; most needful for His saints in their intercourse and dealing with each other. But it is far from being the expression of all He is and would have us enjoy and reflect. There is the outgoing of good according to His heart, where there is no question of evil to be forgiven, which is in a certain sense only negative, however real and sweet it may be. Here all is positive, flowing fresh as it were and above human thought. Hence the word is, “Walk in love, as Christ also loved us and hath given Himself for us.” To be forgiven was our abject, urgent need, if we were indeed to have the smallest comfort from God or hope of deliverance from wrath and of blessedness hereafter. It was grace, of course, the grace of God, but addressed to, if not bounded by, man's need. But now we stand on the new ground of the excellency of Christ and the exercise of that which is proper to God in the activity of His own nature. Hence it is not the sin-offering that is here alluded to, nor is it simply the

blood or the suffering of our blessed Lord, but His delivering Himself for us, in matchless love, “an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor.”

One would not be mistaken on such a theme, nor weaken for a moment the certainty that in the Lord's sufferings on the cross there are depths found there only; but these are not and could not be put before us as a pattern, seeing that they pertain exclusively to Him who bore our sins in His own body and was made sin for us, meeting that judgment of God, which no man, nor angel, nor creature, nor new creature could share with Him, however blessed through it, and filled with thankful, adoring delight in Him who was thus alone, not only for us, but for God's glory, the object of the wrath God felt and must execute against sin. But here it is a question of that which sets forth the admirable love of Christ in all its positive fragrance and beauty; and this in order to call out, in the energy of the Holy Spirit, the answering ways of the new nature in the saints; for indeed Christ is our life, and what bounds are there to the power of the Spirit who dwells in us? Love leads to service in self-abnegation, whether in Him perfectly, or in us according to our measure; but surely it gives and forms the spirit of service, as we see in our blessed Lord. (Phil. 2)

Nevertheless, the more sweet and blessed, the nearer it is to evil, unless it is maintained in divine power and self-judgment. It brings together; it awakens spiritual affections; and what is begun in the Spirit may end in fleshly corruption, as we see at Corinth, no less than seek a fleshly perfection of a religious form, as we see in Galatia. Accordingly the apostle proceeds to warn the Ephesian saints against the dangers to which free, familiar converse might expose, unless sustained by the Holy Spirit. “But fornication and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints.” These lusts of the flesh were not only not to be allowed, but not even named. They were God's holy ones, saints; and the question now was of that which becomes, not mere men, but saints.

Nor does he confine his warning to unbridled licentiousness or the covetous desire of that which might gratify man, but extends it to unholiness of language too, whether openly shameful or under the veil of refinement— “neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient, but rather giving of thanks.” Here again the positive side is brought in and the heart's reference to God's goodness, which breaks out in thanksgiving. “For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.” It is most important to remember, that let sovereign grace do what it will, let it go out to the vilest, let it cleanse the most defiled, the moral ways of God remain inflexible. His nature does not change. He hates and never can tolerate iniquity. His love may find, and has found, a glorious solution of the difficulty in the cross of Christ; but God and sin never can walk nor dwell together.

The children of God have opposite dangers as to this, and need to watch against their feelings. They may be quick to exclaim in some flagrant case that there can be no life there; they may be too precipitate in giving their confidence where there is a fair show in flesh. Some of the most solemn departures into the world have been where few, if any, doubted; as on the other hand, who has not known the comfort of seeing the painful appearances which repelled one fade away so as to let the grace of Christ shine out more and more, or flesh was judged by the truth in the sight of God; and those of whom most doubted because of untoward looks, at last won the confidence of all? Sometimes it may have needed a serious dealing of God: severe sickness, reverses of

fortune, domestic sorrow, before the soul was set right; still it was though late in the day. Both these extremes teach us the need of waiting on God, instead of trusting our own impressions, that we may judge with righteous judgment. The natural heart may take advantage of grace, but before long will manifest its unremoved evil. Perverse men may rise up, wolves may enter, and sheep may for a while be deceived. But God abides, and the word of His grace: why should we be disquieted? Let us have faith in God, imitate Him as children beloved, and walk in love, not only because, but as Christ loved us; and, whatever the result, we shall have the comfort of pleasing God, meanwhile kept from haste one way or another. Watching for evil is very far from “giving of thanks,” and indeed incompatible with it. But then let us never lower the standard of the ways which God looks for in His children. If no corrupt person has an inheritance in His kingdom, never treat such sin lightly now. “Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them.” To be partners with such in any way is grave for a saint. Let us take heed.

Chapter 36

# Remarks on Ephesians 5:22-24

WE now enter upon the special earthly relations. The general exhortations we have had, which concern the saints of God as such—children of God, and members of Christ's body. But now the Holy Spirit shows that He is not indifferent to the relations which these saints may sustain, either towards one another, or towards others upon the earth. There might be, for instance, husbands and wives, both of them Christians; or there might be only one in this relationship converted, the other being still a Jew or a heathen; and so with the relation of fathers and children, masters and servants. For the present we have only to do with that which pertains to the nearest tie upon earth, that of husband and wife. And we shall find that the Holy Spirit most amply provides for the wants of the children of God bound thus together; so that whatever may be their difficulties, they may find gracious instruction and grave exhortation, and not merely commands in reference to the circumstances in which they stand before God—for this is not strictly the form in which Christian regulation comes before us. Of course, there may be, and are, precepts and commandments throughout the New Testament. Indeed the one who brings out love most presses commandments most; for it is in the gospel and epistles of John, where the greatest stress is laid upon commandments; and yet we all know that there is no part of the Scripture which brings out God's love to us more strikingly and constantly. It is therefore the greatest possible mistake to suppose that there is any inconsistency between God's love, and the strictest injunction that His authority lays upon His children.

Still it is undeniable that as the general character of Christian instruction does not take the shape of commandments as under the law, so we are not set under the Mosaic commandments to form our present thoughts and feelings and course as Christians; nay, we have got nothing analogous to the law: for “grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” Commandments we have; but they suppose and regulate life, and are calculated to bring the obedience of Christ into exercise; and there is nothing more beautiful to the soul, nor more glorifying to God. Ordinarily the way in which instruction comes in the New Testament is thus: there is a relationship formed, and according to its character, amply unfolded and enforced in the word, we have to glorify God. As this is true in natural things, so the Spirit of God uses an every-day relationship as the occasion of bringing out the spiritual one that answers to it. And our hearts being occupied with the exceeding grace that has formed the new and eternal tie, we may find not only a motive, but a pattern and power to glorify God in the natural as well as the spiritual one. There is no place where this comes out more strikingly than in the first of these relationships on which the Holy Spirit here expands peculiarly. “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.” The opening comparison which He uses, before entering into the spiritual relationship which is brought before us after the figure of marriage, the very first thought is to present the headship of the man, as having special force in married life. We all know that, apart from marriage, the man is the head of the woman. That is, if there were no such thing as marriage, man has a place which woman has not, which is entirely independent of character. We may find a man imbecile, and a woman with firmness and wisdom; but nothing can alter God's order. We may find a child endowed with great prudence, and

the parents unwise and weak. Still the relationship is altogether independent of the peculiar character, and state, and condition, of those either in the superior place, or in the subordinate. And it is of great importance that we should have the thing settled in our souls, that no circumstances whatever warrant a breach of the order of God. There are trying circumstances which make the difficulty immense in either relationship. But it is of great consequence to remember that the rights of God's order always abide; that nothing ever justifies disobedience of His will. There may be cases where obedience of the natural order of God would be a sin: there are none where disobedience is a duty. You cannot be required to disobey, under any circumstances. But there are crises where you must obey God rather than man. It is an exceeding mercy that the times are few indeed, where obeying God involves an apparent breach of natural order and moral duty. But it may be so. You will find for instance, in the beginning of the Acts, Peter and John charged by the powers of that day that governed in Israel, not to teach in the name of Jesus. What could they do but fall back upon the authority of God? They could put it to these very rulers that their consciences were bound to God before men. Thus the first great principle remains and is plain, before we enter upon particulars, that obedience is always the part of the Christian.

Hence, flowing out of the general call to submission, in the fear of Christ, (for Christ is the One brought before us with continual honor in this epistle,) the Spirit takes up this first appropriate place for a Christian woman, and lays down the word, “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.” Although that may appear extraordinarily strong language, when we remember what husbands are or may be, still it is a great thing to be always certain that God is right. To human prudence it may seem little guarded. Perhaps you have even to do with an unconverted husband! But only bring in the Lord, and at once you see the power that will make submission easy, and you learn the measure to which submission is to be carried. But more than that; you have the guard against the abuse of the principle: “Submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.” The Lord is brought in, and this sets everything right. If it is a question of trial or suffering, still the word is, “Submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.” The Lord may put us through great difficulties and dangers. What is the proper place of the Christian under such circumstances? Unqualified submission. Because I ought to be sure that whatever may be the breaking up and down which these trials may occasion to one's spirit, yet whatever the Lord does is the best and happiest and most strengthening in the end to my soul, the Lord being incapable of any one thing for me that is not for enduring good to the praise of His own name.

In this epistle it is not merely God's control that is brought out, but special relationship. Here it is the Lord loving His own, with a love that has sacrificed everything for their sake. How can I doubt the blessedness and value of submitting myself to the Lord? The Christian wife may have a husband; and it may be very painful and hard to bear all. Perhaps he makes nothing of you, and asks often what is unreasonable. But what will make it to be a light burden? “Submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.” Let me only see the Lord in the matter, instead of his inconsiderateness and bad temper, and my path is plain. I am to submit unto my husband as unto the Lord. It is made a matter, not of mere duty, but of confidence in the Lord above everything—in His love, care, and government. This is what the Holy Spirit first starts with, and makes to be the basis of all the various instructions that He is about to bring forth. He begins with the grand truth, that the Christian woman is entitled to submit to her husband as unto the Lord. So that it is not

made a question simply of affection, which would be human. This is a most necessary thing as a natural element, but it would be true if a person were not a Christian at all. Neither is it a question of that which the husband expects, or of what I might think to be right. All these things belong to the region of proper feeling and morality. But the important thing is that God cannot be with a Christian woman who walks in the habitual slighting of His ground for her in her relationship as a wife. He will not allow a Christian to walk merely on moral conventional grounds. They may be right enough in their place. But if I am a Christian, I have a higher calling; and then, no matter what may be the difficulty—even if the one to whom I owe my subjection be not a Christian—here comes in the blessed guard, “Submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.” He entitles me to see Himself behind the person of the husband; and I have got to follow Him, and submit myself to Him. In this thought there would be great comfort for the Christian wife who is ever so tried. But then the limit of the trial comes in—for there is a limit in every path—and it is this: that God never puts me in any circumstances where I am free to commit a sin. Therefore, supposing a husband were to command that which would be positively sinful, there at once I learn that I am not bound; because I am told to submit to my husband as unto the Lord. The Lord would never ask what is sinful. He may put me through the sieve, and I may not at first understand the goodness, or the need of it; but faith constantly finds its strength and guidance in the Lord's wisdom; in trusting Him, and not my wisdom in understanding Him. And you will find that we grow in wisdom by being content to take the place of having none. If my confidence is in His wisdom, I shall gather wisdom and grow in it. Our Lord was perfectly man; and although always perfect in every condition of life, yet the great mark of His perfectness lay in this—He was ever the dependent One that looked up to God, and that could say, “Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?” There was at once for man the lowest, but in truth, the highest place. He understood the secret of His own relationship to God the Father. And although that was true of Christ, as of none others, yet it is true of every believer in measure.

But we have most carefully to watch ourselves in this matter. Wherever there is the smallest tendency to slip out of the path of submission, we have to search and see, if we are wise according to God. Nature never likes to be subject. And wherever there is a danger of pleading the truth of God for any act that might seem to be a want of submission to the authority of another, I have need to watch myself with greater jealousy than in any other thing. Where we are found in a path where submission is the word, let us leave room to bring in the Lord. In order to give power and faith to our obedience, and a holy character to it, I should see that it is the Lord I am obeying, even while there is an earthly authority, one that I am subject to. The blessed truth that the Lord was about to introduce begins to open to us. “The husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church, and He is the Saviour of the body.” There we have an allusion to the near relationship, which is intended to skew us how we ought to walk towards one another in this respect. Although He is the Saviour, it is not for the purpose of taking the Church or the saint out of the place of subjection.

“Therefore, as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.” Such is the general principle. But then you will observe there is always a measure and a guard in every such word of Scripture. It is not simply said, “Therefore, let the wives be subject in everything to their own husbands,” but “Therefore, as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be.” There I find that Christ's own blessed way of caring for the Church and dealing with the

Church in its due subjection to the Lord, is brought in as the pattern of wives towards their own husbands. But it is when we come to the higher of the two relationships, that we have the Holy Spirit bringing out its character more clearly. “Husbands, love your wives.” There we find what the snare of the husband might be. First, the wife is to look to her temper, that she discipline her spirit in thorough submission to her husband. It is not said to her, to love her husband, but to submit herself to him. But Satan might take advantage, and they being in the relationship, the husband might be wanting in tender care and affection. There is the ruling and guiding the wife; but what he is exhorted to here, is that which his circumstances most need, and which would be most for his own soul's good and the comfort of his wife. So that the word is, “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it.” What a holy standard! What a most unselfish, considerate, pure, and heavenly Exemplar is brought before us, in order that a relationship which might be easily degraded, should have and keep its due elevation; and that even the poorest saints on earth, so bound together, might have the light and love of heaven shining upon them.

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church and gave himself for it. That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” Thus we have the love of Christ to the Church set forth as the model according to which the Christian husband is to seek that his own love to his wife should be conformed. Look at its source and character: “Christ also loved the church.” All flows out of this. Need I, even as a man, say, that love, as it is what ought to precede a marriage, so is the only thing which, in nature, makes the marriage happy when it is formed? The love of Christ that is shown us here is taken in from first to last, as one unbroken whole. It is well to remember it in married life: the love that was true before the tie was formed, is a love that abides when it is formed, and that should grow and never end.

Certainly it was so perfectly in our Lord. He loved the Church. It is a question of a very special affection here on the part of Christ. It is not the general truth of God's love, who loved the world even; but no relationship was formed with the world. The important thing to look at here is that, although it is a love that exists before the relationship, it finds its proper exercise in it, and ever continues its real strength and joy. And if we turn aside from looking at the earthly thing to that which is set forth by it, how great the grace, and how rich the blessing! Once it was a joy for our hearts to realize that God could love sinners, and so love as to spend His Son upon us, sinners as we were. But there is another kind of love that we know now. God has taken the relationship of a Father to us; at any rate He has brought us into that of children by Jesus Christ to Himself. We are “children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.” Accordingly the Father loves us with a Father's heart; it is not only that He loves the creature as God, but He loves us as a Father—yea, as the Father of our Lord Jesus loved, and not only in the measure in which a human parent regards his children. In such a circle there might be complacency and delight; and when we think what and who we are, to think that such an One as God the Father could delight in us now in this world, is most wondrous! that He should infinitely more love us than an earthly father does the child that he loves best, and that this love should extend towards the weakest and most needy of His family! There is also a conditional love towards those that are walking faithfully, and John brings that out in John 14-15. But now I am speaking of the absolute, personal love in the relationship in which God as Father to

His children, as such, which does not only pity, but look with pleasure upon, and take delight in them now, spite of everything that is calculated to turn aside or weaken that love. Ought I not, as in Christ, to be as sure of that, as I am of my own existence as a man? yea, to have a better knowledge and certainty of what His love is towards me, than of anything that affects me as one living on the earth? I have that in me which is not proof against the deception of the world outside. But in the things of God, where faith is, it is not so. There is, there ought to be, divine certainty.

Where God clearly reveals Himself, the soul should receive it in humbleness of mind; and the more humble, the more sure, because the ground of the assurance is that God has revealed it to us. It is a question of Himself and not of us at all. If this be so, what a wonderful place it is to be in Christ! It is quite true that Christ loved me, but here it is the Church— “the assembly,” and Christ has a special love for His assembly, which I am entitled to appropriate and count on. This makes the union together of the children of God as the assembly to be so precious, and shows the all-importance of not reducing it to a voluntary society, small or great. The moment you bring in the will of man, you virtually and at once destroy the divine ground, which Scripture assumes. Whereas, if you see that God has formed a certain bond in the Holy Spirit for the glory of His Son among those who belong to Him on the earth now, and that Christ regards those who were within that bond with a perfect and most peculiar love; then it is the greatest possible joy that our own souls should enter into this love, and next that we should seek to act by His word upon the other members of the body of Christ, that they may believe and enjoy it also. It is not a part only, but He “loved the assembly.” The reason why I use the word “assembly” is that people often have a very vague notion about the Church. The word is usually and completely misapplied in the present day. It is said of a religious building, or of a particular party, in particular of such as are dominant anywhere; whereas, bring in “the assembly,” and understand by that the whole body of those that God calls out from this world, by the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven; and there you learn the special love that God has revealed in Christ, not merely to the soul, but to the assembly which is His body on earth:

Chapter 37

# Remarks on Ephesians 5:25-33

OF course, the death of Christ was essential, in order that the gospel should now be preached to the world. This, too, is the ground on which the heavens and earth will be cleared of all that now pollutes and defiles. Everything for the justification of God in the past, and the outflow of the love of God in the future, is founded upon the death of Christ. Hence the momentous value of His redemption, for earth and heaven; for Jew, Gentile, and Church of God, for time and eternity. But, besides, there is great force in the word, “He gave Himself.” There was nothing in Christ that He did not give. It is not what He did, nor only what He suffered, but He gave Himself. Of course it implies all that was in Him and of Him, but it goes a great deal further, because it is absolute self-renunciation in love for the sake of the object that He loved; the perfect pattern of the very fullness of love which it is quite beyond any human relationship to emulate; justly does the Spirit in addressing the Christian husband, skew us that Christ in all things has the pre-eminence; “He gave Himself for us.” What is the consequence of that? The Church is without sin before God—sins are blotted out forever— redemption is effected—Satan is defeated—divine wrath and judgment borne—the ordinances, which were against those that were under them, are nailed to the cross—the enmity is gone— the new man is formed; and all this and much more than this, founded upon Christ's giving Himself. The effect for us is that here we have in unclouded light, without doubt or question, Himself, in love, as the object of our souls to delight in and submit to, and serve, and worship evermore.

I have no more right to believe that Christ gave Himself for me, than I have to believe that my iniquities are completely purged out by His precious blood. If I believe the one, I owe it to God to believe the other; and the ground of my faith is God's testimony to the perfectness of what Christ has done according to the glory of His person. God sets such value upon His work of suffering on the cross, that He can perfectly love me. We are free. We have redemption through His blood. But it is in Him; not only through His blood, but in Him; as it is said in chapter 1. “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.” So that it is of great importance that while we hold redemption, we should not hold it, if I may be allowed so to say, apart from, but in Him. And what will enable me to estimate and hold fast the preciousness of this work, is His person; we must remember not only what was done, but who He was that did it. If you, in self-judgment, cleave to Him and to these two blessed truths in Him, there never can be a cloud upon your soul, as to your own perfect deliverance from all charge before God, but now comes another thought. If Christ has completed this, if it is a past thing, never requiring to be re-touched, we enter upon the second proof of His love, “that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.” I take it that the sanctifying the Church spoken of here, though connected closely with its being cleansed through the word, is a distinct thing. These are two operations, and there is an important difference between sanctifying the Church and cleansing it. This sanctifying does not merely refer to our growth in grace: it is connected with Christ. It is not the Spirit of God merely working in the believer. Men talk as if it were the business of the Son to justify, and of the Spirit to sanctify. But we are washed, we are sanctified, we are

justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. All that by virtue of which we are washed, and sanctified, and justified, is Christ; and it is by the Spirit of our God. The Spirit of God is the active agent in the justification, no less than in the sanctifying; but it is always by using Christ. Hence there is a great danger in disconnecting Christ from sanctification. Christ gave Himself for the Church “that He might sanctify and cleanse it.” His blood is involved in His giving Himself.

In fact, all that which flows from redemption, properly so called, is involved in verse 25: “He loved the church, and gave Himself for it.” This is a past thing. But now comes that which is going on all the time of the Church's existence upon the earth. After this calling comes the death of Christ for us—His giving Himself for the Church. And now you have, founded upon the cross, this sanctifying and cleansing that goes on continually. But how is it wrought? In both cases it is by the washing of water by the word. This shows us the immense importance of the word of God. Of what moment it is for every child of God to value that word and to seek to grow in acquaintance with God through it—to increase in the knowledge of God! So far from our belonging to the Church, or rather to Christ, being the sum and substance of all we have to learn, it is only the foundation; and it is after we know this, that there comes in all this sanctifying and cleansing by the washing of water by the word. So that it is clear we have got three fruits of the love of Christ that are very distinct indeed. The first is, that He gave Himself; (that is, unto death;) the second is, the present work of His life: since the cross, He is occupying Himself in heaven about the Church; He is taking care of His members, working by the Holy Spirit, and applying the word of God, and all connected with Christ Himself, because the whole point of it is Christ's love to the Church. He is sanctifying and cleansing now by the washing of water by the word; but we know that our sins are put away by His blood.

Allow me to say here, a fresh application of the blood of Christ is unknown to Christianity. There are Christians, no doubt, who tell you that you must have fresh recourse to the blood; but they have no scripture for their thought. On the contrary, it weakens the fundamental truth of the efficacy of Christ's own sacrifice, which it is intended, after a human fashion, to commend and exalt: and that is the effect of forming our own thoughts of the use that is to be made of any truth, instead of simply bowing to the word of God. The moment we take a truth out of His connection for us, it is like rooting up that which has its own due place in the garden of God, where it produces its own proper, abundant, and precious fruit, but which becomes a withered thing when man takes it into his own hands. Repetition as to this would prove imperfectness. This foundation has been laid so completely in the Epistle to the Hebrews that it never requires to be laid again. There is no more the possibility of a fresh sprinkling of Christ's blood, than there is room left for His dying once more to shed His blood. When a soul has found Him and been washed from sin in His blood, there it abides forever. This is what makes the sin of a Christian to be so serious. If you could begin again, what is the effect? Not very different from that which his confession before a priest has upon a Romanist. People soon learn to trifle with sin, and to get hardened by its deceitfulness. Although it is a different thing where Christ is looked to, still the moral effect is much the same, as far as the making light of sin is concerned. If a person can again and again start afresh, as if nothing had happened, and begin over and over again for every fresh downfall, sin is never felt nearly so deeply. But we are bound to bring no stain upon that which is washed in the blood of Christ. Yet we are conscious of constant failure.

Is there, then, no resource? Is there no renewal of access to the cross? It would be a tremendous thing if there were no provision against our failings and falls, no means of dealing with these departures: but there is a resource, and we have it here— “That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.” You have similar truth set forth in its individual application in John 13. There it was on the ground that the disciples were His own; that He loved them, and that whom He loved He loved unto the end: and then we find that being exposed to defile themselves in the world, the Lord would guard them against two things; first, the anxiety lest He should cease to love them because they were unfaithful; secondly, the danger of their using His faithfulness as a reason for trifling with sin. Christ will never cease to love, nor will He trifle with sin, or allow us to trifle with it. He keeps us always resting on His blood. But, then, supposing one is guilty of sin after receiving this remission, what is to be done? Let us go and spread it out before God. The veil is not set up again because you have acted foolishly outside it. You are entitled to draw near and spread out your failure before God—to come to Him on the very ground that you are washed in the blood of Christ. What is the effect of this? And what is this the effect of? It is because Christ is sanctifying and cleansing, keeping up the washing of water by the word. There may be this corporate aspect of it as well as the individual—both are true. It is true for every soul and for the Church at large. Christ is always acting in the presence of God on behalf of the Church; and the consequence is, the need of reproof and of chastening. A man is brought to feel what he has done. Some word of God, either in his own meditation, or through others, flashes upon his soul. He is convinced of his folly; the will has ceased to act; the word of God is brought home with power by the Holy Spirit; the man bows under it.

This is the washing of water by the word. It is the effect of Christ's priesthood at the right hand of God. The application of the word of God to the soul is the effect of the intercession of Christ to put away failure wherever it has been. The work that He is doing at the right hand of God is this intercessional work. A great deal of that which goes on in the soul is not provision for failure, but to guard us against failure. God does not count upon sin—He does not look for failure in His child. On the contrary, there is a most solemn injunction against sin. “My little children, these things write I unto you that ye sin not.” He had been telling them, that if any man said he had no sin, he deceives himself, and the truth is not in him. Then the effect of that on the corrupt heart of man would be, that it would be said, Sin is not so much matter after all. “My little children,” he says, “these things write I unto you that ye sin not.” We are never free to sin. We are always inexcusable when we do sin. “But,” it is added, “if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” There you have what answers to this very thing. It is not that the position of Christ is the same, but the effect, as far as regards the soul, is similar. Christ is carrying on His blessed action of love, and the effect is that there is that in the word of God which applies itself, by the grace of God, to our fault; so that the sanctifying spoken of here is the practical setting us apart according to our proper calling as God's assembly—the making it good in our souls by the word of God. This is done by the revelation of Christ, and of Christ as He now is in the presence of God. And this is what is referred to in 2 Corinthians 3, where it is said, “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.” We find that the Holy Spirit, revealing Christ as He is glorified now before God, separates us from the world which knows nothing of His glory, but is bent upon something connected with present things. God reveals to us Christ's glory, and the effect is that we are weaned from the false glitter of this evil age.

But this being the complete account of what Christ does, there is the cleansing, as well as the sanctifying, the Church. This defilement requires to be removed; and in both cases it is the washing of water by the word which God uses. But there is a third and future fruit of His love—"that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing." There we have clearly the complete glory of the Church, when there will be no question of cleansing it any more; when all the love of Christ will have its perfect effect, and when the Church will be glorious according to His own likeness, "That he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." Thus we have the full, blessed account of the love of Christ. But mark, it is not introduced merely in a doctrinal form, but in a most practical way, for the purpose of illustrating the place of the Christian husband towards his wife. The husband can only act properly towards his wife when the relationship is not merely regarded as a natural one. A Christian must act upon heavenly principles, in order to act well in a natural relationship. You might have a husband attached to his wife, and a wife ever so much attached to him; but if that is merely their ground in married life, it will never have the power, blessing, and honor of God. Though it is all quite right, yet more than that is needed; and the something more that is needed is just this—the reminding of our souls how Christ feels and carries Himself toward the Church. There is always blessing and power in believing the word of God. If not using this, we shall not have the strength of it in the natural relationship of this life; yet we ought to have it. If we have it not, are we not doing without that which would give power, and which God would own and honor?

But he applies it, "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself." He is now taking up the common instinct that men naturally avoid pain and take care of themselves. He is speaking only of the fact, and says, Look upon your wife as a part of yourself; and that anything that would wrong her is so much wrong done to your own body. It would teach you affectionate care, "for no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church." A beautiful and sweet addition to the truth that He had already brought out. All the rest had shown redemption, the present practical cleansing the future glorification of the Church. But now he adds, that Christ "nourisheth and cherisheth it." There is the special entrance of His mind, His careful interest in those that belong to Him. It is a great comfort that we know this about the present state of the Church, when we think of the ruin of all around. Does Christ ever cease to nourish that which belongs to Him? He does not. Spite of all the ruin, He has the same care for His people. We never can pray too much for the Church; but it is another thing to be troubling our minds as if the Lord forgot her, and were not taking adequate care of the saints in their need and sorrow. The Lord has never failed; and what He here tells us to do in our earthly relationship is no more than what He has perfectly done towards His Church. He loves the Church; He nourishes and cherishes it, and He does this because "we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." Just as Eve was a part of Adam, so the Church is of Christ. The Lord took out of Adam's side that which He built into his wife. So we stand in this nearness of relationship to Christ. The verse is sometimes applied to Christ's becoming man; but it is the converse of this. It does not mean Christ taking our flesh and bone, but our being made members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. It is our relationship to Christ risen from the dead, and not Christ's relationship to us as a man upon the earth. I only refer to it to guard souls. There is no allusion to our Lord's taking flesh and blood, which we know He did: that is taught in Hebrews, but not here. We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. We are really a part of

Himself, united to Him as He now is in the presence of God. The case of Adam is then quoted and of Eve. “For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.” This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the Church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself, and the wife see that she reverence her husband.” Thus we have the subject summed up with this practical word. I need not say that everything contrary to the most entire confidence in such a relationship is excluded by this verse. The husband, if acting in the spirit of it, has no secret from the one that is a part of himself: but as to the wife, let her see that she reverence or (literally) fear her husband. It would not be the mere familiarity of love, which is wrong in a heavenly point of view. Whatever the confidence of a wife in her husband, it is surely a becoming thing for a wife to fear him. Nor is this the least incompatible with love. We are told to hold fast grace; and what is the effect? That we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. There is an immense difference between the thoughts, but it may serve to illustrate. Here it is the fear that fears to offend, and seeks earnestly the husband's honor. This holds true in every case. Supposing you take the case of a stupid husband who has a clever wife; if he shows what he is from day to day, so much the more has the wife to guard her own spirit that she should use what she has to keep her husband without seeming to do so. And now comes in the very important thing, that in these circumstances she should honor God and her husband, instead of a word to himself or to others that would wound or show a want of care. It is in such circumstances that the wisdom and spiritual feeling of a godly woman should shine, and shine by not shining: for the blessing of the married pair supposes that the man should appear and not the woman. Where the heart is simply looking to the Lord, there would be this result: and although it might look unseemly that such should be linked together, and it would make their path more difficult, still there is nothing impossible to God. And if the Christian woman sought the mind of God, honoring Him in the circumstances, God would use her in a very blessed and happy way, for the helping of her husband, and for the covering of that which would be mortifying to him. But the principle always abides. As nothing justifies a husband in not loving his wife, so nothing justifies a wife in not reverencing her husband. The Lord grant that we may bear in mind His holy and gracious admonition.

Chapter 38

# Remarks on Ephesians 5:8-21

THE eighth verse of our chapter gives another ground of appeal. The exhortation to walk is neither in view of the calling wherewith we are called (ch. 4:1), nor specially in contrast with other Gentiles, alienated from the life of God (ch. 4:17-18), nor yet in love only (ch. 5:27), but “as children of light.” “For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord.” The change being thus complete, the word is “walk as children of light.” Be consistent with what you are, not merely with what you ought to be. We are light, yea, light in the Lord—at once the ground, and character, and measure: let us walk accordingly. How comforting is the call of grace to holy ways! The most solemn appeal reminds us of our blessing, and its security, even when urging us on with ever such closeness. How holy is our standing in Christ that God Himself should be able to say of us, “Ye are light in the Lord.” If He does, should we not say it of ourselves, both in Privilege and responsibility! Let us look to Him that, thus set outside all taint, (for there is nothing purer than light,) we may go forward, showing that light which we are now in the Lord. It is in the light we walk and by it should we judge all, for light we are. God would repudiate a lower standard or an atmosphere less pure. He is light, and in Him is no darkness at all; if we are His children, we are children of light.

“For the fruit of the light is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth.” No doubt these are the characteristics of the gracious operation of the Spirit; and this may have led to the substitution of “the Spirit” for light in the common text. But there can be no reasonable question that the true thought and word in verse 9 is “the light,” which is not more borne out by external evidence than by the scope of the context. In Galatians 5 it is the fruit, not of the light, but of the Spirit, because in contrast with the works of the flesh—ways of uncleanness, violence against God and man; whereas the Spirit's fruit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, against which, as the apostle emphatically says to the law-affecters, there is no law. Here it is in contrast, not with legal proclivities and the workings of flesh which the law alike provokes and condemns, but with the darkness which we once were when without the Lord. But now we are called to walk as children of light, which is our very nature in Him, and we are reminded that its fruit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth. God's exceeding riches and grace in no way weakens, but rather confirms, the display of His moral principles, and makes them good even in us His children, whatever we may have been and are naturally. The new life He has given us in Christ answers to His own goodness and righteousness and truth. It could not be—it ought not to be—otherwise; nor would the renewed heart calmly bear that He should be dishonored or even misrepresented in the objects of His favor. He implants in us the desire of pleasing Himself, and He watches over us that this desire should be neither vague nor uninfluential, but bear fruit—the fruit of the light, “proving,” as it is added, “what is acceptable unto the Lord” (vs. 10).

Again, it is not enough for our souls to refuse to be partakers with the children of disobedience (vss. 6-7). We must have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather even expose them. It is all a part of our marvelous place and responsibility as being children of light. It is

not law, simply condemning as by an applied outward standard, but an inward and most searching divine capacity, which, whatever the love that is the source and end, spares evil even less, but brings in good by the Holy Spirit in Christ. “For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret; (that is, the doers of the fruitless works of darkness); but all things that are reproved (or exposed) are made manifest by the light; for whatsoever doth make manifest is light” (vss. 12-13). It is the property of light to manifest itself and all things else; and this is quite as true spiritually as in nature.

But there is more in the Lord's mind here concerning us. He would have us in the full enjoyment of the blessing, and not content to possess it only. There are dead things and persons around us, and their influence when allowed is most injurious. “Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead and Christ shall enlighten thee” (vs. 14). It is not giving us life as if we were dead, nor even light as if we were not light already, but rather shining upon us who are light in Him, yet slumbering carelessly in the midst of that which is dead and deadening. How vigilant His love that thus thinks of us, that our cup of blessing may run over and our souls may be delivered from that which degrades Him and even us in Him, that we may be full of that which we are as His own! How every word of His, how every circumstance of ours, calls us to walk circumspectly (vs. 15), not as fools but as wise, redeeming the fit opportunity because the days are evil! We are furnished indeed; but constant watching and dependence are needed. The due season must be looked at and sought, let it he ever so costly, if, in these evil days, we would not be unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. Worldly excitement must be avoided, and those incentives to nature which jaded man craves, wherein is excess. Yet we may and should be absorbed with a power above nature, which excludes present things. “Be filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God” (vss. 18-21). This is true and holy joy. May we cultivate it in simplicity. In truth, we have a goodly portion. What can we not thank Him for, who is our God and Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus? What else makes us so happily submit to one another in His fear?

Chapter 39

# Remarks on Ephesians 6:1-9

LET us briefly look at the relations of children and fathers, as well as of servants and masters. Here, obedience is the grand point pressed on the inferior in each case. As all saints are called to submit themselves one to another in the fear of Christ, and wives especially to their own husbands, subject to them in everything, so children are to obey their parents in the Lord (vs. 1). It is not that the Holy Spirit has not a suited and serious word for their fathers; but, in general, how easy is the flow of a Christian household where the young obey—above all, where they “obey in the Lord.” Natural affection is sweet, and the lack of it is a sign of the perilous last days; but it is not enough; nor is conscience, all-important as it is in its place, an adequate guard, nor can it be a spring of power; but the Lord is. And how blessed, where duty is clothed and absorbed in Him; and this, and nothing less than this, is pressed by the Holy Spirit.

It was so with the Lord Himself when He was here, and knew what it was to be in the place of child. “And the child grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him.” Nor are we left to a vague, general statement; we are shown a living picture of His ways. “And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast. And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it. But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him. And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers. And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?” Thus, He, even as a child of twelve, had the consciousness of His own proper relationship. The humanity He had taken, as born of a woman, in no way weakened the sense He had of His Father's love and business, but rather gave a new occasion in which He had to make it good. At the same time, we see what is so beautiful—how His eye, absolutely single, saw that which became Him on the earthly side, in striking contrast with Joseph and even His mother, who “understood not the saying which he spake unto them.” Hence we read immediately after that “He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them.” Such was Jesus, the Lord of all, during much the larger part of His earthly career.

The same principle is true of the Christian child, save that His relationship to the Father was essential, ours to Him and to His Father is, of course, the pure gift of grace. But still we too are children, conferred on us as the title surely is in and through our Lord Jesus. “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.” And this, by the working of the Holy Spirit, is the secret of happy obedience in the earthly relationship. Conscious of what we are to the Lord, we can obey in Him. “In the Lord,” is the encouragement, the safeguard, and the limit. The parents might be Jew or

heathen, or they might hear unworthily the name of Christ; but Christian children, while thoroughly owning their relation to their parents, whatever they might be, have the sweet privilege of obeying “in the Lord.” How it simplifies questions otherwise perplexing! How it determines also where and how far they are to go! For if they are to “obey in the Lord,” such a call cannot rightly be made a reason or excuse for sin.

In the Epistle to the Colossians, where the saints were in danger from a misuse of legal ordinances, the ground urged why children should obey their parents in all things, is “For this is well-pleasing unto the Lord.” Here the faithful were free from that snare, and the Holy Spirit could freely use a principle embodied in the law, and hence adds, “for this is right or just.” Nay, He can follow it up with a quotation, slightly changed from the Decalogue, drawing attention parenthetically to its special place therein. “Honor thy father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise, that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest be long-lived on the earth” (vss. 2-3). If such was God's estimate of filial piety under law, was it less now that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ unfolds His nature and calls unto the relationship of sons unto Himself? If respect to that word of old found its approval and recompense in the righteous government of God, if He then watched over and prospered such as honored their parents did the revelation of Himself in grace relax the obligation for His children or make the love that prompts and sustains such honor less precious in His own eyes now? No intelligent Christian would contend that it is other than a precept from the law, but so applied as to insinuate, if I mistake not, a kind of a fortiori conclusion to the New Testament believer. Certainly to be well and live long on the earth is not the form in which the proper portion of a saint since the cross of Christ is usually set before him.

To the fathers is the admonition (more needed by such than the mothers, perhaps, though in principle no doubt intended for both,) “Provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (vs. 4). What knowledge of the heart of both old and young! What tender consideration, after the pressure of obedience, lest a too stringent and capricious use of the parental authority might exasperate! The bringing them up, or nourishing, is, on the other hand, to be with the Lord's discipline and admonition. As the Christian knows His ways as they are in exercise toward Himself and others, so is he to train up his children for Him, an all-important principle for the parent's own heart and conscience. Do we desire the Lord alone for them, or the world too?

Next, (ver. 5-8) the Christian slaves are exhorted to obey their masters according to the flesh, (such they were, whether converted or not,) to obey them with fear and trembling, in singleness of their heart, as to Christ; not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the soul, with goodwill doing service as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that whatever good thing each doeth, this he shall receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free. Is it not worthy of all note the extent and depth of the liberty that is in Christ? There is nothing violent nor revolutionary, and yet the change is complete, absolute, final in its principle and character, though one has to grow in the appreciation and manifestation of it. And this growth is important morally, being part and parcel of Christianity practically viewed, where the very first blessing which God's grace bestows upon us in Christ appears not save to faith, has to be realized all through in the power of the Spirit through self-judgment, and is only ours in actual possession and display when that which is perfect is come in resurrection-glory. Still, how blessed that if in one sense we

have nothing, in another and just as real a sense we possess all things. On this truth faith has to lay hold and act; and among the rest, what a boon to the Christian bondman! What a mighty motive for him, who, already consciously free in Christ in a liberty entirely superior to circumstances, has for that very reason such a scope for triumphing over his fetters and serving Christ in obeying the worst of masters if it were the Lord's will so to try him! Doubtless, the master too has his duties; but if he fail, what then? Is the slave absolved from his responsibility? How can this ever be a difficulty, if be obeys in simplicity as unto Christ? Does He fail? What a deliverance from every shade of dishonesty!— “not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, (how honorable the title which one shares with an apostle!) doing the will of God from the soul;” for such is the true word here. More than this: not only is there the call with goodwill to do service as to the Lord and not to men, but they are reminded that the day was coming when each, whether bond or free, should receive of the Lord for whatever good he might do. Ample wages then, be assured; for He at least is not unrighteous.

Then, in turn, (vs. 9) the masters are called to impartial equity, doing as they would be done by, and abstaining from the threats so natural toward a poor slave. They were to know that the Lord of both masters and slaves was in the heavens, and that no respect of persons is with Him, both of them weighty considerations for a master, and with delicate propriety laid before him rather than the slave.

Chapter 40

# Remarks on Ephesians 6:10-12

WE now enter on the final exhortations of the Epistle, no longer occupied with the several relationships of the saints in their earthly circumstances, and hence looking at distinct classes, but addressed to all. “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.” It is the opening of the solemn subject of proper Christian conflict, viewed, naturally in Ephesians, as carried on at the height of our heavenly privileges in Christ. In 1 Peter the scene lies, so to speak, in the wilderness, where, most appropriately, sobriety and vigilance are enjoined on the pilgrims and strangers who pass onward to the incorruptible inheritance; because their adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour. Here the enemy is regarded as on high, where the saints are blessed with every spiritual blessing, where their Head is exalted, where they are seated in Him, where the principalities and powers are learning by them the manifold wisdom of God; there too is the real struggle with the prince of the power of the air and his hosts.

But if, on the one hand, there is no keeping back from the believers the formidable conflict to which they are inevitably committed, there is, on the other hand, no weakening of their hands. On the contrary, the trumpet, which here summons to the battle, gives the most certain sounds of good courage, without presumption, in the saints, and of the amplest provision for their victory in the Lord, who has called them to warfare at His charges. What was His name by faith in His name to him that was lame from his mother's womb, whom they laid for daily alms at the gate of the temple? Is it less for our need? Far be the thought. All that is needed is the faith which is by Him; and faith comes by a report and this by God's word; and what more inspiriting to us than such words as these, “Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might?”

Nevertheless, the mighty contest with the powers of darkness admits of no negligence on our part. We cannot afford to be unguarded anywhere. We have to stand, not so much against the strength of the devil (Christ did this) as against his wiles. In truth, he is to us a vanquished foe in the cross; and we are entitled always to treat him as such. Therefore says James (ch. 4:7), “Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” It is his artifices that are chiefly and always to be dreaded; and to resist these we need to put on the panoply of God, as it is added here: “Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against spiritual wickedness in heavenly places.”

Well might we tremble if we stood in any resources of ours against such an array. But it is not so. The battle is the Lord's, and our exposure but draws out His mighty hand and unfailing wisdom. Still we have to fight. It will not do to plead our weakness or His strength in order to shirk our responsibility. We must not merely look at, or point to, the panoply of God as our possession, so to speak, but must put it on at His bidding.

Another thing must be borne in mind. It is no question here of our wants before God. For He has no conflict with us; but having delivered our souls, He calls us to wrestle for the mastery with the

unseen armies of His enemy. As naked in our lost estate once, we needed to be clothed; and His grace did clothe us with the best robe, with Christ. This is our clothing as before God: nothing less, nothing else, would suit His presence as His guests. But here it is a question of fighting the enemy, after we are clad with Christ; and we needed armor of divine tempering to stand aright and securely. On the details of this armor we shall enter by and by; it is only on the general truth that I would insist now.

How remarkably we are here reminded of Joshua in verse 10, and Israel's foes in verse 12! To Joshua the word was, “Arise, go over this Jordan, thou and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee nor forsake thee. Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land which I sware unto their fathers to give them. Only be thou strong and very courageous.” (Josh. 1. Compare also verses 9, 18.) Again, it is clear that if the Canaanites were but enemies of flesh and blood, they are types of the still deadlier foes we have to fight foes whose effort it is to hinder the Christian from taking possession, in present enjoyment, of his Heavenly inheritance.

It is not here, note it well, the Red Sea crossed, and then the desert, where we have to learn what God is and to be proved ourselves. The wilderness is the great scene of temptation; though no doubt there are occasional battles, as with Amalek and with Midian, still it is the place where we have to go or stay at God's bidding, in need of daily, heaven-sent supplies, where there is nothing else to sustain, ever marching onward with the heavenly land before us. But the wrestling here, as in the Book of Joshua, supposes the passage of the Jordan and entrance into Canaan, where the day of conflict begins, rather than that of temptation in the wilderness.

Is the evangelical school right in making Jordan to be the act of death at the end of our career when the saint departs to be with Christ? Clearly not; for in this case what would answer to the wars in Canaan? No! Excellent as Bunyan was, in this he was mistaken, following the mistakes of others before him and perpetuating them far and wide to this day. Indeed, this is one of the tests of where the soul is and how far it is emancipated from traditional theology, which limits its disciples to a minimum of truth. Elsewhere, as for instance in the teaching of the Passover and Red Sea, there is defectiveness; here there is absolutely nothing, or error. And this I say, singling out the author of Pilgrim's Progress as the best and most advanced specimen of popular views. The best of their day in the religious world are but his commentators—some of them literally so. Can there be a better proof how completely the truth of this epistle is ignored? The truth is that in the Red Sea we have Christ dead and risen for us; in Jordan we have our death and resurrection with Him: the one ushering us into the world as the dreary waste of our pilgrimage, the other putting us in view of our heavenly blessing, which we have then to appropriate by victory over Satan. The distinction is as clear as it is important, though both are true of the Christian now. When the glorious day comes for the inheritance to be ours, not by the force of faith which thus in practice defeats the enemy and makes good the land God has given us, we shall not have to wrestle with these principalities and powers in heavenly places: it will be closed for us and forever. The expulsion of the dragon, “that old serpent,” is not our work, but that of Michael and his angels. With overcoming him we have to do, but not with his forcible ejection from heaven. All the time the

Church is here below, our conflict goes on with these spiritual wickednesses in heavenly places; when the actual casting out by God's providential power takes place, we shall not be here but above.

After the Passover and the Red Sea there was no return of Israel to the slavery of Pharaoh; their taskmasters were overthrown and gone; “there remained not so much as one of them.” “The Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptian, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the seashore.” But circumcision did not characterize the redeemed in the wilderness. No sooner were the children on the Canaanitish side of Jordan than they rolled away the reproach of Egypt at Gilgal. The knife of circumcision was applied to deal with Israel before they draw the sword on the doomed inhabitants of Canaan. They were in Canaan—had nothing to do more to get there: their work was to make the land their own.

Has this no instruction for us? Have we consciously laid hold of our union with Christ on high? Do we know our place is there in Him, and that we have there to stand? Is nature, root and branch, a judged thing in us? Do we render a heavenly testimony—not only righteous and holy, but heavenly? Are we then and thus advancing on the enemy and making good our title by present victory to enjoy the boundless blessings above which we have in Christ? Or are we still, as far as realization goes, ransomed, but in the wilderness, with Jordan uncrossed and the old corn of the land for us untouched food? Are we merely guarding against the flesh breaking out here or there, against worldly temptations overtaking us in this or that? If so, need we wonder that verse 12 sounds mysterious, and that we question what is meant by the wrestling with the enemies in heavenly places? It was probably the total misapprehension, or nonapprehension, of the truth here revealed, which led our English translators into the unwarrantable change of heavenly into “high” places in this passage only. It behooves ourselves, however, to consider whether our own souls have proved and are proving the panoply of God in this conflict, where, above all, it is plain that “the flesh profiteth nothing.”

Chapter 41

# Remarks on Ephesians 6:13-17

Is these verses, after a prefatory resumption, we come to the particulars of the Christian's armor. “Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth.”

The first thing to be noticed is that the Holy Spirit calls on us to take up the panoply of God. Neither strength nor wisdom of man avails in this conflict. As we have to do with the hosts of Satan on the one hand, we need on the other “the whole armor of God.” Our natural character and habits may not signify, where the Spirit of God is at work to save our souls in His grace; but they are of vast moment in presence of a foe who knows how to take advantage of every unguarded opening. Even to those at Corinth, carnal as they were, and only fit to bear the food of babes, (not the solid meat which is set before the Ephesian saints,) he had shown that, walking in flesh, we do not war according to flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but divinely mighty to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down reasonings and every high thing that lifts itself up against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. Not flesh, but the Spirit of God has power against Satan.

Here, too, the character of the time in which the conflict goes on is designated as “the evil day.” Evil indeed is the entire period since Christ was crucified and the enemy acquired the title of “the prince of this world.” Hence, in chapter 5 we are expected to walk with carefulness, not as fools but as wise, seizing every good and suited opportunity, because “the days are evil.” But here we have something more precise, “that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day.” For there are occasions when the power of evil is allowed to press more closely and the danger is great for the careless soul. It is emphatically then “the evil day;” and it is well when the Christian has anticipated it; for the point at such a time is not to take up the panoply, but, having already taken it, “to withstand.” “The evil day” should find us already and fully armed, if we are to make effectual resistance. Nor is this enough. For how often the victory of faith is too great for the faith that won it, and a saint who has long and afresh vanquished the enemy, may tire of the struggle and turn aside into a seemingly easier path, to prove his own folly, and his exceeding danger, even if in the end delivered by the pure mercy of God. To resist, then, does not suffice, but “having done all,” having thoroughly accomplished all things requisite, “to stand.” The fight—the fights—may have been keen, the victory complete through the Lord's goodness and might; but the war is not over. Our place is still to stand our ground.

“Stand, therefore, having girt your loins about with truth, and put on the breastplate of righteousness, and shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace.” I have changed the English version slightly, so as to adhere more closely to the true sense, which supposes not only a settled position, but the soul in activity according to the summons of the Holy Spirit. Much mischief has arisen from regarding this passage as if it treated of standing, whereas, in truth, it is essentially different. It is practical arming and conflict, founded on the most blessed standing anywhere revealed in the New Testament, and suitably closing the epistle which reveals it.

To know the truth and be set free by the truth is one thing; to have girt about our loins with truth is another. It is the intimate dealing of truth with the soul, so that there is no laxity of heart or indulged will, but on the contrary, the affections and judgment braced up to Christ and the things of Christ. Thus the saint cleaves to the Lord with full purpose of heart; and, self being searched and judged by the truth, there is vigor imparted through the revelation of His mind and grace, which are now more than ever enjoyed. It is the power of truth in keeping the soul, delivered in God's rich mercy, and too thankful to be under an authority so comprehensive and penetrating and absolute as to leave nothing, let it be ever so inward, outside the range of God's will and the saint's obedience. To bear and delight in this, however, assumes that the heart is established in grace; it can then welcome the truth in all its energetic claim and control.

Next follows “the breastplate of righteousness” put on. This is quite distinct from the righteousness of God, which we are made in Christ. The latter we need before God; the former we want for successful wrestling with our adversary, the devil. As the Spirit, in the girding round our loins with truth, shows the first piece of armor to be the thorough application of the word to us in self-judgment and withal in moral energy, so the next demanded is that we put on practical righteousness as our breastplate. Nothing exposes a saint in conflict more readily than a bad conscience in his ways. I do not mean a conscience unpurged, but where evil, after the knowledge of redemption, has been allowed and communion is broken.

Connected with this is the having “the feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.” This, again, is evidently a matter of practical power and enjoyment, the effect of maintaining a good conscience, as the latter can only be where all is held and guarded by the truth. Then the soul goes on in peace. “The fruit of righteousness,” as another apostle says, “is sown in peace of them that make peace.” Where there is laxity, the conscience gets bad; and the result is trouble, and making trouble; where truth governs, the conscience is kept bright, and, happy ourselves, we shed happiness around us.

Verse 16 introduces another and quite as necessary a part of the divine armor, but, doubtless, justly put subsequent to what we have seen. “Above [or, beside] all, having taken up the shield of faith with which ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.” This means that confidence in God Himself which the soul is entitled and encouraged to cherish: I say, in Himself, because, though inseparable from the godly and righteous state the previous portions of the panoply intimate, it is a confidence springing only from what God is known to be in His own nature and character. All the envenomed efforts of the wicked one are futile where God is thus known in the power of the Holy Spirit ungrieved within us; all his darts not only fail to produce despair and distrust, but they are extinguished by the shield of faith.

But there is more: “and receive the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God” (vs. 17). The shield of faith is more general confidence; the helmet of salvation is rather the bold and joyful consciousness of the full deliverance God has wrought for us in Christ. This crowns the various parts of the armor already noticed, and is therefore followed, not by further means of defense, (for it is complete,) but by the instrument of offensive energy against the adversary, the sword of the Spirit, even God's word. How wisely it is thus placed in the last place of all, will be apparent to the instructed mind. Indeed, if there be not this order known practically, the word is made a mere toy of, or perhaps a scourge for self, rather than it has the character of

the sword of the Spirit; it is misused and powerless. Handled in the Spirit, what deliverance it works! What disabling of adversaries and what a detector of Satan!

Chapter 42

# Remarks on Ephesians 6:18-24

We have had the details of the panoply of God. But there is a hidden spring of power without which nothing avails; the expression of weakness, strange to say, but of weakness in dependence on God. Hence, the word is, “praying always with all prayer” —praying at every season. There is nothing the enemy more dreads, nothing that flesh more seeks to hinder, or to make amiss if there be the form. But so much the more need we to bear the call in mind.

Besides, there is the exercise of spiritual desires and not dependence only; as it is said by our Lord elsewhere, “Whatsoever ye shall ask in My name that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in My name, I will do it.” “If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you” (John 14-15). In a word, there is encouragement and exhortation to every kind of prayer and at every opportunity, while there is also that character of petition which is sustained in the power of the Holy Spirit, “supplication in the Spirit,” which all prayer of the saints is not.

Another weighty word is the call to “watch unto this very thing;” for this supposes the activity of love which is quick to discern in the fear of the Lord and in the bowels of Christ that which might tarnish His glory on the one hand, and on the other whatever would contribute to the exaltation of His name in His saints and testimony. What a deliverance this is, not only from self-will, but from anxiety and from self-importance! And what a field for gracious affections to turn everything of good or ill into occasions of intercourse with the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to turn all—otherwise transient, or food for gossip—into channels of everlasting-blessing! How wise and good is every word of our God! May the thing itself, as well as His word about it, be precious in our eyes! Where this is so, there will be watching in this habit of prayer, “with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.” For where God's presence is thus realized, there is no straitness in the affections, but love goes out energetically to Him and in communion with Him concerning all the saints. But as having at heart the interests of Christ, there is the special remembrance of such as gather with Christ. So here the apostle speaks of their supplication on behalf of himself; and, as it appears, with a link of greater energy than that which spread desires about the saints before the Lord— “and for me,” (not merely περ■, but ■π■ρ ■μο■, as indicating particularity among the general objects of the action,) “that utterance may be given unto me that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, on behalf of which I am ambassador in chains; that therein I may be bold as I ought to speak.”

It is blessed to find such a practical evidence of the apostle's own sense of the value of intercession, the intercession of saints, for his ministry. His consciousness of its dignity rather increased than diminished his wish to be thus remembered.

But again, he reckoned on their love, not only in thus praying on his behalf, but also in their desiring to know matters concerning him, how he fared; and, therefore, tells them that “Tychicus, the beloved brother, and faithful servant in the Lord, shall make known to you all things: whom I sent unto you for this very purpose, that ye may know our affairs, and that he may comfort your

hearts.” What a contrast with the spirit of men is the mighty, gracious working of divine love in the heart, which counts on the tender concern of the saints in him who served and loved them in the Lord! Man, as such, would either be indifferent and hard, or would fear the imputation of vanity, as if his matters could be objects of interest to others. But Christ changes all for the hearts of those that have received Him.

“Peace to the brethren, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace with all that love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruption.”

Chapter 43

# The Epistle of Christ

(2 Cor. 3)

That which alone can make us “epistles of Christ” is looking unto Jesus, or as in verse 18, “with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord.” The ministry of the Spirit is “taking of the things of Christ and showing them unto us.” There is power as the consequence of the Holy Ghost being here. Until Jesus was glorified there could not be power nothing either to reveal. It is called the ministration of the Spirit. “Ye shall be endued with power,” &c.

It has struck me latterly in the last verse, we never attain the glory while down here, yet are always looking at it as an object, and “changed into the same image,” but we are not actually in any sense the same. Still we are daily growing up into Him who is the Head—who is in the glory. Paul says, “I press towards the mark.... if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection,” at the end rather than at the beginning of his course; yet he had attained a great deal, if you look at him as to the realization of power. Well, that is what the individual Christian is called to, founded on the ministration of righteousness—glory and righteousness go together. It is not now merely that God forbears—that He did before; but He declares His righteousness—a righteousness now obtained; not a future thing. The law required righteousness from man, but that is a different thing from the administration of righteousness to man; now He, Christ, is giving it unto no. The law was called the ministration of condemnation. The ministration of righteousness is also called the ministration of the Spirit, because the Spirit is here in virtue of accomplished righteousness in the person of Christ, who is up there in the glory. “He that ministereth to you the Spirit.” God ministers to each saint a portion of the Spirit.

Righteousness is shown in God in two ways. First, in setting Christ at His own right hand; secondly, in not letting the world see Him any more, who rejected Him and cast Him out. The Spirit convicts the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment— “of sin,” in rejecting Christ; “of righteousness,” because Christ is gone to the Father; “of judgment,” because the prince of this world is judged. If I receive the demonstration, I partake of it, and the demonstration of righteousness placed Christ on the throne, at the right hand of God. “I go to my Father.” In verse 7: “So that they could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance,” &c. There was no veil, but the state of Israel was such that they could not bear a sight of the glory, “which glory was to be done away.” So in verse 13, Moses put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel might not look to the end of that which was abolished; showing, I believe, the moral condition of the people, for Moses had no veil when he went to God, but they could not get beyond the outward thing. The veil was over Moses' face, and all was veiled to them, so that they could not see to the end. He is here giving the meaning of the act: they could not see to the end, but stopped short in the things given. The veil is now not on the things, but on their heart, which is done away in Christ; “nevertheless, when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.” In Christ everything is fully revealed in the reality and truth of it, not in mere types and shadows. They could not see to the end; it is always because of the hardness of their hearts, though the veil is at

one time on the glory, and at another on their hearts. Moses put a veil over his face, but it was God's purpose being fulfilled. Now we are not as Moses, but use great plainness of speech. It is not now about the people, but about the ministration.

The Holy Ghost is come down here, because Christ is in the glory; therefore, we do not leave people in dimness and darkness. We speak boldly; we tell you plainly you are “accepted in the Beloved,” righteous as He is righteous, and the glory is your portion. We speak thus very boldly about it; “For we are not as many who corrupt the word of God, but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God, speak we in Christ.” The difference in the subject of ministration gives this greater boldness. It is not a certain working of the soul to get up to Christ, but when Christ is thus really and truly revealed to the heart, it is inwrought by the Spirit of God in the soul, and graved and written on the “fleshy tables of the heart.” The soul will be exercised upon receiving this glory, not to be satisfied to know merely as a fact there is this righteousness, but have it wrought in the heart. We should not be only thinking about Christ sometimes, but be wholly occupied with Christ Himself. What a little compass it reduces a man into when Christ is received in the heart! Paul says to the Corinthians, “Ye are our epistle written in our hearts.” He carried them about with him, though they were leaving him and preferring other teachers; but he appeals to them as a proof of his ministry, and his commendation is seen and read in them as his converts. Therefore, he is proved to be an apostle. There was the public testimony to Christ, and what evil had there been permitted amongst them was corrected. So he could say, Titus brings me an account of how you received my first letter, and he writes a second, now that he is happy about them; and then speaks of the glory, and of God who “comforteth them that are cast down,” &c.; of faith and obedience, &c. Still he was jealous over them with a godly jealousy, because of Judaizing teachers.

The end of that which was to be abolished was Christ. In Hebrews, Christ is the starting point of His house; if they departed from that they were not His house at all. The law was only a shadow; the substance or body is Christ. The Lord was the body, so to speak, of the spirit, and that is what is meant, I take it, here, “Now the Lord is that spirit.” The spiritual meaning of it is the Lord. They had neither the image nor the reality, but the Holy Ghost giving the meaning of those things in the power of a glorified Christ. In verse 7, if they had seen to the end, they would have seen Christ. “If the ministration of death was glorious,” &c. There was glory in the establishment of the law, not in the law itself, but going with it. “For even that which was made glorious” —which was introduced with glory— “was not to remain;” but the glory in Christ is not merely introduced, but is a reality which will remain forever. The law was the shadow, Christ was the fullness. That shows what the things He manifested were, “those which remained.” It looks at first as if characteristically the things Paul ministered were to remain, but it is the glory of Christ's person remains. It is the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, that gives a distinct character to Paul's gospel—really the gospel of the glory of Christ—the glory of God shines in His face.

Short of this, you cannot minister righteousness; you may set forth all the attractiveness of Christ and draw sinners, like the woman who loved the Lord, as a sinner attracted by His grace, but had not found righteousness yet, till sent away in peace. “Thy sins, which are many, are forgiven thee.” The Holy Ghost tells us now of righteousness because Christ is set down on the Father's throne—declares God's righteousness by and in “Jesus Christ the righteous.” As soon as you get unqualified righteousness, you get a present heavenly character; not merely attracted to Christ, but suffering with Him who is in the glory. People are told sometimes, practically, they must find

out what work the Spirit has done in them, instead of having set forth the work of Christ as accomplished for them. None went beyond the preaching of the cross for many years past, fearing to preach God's righteousness, lest it should lead to antinomianism. But now we see it is the ground of perfect righteousness we start upon; and that is the very reason we desire to walk so as to please Christ. In John 15 we are spoken of as being loved according as we have loved Him, not as in grace, but as a Father. The place righteousness is put in shows that the Church's place is with God. The heavenly position is shown. God receives us into His presence in Christ when Christ is received. Having the Spirit, we “wait for the hope of righteousness.” What is that? Oh, it has set Christ at the right hand of God, and it will set you there too. “Set in heavenly places” is the Church's place properly. In Rom. 3:22 it is not the righteousness of a certain class of men for God, but God's righteousness for man who had none of his own— “none righteous.” “Unto all,” as much for the Gentiles as Jews, “and upon all that believe;” though presented to all, it is by imputation (that real by grace, and not by accomplishment) on them only that believe. God ministers righteousness, which we have not got, (that is the gospel) because Christ is set down at the right hand of God. But we should have been ignorant of the fact if the Holy Ghost had not come down to tell us of it. The Church's proper association is with Christ in the heavens. And when in the glory, I shall only have my body put right, for everything else I have now by the Spirit. The coming of the Lord is to take us into the place, where we are in spirit by faith already, to which we belong. “I have finished the work thou gavest me to do Now come I to thee.” We shall be to the praise of His glory then, as we are to the praise of His grace now. In Ephesians Christ's coming is not even spoken of, because they were seated in heavenly places; and therefore all that was spoken to them was about the inheritance; the thing set before us is the inheritance in heaven, the possession, not the glory, or translation. In Colossians it is “the hope which is laid up for you in heaven.” Why? Because they were not holding the Head, but holding angel-worship and all sorts of things. They had slipped down from the full possession of their place, and he is getting them back. “If then ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above.” In Ephesians they were going on properly, and he could unfold to them all. In Peter, it is “to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled.... reserved in heaven for you” — “ready to be revealed.” Here they are seen as begotten again, walking towards heaven, and therefore the word is “as pilgrims and strangers in the earth,” in virtue of the resurrection. If the flesh be not judged, one will not stand. The coming of the Lord is the proper hope of the soul to be converted to; as in Thessalonians, “to wait for his Son from heaven.” It is of the utmost importance that we should thoroughly get hold of what the Church is and its identification with the Lord Jesus. Its importance may be gathered from the very many and various ways the enemy seeks to attack that truth, and it is always liable to be let slip, for it is easily lost. To have the one truth, that I am in and associated with Christ, uppermost in my thoughts, is a most difficult thing, and the easiest lost of any, because it is a thought, of course, of the Spirit, and nature will always sink the soul down into something in itself by which it is to satisfy God. I am to understand that the power working in my soul is “according to the working of his mighty power which be wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places.” And it will not do if the soul has not taken up its position with Christ. One need not speak of hypocrisy, but it will not do. I ought to crucify the world, and the heart should settle down easy and happy. This puts Satan out. I do not mean there would be no conflict with him, but we must keep him outside. Satan always acts on the flesh; he has no power over the new man. If we are in the light, all things are made manifest. What a wondrous thing to

say we are “one spirit with the Lord.” “He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit;” and what persons we should be if abiding under the power of that one spirit with the Lord in heaven! What great peace we should enjoy, now that nature is duly judged. The knowledge of righteousness, with. out the knowledge of the Holy Ghost, has led many into Antinomianism. They have turned to the flesh to keep down the flesh; and it is impossible, if a man is so occupied with himself, to keep him from self-importance. A danger exists, that when some have seen the truth of the Church being in heavenly places, and there has been the labor and working of the soul itself, they may get a great many ideas of the blessedness of the glory, without having got peace because they have not got their souls on the ground of righteousness, by which alone we are enabled to crucify the flesh. If, all of a sudden, the question were seriously put Are you safe and ready to be taken? they would be all aback; the ground of the heart is not so thoroughly plowed up as that they know they are made the righteousness of God in Him. Job said. “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself,” &c. Was that the first time Job had seen God? Yes, in that way. God will have nothing but good in His presence, and the soul finds itself nothing but evil, and says, “then I cannot have it.” But it is His grace that is working. The soul, brought into the presence of God in that way, rests in His perfect grace, and has done with itself; then all the bright place into which it is brought is enjoyed; and we eat the corn of the land. Moses saw the promised land from Pisgah, but did not go into it; that is a different thing from entering it. It is easier than as Joshua who went in by conflict; Moses on the contrary did not strike a blow. You know now what it is to sit in heavenly places, and what it is to enjoy “the things that remain.” It is true, there is conflict; but you do get into possession. It is wonderfully connected with the whole armor of God, always the defensive first. The person is first thoroughly preserved, spiritually, before a sword is put into his hand. Temptation would pull us down from the place God has set us in; but when it is conflict, it is fighting as in danger of being turned out. A person not spiritual cannot tell what it is to be fighting with wicked spirits in heavenly places. He would say, all his battles were on the earth, neither does he know the joy of sitting above. The difference between the Red Sea and Jordan, is that the Red Sea is Christ's dying and rising again for us, effectually; in Jordan, it is our death and resurrection with Him. Therefore the moment they had passed the Jordan, they were all circumcised. The first thing in the knowledge of the Church's place in heaven is the destruction of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ (where it is real). We want to have things real with God and not ideas. We cannot go on without faith.

The coming of Christ is such a different thing to the soul when our true position is understood. Instead of my desiring it that I may get rid of myself and what I may be doing on the earth, it will be that I may enjoy Him and be with Him in heaven. The affections may be attached to Christ; but unless righteousness is known, there cannot be the quiet waiting for Christ. I dare not look for Him until I know the righteousness of God in Christ. If I have not liberty, I may be wishing for Christ to give my liberty: but when the soul has liberty, it is the peaceful enjoyment of the soul with Him and happy affections! Nothing more easily slips from our souls, even when there is a true desire for it, than the coming of Christ. “Be not conformed to this world.”

# Errata

In No. 92, p. 2, col 1. line 7, read “xxvii.” for “xvii.”

„ p. 9, col. 1, line 31, read “from but as” for “from that as.”

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# Erratum

In page 156, col. 2, read, “But when we open the book of the Prophet Isaiah, and also the historic scriptures of the periods in which he prophesied, (2 Kings 15-20 Chron. 26-32,) and glance,” &c, PRINTED BY GEORGE MORRISII, 24, WARWCONLANE, PATERNOSTER ROW, B.C.

Erratum

In page 176, col. 1, line 29, for “privilege,” read “principle.”

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Erratum

in Page 180, Col. 1, for “Brethren,” Read “Heathen.”

Chapter 46

# Exodus 25:1-22

The Lord gives instructions to Moses that the children of Israel should make Him a sanctuary that He might dwell among them. See verse 8.

There is a great sense in such a word, I believe. The Lord had already spoken from the fiery hill, down to the which He had come in fire and earthquake. But He had not rested there. He had found no dwelling-place there; He could not. The law gave Him no occasion, no opportunity, to display Himself, or to do His proper business. He found fault with it, therefore (Heb. 8:8), though it was perfect in its way— “holy, just, and good.” (Rom. 7:12.) How rapidly, in like manner, the Lord Jesus, in spirit, passes Mount Sinai in John 8, and reaches the sanctuary of life and peace!

The opening of this chapter (Ex. 25) shows that He made a rapid journey beyond it. And He desires a dwelling-place, a sanctuary, where mercy was to be seen rejoicing against judgment, and where a believing soul could meet Him. This is full of comfort. Love, the divine nature, so to speak, rapidly passed Mount Sinai, and rested only in the place where a sinner could be relieved instead of being destroyed.

The sinner himself, once convicted, makes the same journey. Sinai does not suit him either. Conviction or conscience (through the spirit of faith) gives him wings to fly beyond it, to rest not till he reach the very spot where the Lord had gone before. The journey of the Lord was only somewhat the more speedy and immediate. It is taken at once, taken under necessity of nature, as I have said. The sinner lingers round the fiery hill, and leaves it only on the discovery that it is the place of death to him. So, at the creation, God gives witness at once that He could not rest in it, for even the garden of Eden tells of His counsel and purpose touching redemption.

All this has meaning for our comfort as sinners. If we reach the gospel by faith, we know that God is there before us. It is His gospel. And as Israel here had to make a sanctuary, or a dwelling place for God, so it is saved sinners who now make a dwelling place for Him. “He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.” Here is the sanctuary which the Israelite of this day, the poor believing soul, builds for God. Faith rests in God and then God rests in the soul that has this faith. For we can repose in one that reposes in us, but in none else. A person may serve us, a person may admire and flatter us, and seek to imitate us, but all that will not do for the heart. He must trust in us, or we cannot commit ourselves to him. So with God. Nothing builds a dwelling place for Him but the faith which rests in His love, the faith which enjoys His acceptance and adoption of us in Christ Jesus. What an argument with our hearts it should be, that our happy confidence in Him as pardoned sinners is really the only way now to build Him a house!

But again. It is from this sanctuary God issues His commandments, from the place of enthroned mercy—mercy sustained and made effectual and glorious by the person and work of Christ. “And thou shalt put the mercy-seat above upon the ark, and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I will give thee; and there I will meet with thee, and will commune with thee, from above the mercy-seat, from between the Cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things

which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel."

This is also very full of blessing. For when issuing commands to His people the Lord is still upon the throne of grace. Paul, in New Testament form, gives this thought: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice." The earlier part of the Epistle to the Romans had been, as it were, constructing the mercy-seat, or raising the throne of grace in the sight of the congregation of the Lord—unfolding the gospel, "the law of liberty," the mystery of mercy rejoicing against judgment, or of grace abounding over sin; and now, entering on the detail of duties, the voice still breaks forth from the mercy-seat. (Rom. 12)

Deeply precious is all this. Did the Lord return to Sinai, when delivering commands? No; He speaks from the sanctuary of peace. Does commandment or precept come to our hearts invested with the fire and smoke of Sinai? Does it come bringing with it a spirit of fear and thoughts of judgment? Do we listen to it as though life or death hung on the answer we gave it? This must not be. We are besought "by the mercies of God" to do so and so, in obedience, for His name's sake.

Such is the blessedness of this scripture (Ex. 25:1-22), I judge—according, at least, to one's small measure in opening it. It tells us how the Lord passed the fiery bill, where the law delivered its words of righteousness; how He passed also the thick darkness, where the statutes of the realm were published. See chapters 20 - 24. In neither place could He rest. He found no dwelling-place there. But where does He? Either in the cloud which was on high above the bill and beyond the darkness, or in the sanctuary which faith—the faith of sinners—built for Him; i.e., either in His own native glory (so to say), or in the bosom of a poor convicted and humbled, yet trustful, confiding sinner. And where He dwells at peace with us, there He delivers His will and commands to us.

Who can tell it? Heaven has prepared Him a place, and so has faith! Faith does for Him the same work as His own all-perfect power and skill! "He is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation."

Chapter 47

# Exodus 28

THE apostle says, “Moses made all things according to the patterns showed to him in the mount;” and again, these “things were patterns of the heavenly things.” The doctrines themselves are in the New Testament; the details of things connected with them are in the types.

Priesthood supposes accomplished redemption: not to bring us in, but what we get when brought in. “See how I have borne you on eagles' wings, and brought you to myself,” the Lord says to Israel. As a people, they were brought to God, but a feeble and infirm people, they needed this help by the way. We are brought by redemption into the light as God is in the light; but down here we want His priesthood to maintain our walk before Him in the light. The priest is clothed in special garments. These garments are merely figures of that which is real in Christ, in the exercise of His priesthood. That which was peculiarly the priest's garment, was the ephod. “Doeg turned and fell upon the priests, and slew on that day fourscore and five persons who did wear a linen ephod.” David “inquired of the ephod,” &c. This ephod was made of two pieces: one before and one behind. There were two shoulder pieces, joined at the two edges, a girdle wound round the body to confine it; above that, a foursquare-double, to be a breastplate, containing the names of the children of Israel. There was to be a holy miter on the head, and upon the skirt of the ephod the bell and the pomegranate.

All was connected with His people in the priests' garments. If it is the breastplate, the names are engraved in it. If it is the shoulder piece, the names of the children of Israel are there. If it is the Urim and Thummim, the names of the children of Israel are there. Again I say, it was not to acquire righteousness, but to maintain their cause before God. He is there, acting before God on the people's behalf. It is not that we have to get some one to go to God for us. Christ is there for us; and grace is exercised, not because we return, but to bring us back. It is not said, “If any man repent,” but, “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father.” The love Christ exercises about us springs directly from Himself. With Peter, it was not after he had fallen that Christ says to him, “I have prayed for thee,” but before. His intercession for Peter was going on all the time; and it is because of our getting wrong, not because we are right, that it is exercised. Our feebleness and failure become the occasion for the exercise of this: grace. When the intercession of Christ answers in the way of warning, chastening is not needed. Christ looked upon Peter, and it was before Peter wept. The look was just at the right moment. We know not what Peter might have done next, but the look causes him to weep.

The priest goes to God for us, not we to the priest. Righteousness and propitiation are there already, and by virtue of His being there, and being what He is there, He can set them right.

Priesthood is Christ undertaking the cause of His people, through the wilderness, maintaining us in the presence of God; keeping us in God's memory, so to speak— “For a memorial.” This is a different thing from His shepherd character, strengthening the sheep down here; but it is sustaining them according to the power of inward grace before God. He bears them all in a detailed way, each by name, engraved. As a shepherd He calleth His sheep; but also, according to

our particular individuality, He bears us on His heart and shoulders. God looks upon us according to the favor He has for Christ Himself. If a person sends his child to me, I receive it according to the affection I have for the father. The priest was there in the garment proper to his office.

When we think of Christ as a priest, we should have in remembrance our individual imperfectness. In one sense we are perfect, but that is in our membership with Him—union with Him our Head.

The breastplate was never to be separate from the ephod. (ver. 28). “That the breastplate be not loosed from the ephod.” Whenever the high priest went into the presence of God, it was in his garments. He could not go without representing the people. It is impossible for Christ to stand there in the presence of God without us.

The girdle was a sign of service: it is the characteristic of a person in service. Christ is a servant forever. When He became a man, He took upon Him the form of a servant. He might have asked for twelve legions of angels, and gone out free; but then. He would have gone out alone. No! He says, I have got my work to do, my wife to care for. And thus He chose to be a servant forever. He became a servant when incarnate, but He was bound a servant forever when He gave up His life. (Ex. 21) Yes, and He will be the servant; for “He shall gird Himself, and will make them sit down to meat, and came forth to serve them.” His divine glory never changes, of course; but He will never give up this character of servant: forever and ever we shall have this “first-born of many brethren,” this new Adam head of the family.

Verse 29. “Aaron shall bear the names,” &c. Whatever value the Priest has in God's sight, He brings it down upon them. He bears them on His heart. All the love that Christ has for them, He bears them before God, according to this love. Then in answer they get whatever they need: it may be chastening, it may be strength. He obtains for us all the blessings we need, according to the favor that God bears Him. There is not only the personal favor, but the Urim and Thummim, the ground of their favor, which is in God Himself. The blessing is, given according to the light and perfections of God, (the meaning of the words being light and perfections.) He bears our judgment according to the light and perfections of God. That is where we are as regards daily judgment. We walk in the light as God is in the light: and as we want cleansing, there is the blood. If I commit a fault, what then; am I condemned? No, because Christ the righteous One is there; but then God must deal with an individual according to this light and perfections. He deals with us according to our need and weakness. He will make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear, because Christ is there. He deals with us just where we are, taking into His account our standing as to grace, of course. When they have to learn things of God, it is by the Urim and Thummim also. It is according to the light and perfections of God that He instructs and guides me.

The feebleness, failings, and infirmities, instead of being the occasion of condemnation to me, are the occasion of instruction. The names He is bearing are those for whom there is no wrath. Christ bears Peter on His breast, and He does not pray that he should not be sifted, because He saw the self-sufficiency of Peter needed to be broken down—but He bore him on His heart, and obtained for him the thing he needed, that his faith fail not. His priesthood is exercised for me, in putting my heart in a right position before God, (not on account of wrath,) and He bears us continually before the Lord.

There is reference here to another thing we have in virtue of Christ having gone up on high—the Holy Ghost. He received of the Father the gift of the Holy Ghost. He received it alone, in virtue of His finished work—His accepted work; but we, the skirts of His garments, get it shed upon us. (Psa. 133). The bell and the pomegranate may signify the gifts, testimony and fruit of the Holy Ghost, when Christ went into heaven, and when He will come forth again. “And his sound shall be heard when he goeth into the holy place before the Lord, and when he cometh out, that he die not.” The miter is “holiness unto the Lord,” and it was to be always upon his forehead.

It is not only when I have failed that Christ intercedes for me, but in holy things; when I go up to worship God, there comes in something that cannot suit the holiness of God—something that has not a bit of sanctified feeling in it; a distracting thought, admiration of fine music, &c., and this for want of habitual communion with the Lord. Well, then, can I say I have failed, and let it go? There is holiness in Christ for our worship. True, we ought not to be satisfied without the full tide of affection going up to Him from us; but we are accepted because of His holiness. The iniquity cannot be accepted, but it never goes up. The Christian is always accepted, because in Christ. I may always go to God, because of the continual priesthood exercised. Christ bears my failures that they may be judged; my weakness, that I may get strength; but His heart is always engaged for us. Not merely the abstract love of God for us, which is always true, but this love of Christ ever ready for our necessities. There is evil that wants correction, but He will not put us out of His sight for it: but because you are accepted, He will remedy it.

The object of it all is that our souls should be up there with Christ, walking according to the perfectness of God Himself. When we see Christ for us there, we can venture to apply this light and perfection to our ways. How He has provided for us in love and holiness, for holiness we see stamped in great letters upon it! He is the Apostle and High Priest of our profession. The sinner wants the Apostle, the message from God about acceptance. The saint wants the High Priest.

Chapter 48

# Extracts From J. N. D

The life of faith is always nourished and sustained according to the power of that which draws upon it, according to the difficulties through which it has to pass.

We must ever remember this, that though God may give an outward display of power, such as gifts of healing, tongues, and the like, as a testimony to the world, and these may all have come to an end, yet at all times, either with or without this outward manifestation of power, the sense of weakness is competent strength if mixed with faith. There may be trouble of heart, along with this sense of weakness, without unbelief.

There is always strength in looking to God; but if the mind rests upon the weakness, otherwise than to rest it upon God, it becomes unbelief.

Difficulties may come in; God may allow many things to arise to prove our weakness; but the simple path of obedience is to go on, not looking beforehand at what we have to do, but reckoning upon the help that we shall need and find, when the time arrives.

The sense that we are nothing makes us glad to forget ourselves, and then it is that Christ becomes everything to the soul.

It is not “much strength” that is the question, but the thing we most want is greater conformity to the position of Christ.

It seems not much to say of those in Philadelphia, “Thou hast kept my word and hast not denied my name,” for there was not much done by them; well, what could they do? But, in fact, this was saying everything of them. When all that was going on was to the setting aside of the written word, they kept it; and when everything went to the denial of Christ's name, they did not deny His name. That which is a great act in God's sight, is not the calling down fire from heaven, as Elijah did, but the being faithful amidst surrounding unfaithfulness. So likewise it did not seem to be saying much for the 7,000 that did not conform to the gross act of worshipping Baal, in merely saying “they had not bowed the knee to Baal;” but it was in truth saying everything for them, because they were surrounded by all those who did bow the knee to Baal.

Any old truth which has gained credit in the world, so as to be accounted orthodox, fails to put the heart to the test. It accredits nature: one is esteemed for it.

If I can take religion and accredit myself with it, instead of having the heart put to the test by it in the exercise of faith, I may be quite sure that it is not the religion of God; though it may be the truth, as for as it goes, it is not faith in God.

The character of these last days is just this, that men are always seeking, and never coming to the knowledge of, the truth. I have no need to be asking what is truth, if I have it; what a man seeks he has not yet got. A man that is always hunting after truth proves by his actions that he has it not yet.

The Church must be judged according to the resources it has at its disposal. God never goes below this in looking for an answer to what He has done. Therefore we have to ask ourselves whether as individuals we are showing to the world the holiness that we are made partakers of and the love we are the objects of. There are very many who profess Christ, while there are few comparatively who live Christ.

Chapter 49

# Scripture Query and Answer: Ezekiel 38-39

Q. Isa. 28; 29—If these chapters are mainly prophetic of the last days, how is it that the first attack of the Assyrian falls on Ephraim? Will the ten tribes be in the Holy Land when “the king of the north” comes against “the king?” Can his second attack and fall be identified with the invasion and ruin of Gog in Ezek. 38; 39? Will the millennial reign begin before that invasion, or will there be a transition, after the judgment of the beast and the false prophet, before the Lord reigns with His saints over the earth? Maohthi

A. The question is a very natural one, and the first part of it more obscure, for me at least, than many parts of prophecy. I give my answer under correction—I mean the precise, relative time of the return of the ten tribes. My present impression is that chapter 28 does not refer to the ten tribes as returned as such, but to the Jewish people localized in Ephraim. They are treated as the twelve tribes, and by a word expressing a whole even in the New Testament. Anna was of the tribe of Asher. In Chronicles several of the tribes have their part in the return from the captivity. Further, it is recognized in Ezekiel and as distinct from the ten tribes proper. (Chap. 38:16) We have the stick of Judah and for the children of Israel his companions; and another for Joseph, the stick of Ephraim and the whole house of Israel his companions. They are then united and are all recognized as children of Israel, which is the subject of Ezekiel, not properly Judah. This final union takes place after the deliverance by judgment, when they then come under one head. The ten tribes are purged from transgressors before coming into the land. (Ezek. 20:33-38.) The Jews are purged from transgressors in the land. (Zech. 13; 8:9, and many passages.) Hos. 1; 2, confirms the thought that the final union under one head is at the close of all this process of purging, as it naturally must be if Christ is to take them. (Comp. chap. ii. 19-24.) If this be so, the ten tribes as distinguished from the stick of Judah will not be in the land when the king of the north comes up: their rebels never enter the land. I believe the last coming up of the Assyrian is Gog. The term is geographic, whoever is king of the north. In Dan. 1 do not believe it is yet directly Gog, though perhaps dependent on him; for he is mighty, but not by his own power. (Comp. Ezek. 38:17) Of course, the millennial reign will not commence before that invasion, but the then destruction of the beast by Christ from heaven will cause the Assyrian, or Gog, to find Him, the Lord, in Jerusalem, so as to be destroyed by divine power, but by that of His earthly government in Jerusalem. Christ will have established His power there; but He will yet have to destroy Cog and purge intruders out of the country belonging to Israel,

Chapter 50

# Fragment: Faith and Failure

It is often after a great effort of faith, that failure comes in. See the case of Gideon.

Chapter 51

# Fragment: Feeble Light and Strength of Will Go Together

Where there is feeble light, there is generally great strength of will.

Chapter 52

# Fragment: Discernment of Spirits

It is not false doctrine abstractedly, neither is it a person, but evil spirits are at work, and this discernment of spirits is in question in 1 John 1-3.

Verses 3 and 4. How gracious of God to permit the evil then to be manifested, that we might have the light and truth needed to meet it in our day. Greater is He THAT is in us, than he that is in the world.

Chapter 53

# Scripture Query and Answer: The Firm Foundation of God

Q. A correspondent questions both the translation and the meaning of “the firm foundation of God;” as given in the new version published by G. Morrish. He would render it substantially as the Authorized: “yet still the foundation of God stands firm,” and argues that it can be nothing else than the resurrection of Christ, because of the contextual reference in verses 8 and seq.

A. But, in the first place, the proposed rendering, like that of the English Bible which it repeats in its faultiness, offends against ordinary grammar. The position of the article proves that στερε■ς,” firm,” cannot be a predicate, but is an epithet forming an integral part of the definition.

The only possible meaning, therefore, is, “the firm foundation of God stands.” Secondly, the notion that the fundamental doctrine of the resurrection is meant, was that of Cocceius, as well as of some since his day. Theodoret held a similar but wider view, considering the foundation to be the basis of the truth, of which the hope of resurrection is the seal. But I see no reason for giving it a special application, believing, with the translator referred to, that tile figure is used abstractedly.

Chapter 54

# His Foundation

(Psa. 87)

There is one truth that specially gives solid footing; there is no other thing, perhaps, that confers such stability upon creatures, weak, vacillating, impressed, easily moved, and carried away as we are: it is the consciousness of God's sovereign favor and choice of His will; of the place and portion that grace has conferred upon us. I do not believe that the bare fact of knowing our privileges will keep any soul. For the heart is so deceitful and desperately wicked, that any privilege which is merely our own, we can carry with us in self will; and so vile is the flesh that the very privilege itself may be used as a reason for dealing lightly with our sins, our follies, our love of ease, our self-seeking in any form or measure. But it is impossible so to act and feel when we have God before us: for at once we have to do with One who is holy and above all. Whatever may be His love, still authority is there, which none can dispute, and which can put us in our place of entire subjection. Hence, the principle of godliness depends upon this, that we see and have to do with God in each thing we have to seek or avoid. Now we can bless the Lord that this is not new to us, for most of us have known God in our salvation, though we know that it is not a question merely of us or of mercy shown to us, but that there is a blessed and glorious scheme in which God has been winning glory to His own name, so that we have just, as it were, submitted to it; and indeed, it is expressly said in the New Testament, we have “submitted ourselves to the righteousness of God.” We have found that this salvation, though most surely it is on our behalf, yet it is not merely our salvation, but God's; we too can say that our eyes have “seen the salvation of God;” and each can look up, so far as this is concerned, and say, “Lord, let now thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.” Thus it is that the Lord weans us by the very truth which He first reveals to our souls in Christ. He gives us such simple rest in His love to us; He vouchsafes the assurance that this salvation, inasmuch as He is, in every way, concerned in it, must be worthy of Himself. For it is not merely a salvation adapted to our need, but suited to His own name, to His own love, to His own grace, to His own glory. This, and this alone, has delivered us from doubts and anxieties. For when we have rested upon Jesus, and taken in this blessed truth, it is impossible for a soul to have further hesitation as to the character, the completeness, and the perfection of God's salvation. If we simply take it as a part of ourselves, that is as our salvation only, it is evident that there is a door opened to doubt and change; for we are creatures apt to fluctuate. Only bring in God in Christ, which is really the truth, and let the heart receive it with simplicity, then vanish all fears and questions and forever. And it is impossible for a soul who lays and keeps hold of this blessed truth, through the Holy Ghost, any more to be a prey to anxiety. Of course people might, through unwatchfulness, slip, and turn aside, and then the enemy knows how to enter in with his fiery darts, and torment the soul; but that is a different case. To return, the strength of God's will and choice is not merely true of salvation; but we may thank the Lord that it is true of everything. And I venture to say that God claims the right and title to put every single thing that concerns us under His own authority. When the heart rests in His love, we cannot bear only, but delight in His authority; it is painful otherwise, always contrary to nature. But

if there is any one that you really are subject to, and in whose love you have perfect confidence, is the authority of such an one a burden to you? Quite the contrary. Therefore, the Lord Jesus, speaking to the weary and heavy laden says, “My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” Why is this? A burden easy! a yoke light! What makes them so? It is My yoke, My burden. The same principle attaches to all that in which He has put His name.

Take this instance. What a change it makes to our souls, if it is merely an assembly of saints that we come to, or if it is God's assembly! Of course it is an assembly of saints, if it is God's assembly; but there might be a thousand assemblies of saints that are not God's assemblies at all. They might bring in their own thoughts and will, and this not merely in individual conduct—we are all liable to that. But I am speaking now of what brings and keeps them together. They might be all true saints, but they would not be God's assembly unless God were acknowledged among them as the One whom we welcome according to Scripture, and for whom we leave the door open by the Holy Ghost, i.e., unless the Lord Jesus' care and authority over us were owned. Not that I would dare to assign limits to the grace of God or His outreaching blessing, spite of all circumstances. We are now inquiring into the strength and blessedness of doing His will. And assuredly that alone is His assembly where the Holy Ghost is allowed full liberty, according to the word, and by whom He will, to act among the saints. Where this is not the principle, it may be an assembly of saints, but the assembly of God it is not. Our business is to do His will and not merely to be in an assembly of His children. The mere fact of its consisting of saints does not of itself settle the heart. But the moment that I own it as God's, all is changed. There is the One that we have to do with. And it is not merely to one another that we have links of affection—nay, bonds of eternal life, and above all, the link of the Holy Ghost that dwells in all the saints of God; but what we have to seek, what we have to stand for and to be governed by in heart and conscience is this—it is God's assembly. The Holy Ghost dwells where Christ, the Christ of God alone, is owned as the center and Lord. May we be steadfast and true!

Analogous to this is that which the Holy Ghost will make to be felt in its measure by Israel in the day that is coming. This will be their exceeding joy, when they are broken down and individually made to take their true place before God, when all self-righteousness will be crushed, not only in general, but under the dealings of God, and in the very depths of their souls. Out of all this will come the blessed result, that they will no longer be thinking of themselves, but of God. Our first word expresses this: “His foundation is in the holy mountains.” Who was He? What were these mountains, and why were they holy? Is this the cry of long-banished, far-wandering Israel? “His foundation is in the holy mountains.” It is not in anywise that our privileges are less known and valued when God thus fills the heart. Our mercies and joys themselves are filled, as it were, with the presence of the glory of God. Our privileges take their color and their shape, the length, breadth, depth, and height, from Him who gave us this blessedness. His foundation, then, is in the holy mountains. And who is this before me? Is it David or Solomon? Is it the king's foundation? Nay, “the Lord, Jehovah, loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.” Now this is a truth that we are not always prepared for. It is not only that God has His choice in separating from the world, but God chooses too among His people, among those that He loves. He loves, no doubt, all the dwellings of Jacob; but He loves the gates of Zion more than any other. He is pleased to act from His own heart; and who shall dispute His will? He works specially in individuals. He does not deal with us all alike. And even looking at His saints at large, while there

is a sense in which He feels toward them all with exactly the same love, it would be false to suppose that there is not another sense in which the same principle applies to them as to the dwellings of Jacob. Here, also, He arranges all according to His own will. Take the Gospels, take the Epistles, take the facts of our lives sand hearts, we see this principle all through—God will be God. And God, if He is God, must be a sovereign God. It is not that He merely chooses out from the world, but He deals according to His own will among those that He has thus chosen. This sovereign action is painful to the flesh, because it is natural for us all to set up to be as gods. It was the first thing man did, and it is this which disputes, denies, and gainsays the supreme title of God. There is always restlessness in our hearts where such is the case. We know what it was when we had no sight of God; but even when we have seen Him in Christ, there will still be the need of entering more deeply and fully into the wonderful workings of His holy will.

He now explains. “Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. Selah. I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them that know me. Behold Philistia and Tire with Ethiopia. This man was born there.” Rahab and Babylon were the two rival powers for the mastery of the old world. Rahab or Egypt was the first in early strength; but Egypt decayed and fell before the growing ambition and resources of Babylon. Babylon became, under God, the mistress of the ancient world, the head of gold that we read of in Daniel. The Spirit selects these, both of them linking themselves with the Jews, the one with the beginning, the other with the end of the history of Israel. He may be said to challenge them. Choose, O world, your very best, Rahab and Babylon; nor these merely, but Philistia, that most active territory which sent out through its energy to every part of the world, and Tire, too, its maritime competitor. Add Ethiopia also, that distant land of wonders! In all these boasted quarters of the old world, single out the gravest and best, the men that you have most gloried in, the geniuses that led others, and that achieved such fame as man can earn, and give, and boast of; but what is it? Deathless fame, alas! potsherds of the earth! One bit of crockery raising itself up against another! But what are we brought to now? To God? Yes, we have come to Him: God has made Himself known to us. God has chosen, called, and loved us. God has set us apart for Himself; and not only grace, but glorious things are spoken of.

“Glorious things are spoken of thee.” Thou city of whom—of Israel? Nay; but “Thou city of God.” What a joy to know that our very meeting is a witness of this truth! And God forbid that I should ever be at one that was not a witness for the truth, not only that there are Christians in the world, but that God is acting in the world; that God has a choice and that God binds me to it. God is not sparing our flesh, nor calling us for the purpose of giving a loose rein to the flesh; but expressly in order to deny the flesh, and crush it by the deepening knowledge of His beloved Son. But if there be not, along with this knowledge of Christ, the putting the mark of the cross upon the flesh, we shall never retain the truth of God. This is not like human science, that can be acquired and kept independently of our state of soul. It may appear to be received, but it will leak away: it will be surely lost and corrupted. It is impossible for the flesh to keep and to hold the truth of God. It is of all-importance to learn this lesson, to learn it even if late, and over and over again, too; not as some, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth, but always learning and coming to a deeper knowledge of the truth. This is our blessed position through His grace. But it needs the cross of Christ practically, glorying that we are nothing, glorying in our infirmities; certainly not in anything wrong, that the flesh calls “infirmity,” because it does not like to call sin, “sin.” But Scripture never calls sin infirmity. Infirmity is what makes us despised, and which our

own nature likes neither in ourselves nor others. This is the condition of making progress in Christ, and of the power of Christ resting upon us.

But while thus brought to feel that we are nothing, it is important, on the other hand, to know that glorious things are spoken of the chosen of God. It is not the part of true humility to obscure, ignore, Or deny our full blessedness. There may be weakness in every way. Instead of many, there may be only two or three meeting together; but if those two or three are met around that blessed name, and that name only, they ought not, would not, talk proudly of being God's assembly. But still it is of that very nature; and if it were not God's, I do not know a divine reason for coming together. It is all self-will unless it is God that brings us together. But if it is God, then it is not a question of saints. How all-important that our souls should hold to this!

And what is our boast? The great glory for Zion is this: when other nations were boasting of their geniuses, Zion had a better glory— “Of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her, and the Highest himself shall establish her.” Others might speak of their poets, captains, statesmen, kings. But of whom does Zion speak? “The Lord shall count, when he writeth up the people, that this man was born there.” How gracious of God! If you look at Zion or Jerusalem, it was not, of course, literally the fact, for Christ was born at Bethlehem. Of Jerusalem, the terrible truth is, that Christ was crucified there. But how blessed is the reckoning of grace! “The Lord shall count, when He writeth up the people, that THIS MAN was born there.” The Lord connects His beloved One with Zion; and therefore in the day when the Lord shall look upon the dust of Jerusalem and favor the stones thereof—in the day when He will lift up His might to raise up the fallen ones and to gather the outcasts, this will be the song that He will put in Zion's mouth. They will not contend for or glory in any other; but the kernel of their joy will be, that “this man” was born there.

No wonder, then, that there were players and singers on instruments (verse 7) after such a word as this. No wonder that God Himself should say, “All my springs are in thee.” All these blessed ways of comfort and strengthening God causes to flow and find their center there; because Christ, as far as concerning the earth, finds His place there.

The New Jerusalem has still more glorious things. Our place is not the earth. It is not in Zion, or the holy mountains; it is in the heavens. But it is the same Christ, only Christ known in a still more blessed way; not as One that was born there, but as the Only-begotten before all worlds. For heaven, we may say, was rather born of Him, than that He was born of it. It is there that we are brought into association with Him; and this founded on His death and resurrection. When He was here upon earth, heaven opened upon Him; and now that He is there, heaven is opened for us; and we look up through the opened heavens and behold Him at God's right hand. For if Stephen miraculously, as a fact, saw Him there, it is also the revealed and proper expression of our birth-place and home; we see it as a matter of the calling of God. For God means that we should realize by faith that the heavens are no longer shut for us, and that above them is that blessed One, at the right hand of the majesty on high, and ourselves seated in heavenly places in Him there. Therefore let us not fear, though it be not for us to glory in aught, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; but we ought to glory in that cross, and to know what a stable foundation God has given us in Him. For us it is not so much in the holy mountains, as in Him who made them and all things. He is our Rock in the midst of the surges of this world, as truly as He is and will be our

theme of praise to all eternity.

Chapter 55

# Fragment: The Exercise of Power

If the life of the soul does not answer to the gifts, the exercise of power becomes only the forerunner of failure. It is thus that we see Elijah fleeing before Jezebel, after having done such great things before all Israel.

Chapter 56

# Fragment: Ability to Serve in the Church

After all, the more one gets on in the world, the less the ability to serve in the church. If the wheel is caught in a rut, the man who has on his working clothes is ready enough to put his shoulder to it, but the gentleman, with his nice clothing on, cannot stoop to that.

Chapter 57

# Fragment: Body a Living Sacrifice

You will never find a Christian in a healthy state, who does not keep his body a living sacrifice for God.

Chapter 58

# Fragment: Bringing in of a Better Hope

To allege the impossibility that a holy, just, good, and perfect God can give any rule but one, is contrary to the plain facts and declarations of scripture. God did give another, which he has disannulled, because it made nothing perfect; and there is the bringing in of a better hope, by the which we draw nigh to God

Chapter 59

# Fragment: God Occupied With Us

To know that God in His grace is occupied with us is a wonderful check on will.

Chapter 60

# Fragment: History and Doctrine of the Bible

The history of the bible is the history of original sin: the doctrine of the bible is the doctrine of God's putting it away forever.

Chapter 61

# Fragment: in Christ and Christ in Me

The measure of my privilege is that I am in Christ; the measure of my responsibility is that Christ is in me.

Chapter 62

# Fragment: Nothing Good in Self

It is true that there are many amiable traits in human nature, but not when God is in question. Christ drew out all the wickedness of man. Peter learned that there was nothing good in himself when he had done his best, and no failure in Christ's love when he had done his worst.

Chapter 63

# Fragment: One Step at a Time With Christ

Let us not suffer the dread of what may be to hinder our present blessing. We can only, take one step at a time: let us take it with Christ.

Chapter 64

# Fragment: the Heart Occupied With the Lord

It is an easy thing to set sail and get fairly out into the ocean; but when many days have passed and no land is in sight, one is apt to weary. If the heart is not fully occupied with the Lord, something is taken on board to fill up the void

Chapter 65

# Fragment: Unity of Christians

It is one of the great questions of the day, is the unity of Christians to be founded on love for the truth's sake, or on indifference to it?

Chapter 66

# Fragments Gathered up: Christ Between Myself and Satan

If I have got Christ between myself and Satan, I am strong against the enemy. But if Satan gets in between Christ and myself, then it becomes a question of my own strength, and I find that I am weakness itself. If any one, were it a poor weak woman, is in a house attacked by thieves, but a house well shut up and protected, she is without fear; but if once the thieves enter, it is a question of her strength, which must go for nothing

Chapter 67

# Fragments Gathered up: Christ Has Judged Sin

Christ has judged sin in its very principle. In baptism a man acknowledges that all he is is subject to the judgment of God. It is not merely that he has now new motives, but God has given him a divine conviction of the utter ruin of all he is. And he knows another that the world does not know, as his life. He has one who is risen from the dead. Thus it is not with him a mere struggle against sin. Christ not only blots out the past, but he is given to me of God to live upon for the present. In trials and difficulties, God would keep Christ before me. Thus I am brought through, but it is not by bracing myself as if I could meet the emergency. There would not thus be the quiet faith and sense of nothingness, so wholesome to me and glorifying to him. His grace is sufficient for me. In Christ dead and risen is power against sin. Christ is not merely a friend to help me, nor a motive of love to act on me. In Him I have much more than this. I am entitled as a Christian now to treat myself as dead to sin before God. If I merely struggle against sin, I am treating myself as a living person; for who, save a living person, can struggle? If Christ is before me, the victory is mine.

Chapter 68

# Fragments Gathered up: Guided by God's Eye

The pillar of cloud guided Israel; but we are not guided by providence. Yet, blessed be God for it, we surely are guided of Him; and we know there is not a single thing He allows to happen to us, but what shall prove to be one of the “all things” for our good, though there may be much sorrow and trial mixed up with it, which may be needed to break us down. We often are guided by providence in a great many ways; but then it is a proof we are not guided by the knowledge of His will. If I discern God's will, I shall not be guided by providence, which is at best only being “held by bit and bridle.” It is better to be guided by God's eye. It is a great mercy, however, if I have not the spiritual one, to be even thus held in. If I am going off by a certain train; and get too late, so that I cannot go, this is providence which tells me, I am not to go. Christ never found His guidance by providence; nor the Apostle Paul in general, except when he went to Rome. Then he went as a prisoner; which was very different from being warned by the Spirit of Jesus not to go into Bithynia. “Guide me with Thine eye,” is our privilege.

Chapter 69

# Fragments Gathered up: John 13

John 13—scripture calls God light, and it calls Him love. He is not holiness, for that is relative; he is not righteousness, though he be holy and righteous. To be holy there must be a knowledge of good and evil; and so of righteousness. Evil cannot be in their God; but perfect purity, and that which manifests all, He is, and the perfect activity of goodness (that is, love); and so scripture speaks. And this makes the cross so glorious as the way: God meets sin there. O what a wondrous meeting in perfect love, yet in perfect righteousness and holiness; yea, exalting them by it. Hence he says, “now is the Son of man glorified [for it was glorious for a man to do it], and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God shall also glorify Him in Himself, and shall straightway glorify Him” —shall not wait for the outward display in the coming kingdom, but shall glorify Him in Himself, who was glorified is Him. This is man's place in hope and spiritual nature and affections now—hence not of the world, as Christ (who came from heaven, and as a divine person was in heaven) was not of the world. This nature may display itself in a thousand exercises and relationships here, as it did in Christ—in us mixed with failures, alas! for which there is provision in him—but the proper association of our nature and standing as Christians is with him in heaven. Hence Jesus, knowing that the father had given all things into his hand, and that he came from God and went to God, in presence of all he was, and was going to, and in presence of treachery and failure, takes the place of a servant to wash his disciples' feet that they might have a part with him. He could not stay with them in this polluted earth. Hence, too, when peter would have other than his feet washed—his need through defilement from daily walk, the Lord says, “he that is washed (i.e., really partaker of this divine nature, for they were, save Judas, clean through the word spoken) needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit.” what a picture of grace! What a witness of our portion as part with him! And while giving the assurance that the truth of the divine nature is there (for here he speaks of water, not of blood), how it gives us morally elevating confidence in intercourse with God, and yet allows not the smallest daily stain! Yet grace is learned in it. If this lovely and elevated picture of the Lord's grace is closely examined, it will be seen that it comes after his earthly claims are witnessed and closed. As son of God, he raises Lazarus. As son of David, he rides into Jerusalem. When the Greeks come up, he says, “the hour is come that the son of man should be glorified,” but then adds that he must fall into the ground as a corn of wheat and die. In chapter 13 He shows how we have part with him when he could not with us. But note this well: if we are to be really elevated, it is taking us in spirit out of this world. He gave himself for our sins, to deliver us from this present world

Chapter 70

# Fragments Gathered up: Power to Heal

The Church ought to be able to heal everything. She is set to be a healer in the earth; but if she fail, God can make it turn to blessing. See the case of the young man whom the disciples could not heal. If they could have healed him, we should never have had that precious token of His grace—"O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you, how long shall I suffer you, bring him to Me." Yet they ought to have had power to heal him. The more the Lord's grace and power was manifested, the more they ought to have been able to use it for His glory. What a wonderful Savior we have to do with!

Chapter 71

# Fragments Gathered up: Romans 3:19

Rom. 3:19 is reckoned to prove that all men are under law. It is astonishing how any one could so little see the force of the apostle's argument. The apostle had proved Jews and gentiles under sin; and then turns back to the many advantages the Jews had. He was not derogating from them. Well, he says, you have the oracles of God: let us hear them. Are we better than gentiles? You are as much under sin as the gentiles; read your own books; from which he then cites passages, and (relying on the claim of the Jews, that the law belonged to them, that the law spoke to those that were under it,) applies their denunciations to the Jews who were thus stopping their mouths by their own oracles, which they claimed as belonging exclusively to them. There you are, then, says Paul; you say the scriptures apply to you, and that is what they say; and then every mouth is stopped. That the gentiles were sinners was admitted: they were not Jews by nature. But their own oracles brought in the Jews too; and every mouth was stopped. How any one could think the statement that the law spoke to those who were under it, meant that it spoke to all, when the subject is the Jews alone professing it, and its advantages, would be hard to think, but for the prejudices of a system

Chapter 72

# Fragments Gathered up: the Christian and the Law

If law applies to the Christian, he is under the curse; for it brings a curse on every one who sins. Do I enfeeble its authority? I maintain it and establish it in the fullest way. I say, Have you to say to the law? Then you are under a curse: no escaping, no exemption. Its authority and claims were to be maintained; its righteous exactions made good. Have you failed? Yes, you have; you are under the curse. No, you say; but I am a Christian; the law is still binding upon me, but I am not under a curse. Has not the law pronounced a curse on one who fails? Yes. Yet you are under it; you have failed, and are not cursed after all! Its authority is not maintained, for you are under it: it has cursed y on and you are not cursed. If you had said, I was under it and failed, and Christ died and bore the curse; and now, as redeemed, I am on another footing, and not under law but under grace, its authority is maintained. But if you are put back under law, after Christ has died and risen again and you are in Christ, and you fail and are under no curse, its authority is destroyed; for it pronounces a curse, and you are not cursed at all.

The law is the absolutely perfect expression of what the creature ought to be, but because it is, it is not the transcript of the divine character.

What does deliver from sin and law? It is death, and then newness of life in resurrection. We are in Christ, not in Adam.

The man who refrained from killing, simply because it was forbidden in the law, is no Christian at all.

Chapter 73

# Fragments Gathered up: the World's History in Scripture

I admit scripture ought to be accurate in everything, without going beyond the forms of knowledge of those to whom it was addressed at the time, or it would not have been suited to them. God does condescend to suit his instruction to us; as, if we know his grace, we might expect he would. And where is the book which, addressed, in ages earlier than otherwise known history, to a despised people, has stood the test of increasing light as the bible has on every point? Take the Koran, and see the nonsense that is found in it: yet this was in the seventh century. Take the fathers. Take any book pretending to give an account of what are called fabulous ages, and see how the marvelous prevails; the little grains of fact to be picked out of these large stories; the prodigality of marvelous nonsense, from which we must, in a mythical way, conjecture some historical idea (if there is any), the only effect of which is, when we have discovered it, to show that what we have as plain history in scripture is the true origin of the distorted fables we meet with in profane accounts and ceremonies—ceremonies of which the vulgar know nothing but the outside, as the religion of their fathers; but which show, when investigated, that what we have in scripture is really the world's history—is that which, however distorted, has formed everywhere the basis of the whole system which knit them together as people, and separated them as people too; which acted on their fears and conscience, and impressed their imagination—had been the origin of their different religions, which were but the conscience of having had to say to God in these gradually forgotten wonders of which Satan had possessed himself, to acquire the veneration and govern the lusts of those who had utterly departed from, and forgotten, the true God who had wrought them

Chapter 74

# Letter on Free Will

Very Dear Brother,

I had a little lost sight of an important subject of your last letter but one, solely through the multitude of my occupations. This fresh breaking out of the doctrine of free-will helps on the doctrine of the natural man's pretension not to be entirely lost, for that is really what it amounts to. All men who have never been deeply convinced of sin, all persons with whom this conviction is based upon gross and outward sins, believe more or less in freewill. You know that it is the dogma of the Wesleyans, of all reasoners, of all philosophers. But this idea completely changes all the idea of Christianity and entirely perverts it.

If Christ has come to save that which is lost, freewill has no longer any place. Not that God hinders man from receiving Christ; far from it. But even when God employs all possible motives, everything which is capable of influencing the heart of man, it only serves to demonstrate that man will have none of it, that his heart is so corrupted and his will so decided not to submit to God, (whatever may be the truth of the devil's encouraging him in sin,) that nothing can induce him to receive the Lord and to abandon sin. It', by liberty of man, it is meant that no one obliges him to reject the Lord, this liberty exists fully. But if it is meant that, because of the dominion of sin to which he is a slave, and willingly a slave, he cannot escape from his state and choose good—while acknowledging that it is good, and approving it—then he has no liberty whatever. Be is not subject to the law, neither indeed can be; so that those who are in the flesh cannot please God. And here is where we touch more closely upon the bottom of the question. Is it the old man that is changed, instructed, and sanctified; or do we receive, in order to be saved, a new nature? The universal character of the unbelief of these times is this—not the formally denying Christianity, as heretofore, or the rejection of Christ openly, but the receiving Him as a person, it will be even said divine, inspired, (but as a matter of degree,) who re-establishes man in his position of a child of God. Where Wesleyans are taught of God, faith makes them feel that without Christ they are lost, and that it is a question of salvation. Only their fright with regard to pure grace, their desire to gain men, a mixture of charity and of the spirit of man, in a word, their confidence in their own powers makes them have a confused teaching and not recognize the total fall of man.

For myself, I see in the word, and I recognize in myself, the total ruin of man. I see that the cross is the end of all the means that God had employed for gaining the heart of man, and therefore proves that the thing was impossible. God has exhausted all His resources, and man has shown that he was wicked, without remedy, and the cross of Christ condemns man—sin in the flesh. But this condemnation having been manifested in another's having undergone it, it is the absolute salvation of those who believe; for condemnation, the judgment of sin is behind us; life was the issue of it in the resurrection. We are dead to sin, and alive to God in Jesus Christ our Lord. Redemption, the very word, loses its force when one entertains these ideas of the old man. It becomes an amelioration, a practical deliverance from a moral state, not a redeeming by the accomplished work of another person. Christianity teaches the death of the old man and his just

condemnation, then redemption accomplished by Christ, and a new life, eternal life, come down from heaven in His person, and which is communicated to us when Christ enters us by the Word. Arminianism, or rather Pelagianism, pretends that man can choose, and that thus the old man is ameliorated by the thing it has accepted. The first step is made without grace, and it is the first step which costs truly in this case.

I believe we ought to hold to the word; but, philosophically and morally speaking, free-will is a false and absurd theory. Free-will is a state of sin. Man ought not to have to choose, as being outside good. Why is he in this state? He ought not to have a will, any choice to make. He ought to obey and enjoy in peace. If he ought to choose good, then he has not got it yet. He is without what is good in himself, any way, since he has not made his decision. But in fact, man is disposed to follow that which is evil. What cruelty to propose a duty to man who has already turned to evil! Moreover, philosophically speaking, he must be indifferent; otherwise he has already chosen as to his will—he must then be absolutely indifferent. But if he is absolutely indifferent, what is to decide his choice? A creature must have a motive; but he has none, since he is indifferent; if he is not, he has chosen. Finally, it is not at all thus; man has a conscience; but he has a will and lusts, and they lead him. Man was free in Paradise, but then he enjoyed what is good. Be used his free choice, and therefore he is a sinner. To leave him to his free choice, now that he is disposed to do evil, would be a cruelty. God has presented the choice to him, but it was to convince the conscience of the fact, that in no case did man want either good or God.

I have been somewhat oppressed with sleep while writing to you, but I think you will understand me. That people should believe that God loves the world, this is very well; but that they should not believe that man is in himself wicked, without remedy, (and in spite of the remedy,) is very bad. One does not know oneself and one does not know God.

The Lord is coming, dear brother; the time for the world is departing. What a blessing! May God find us watching and thinking only of one thing—the One of whom He thinks—Jesus our precious Savior. Salute the brethren.

Your very affectionate brother, J. N. D.

Chapter 75

# Our Future Glory and Our Present Groaning in the Spirit

It is comforting and instructive to notice the way in which the expected glory utterly outweighed the sufferings, in the mind of the apostle. It is not that he did not suffer—we must suffer, and sufferings are not pleasant; but suffering is soon over! “I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” It is not merely that he knows he will then get rest and glory; but what a sense of the glory he has now, with his sufferings, of what he here calls the manifestation of the sons of God! Like a person you may have seen in the world, so filled with the bright hopes of to-morrow, that he is getting through to-day as fast as he can. It is “The glory which shall be revealed in us.” It is our glory and yet God's glory. He counts it but fair that, if we are in sufferings, we should be in the glory too. “If so be we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.” If ours is the suffering, it is also in respect of ourselves the glory is to be revealed. While Christ (the Son) reflects the glory of the Father, the woman (the Church) reflects the glory of the man. Then there is the sense too, by the power of the Holy Ghost, of its belonging to us—that it is really our own. If a man has the sense of its being his, there will not be the turning his back on what he knows to be his own, but the getting towards it as fast as possible. If his heart is in that state, filled with the Holy Ghost, he will pass on through the world, as an angel would pass through it. Do you think, if Gabriel were sent on a message into this world, he would desire to stop here? No, he could not stay where all is defiled. It is this “present evil world;” so he does not linger, but is in haste to get through. But it is a much higher principle we enjoy than can be enjoyed by an angel, and so there never can come out of an angel's heart the same song of praise that comes from the believer's heart. Though it has been lately remarked, that the angels are never said in Scripture to sing, they are said “to speak” — “to say” — “to talk,” but they do not “sing.” There could be no harmony in an angel's song compared with ours, their hearts not being exercised with trials like ours. Never having sinned, they cannot know what the joy of salvation is; or what it is to be strengthened when weak, or lifted up when failing, or comforted in suffering. They laud, and praise, and bless God; but they cannot know the new song that they sing who passed through it all. The four living creatures rest not day and night, saying, “Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty;” but their subject is creation— “for thou hast created all things; for thy pleasure they are, and were created.” (Rev. 4) But in chapter v. it is redemption— “And they sing a new song, saying, Thou art worthy: for thou hast,” &c.

Then you see how strong Paul's personal realization of it was; he says, “I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” How much he must have had the glory present to his soul, to prefer it to “present things!” Now, he had suffered much; but it only brought the glory the brighter before him, and shows how the glory of the cross filled his soul.

The words “this present time” are striking. His mind is full of the future—absorbed with to-morrow like the boy at school looking for a holiday, who can think of nothing else. The glory is so present, that he calls it but momentary— “Our light affliction, which is but for a moment.” For if you talk to one whose mind realizes eternity, about this present evil world, eternity is too big to allow of room

for anything else. We never realize eternity, till we fill it with the Father's love and Christ's glory. If we think of it otherwise, we only look into a mere vacuum. We are confounded on the one hand, and filled with glory on the other. Finding ourselves in the glory of God, we hardly know how to grasp it— “a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” It is a blessed thing that it is ours, so that we can get near it in that kind of way. “The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us;” it is not to become proud with the “glory which shall be revealed in us;” it is not a change of time, but the glory is present to his mind, and he realizes the glory. Then he opens it out doctrinally: “For I reckon” —not 'we teach’ — “that the sufferings of this present time,” &c.—the present sufferings had lost their hindering power, because he saw the power of God in them and endured afflictions according to the power of God. He does not say it is received, but “revealed in us.” It is wonderful how the Holy Ghost uses that word “us.” It is the common course of all the promises of God, “to the glory of God by us.” “That ye may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length,” &c. The great thing is to get the heart into conscious association with all this fair scene. And if we have our hearts always occupied with Christ and glory, there will be such a sense of it that we shall be always there. So that if I look at the stars in the heavens—though I admire them and gaze on them with wonder and delight—they do but remind me at once that I am one with Him who created them.

It is amazing how the soul becomes soft when happy in the Lord! How it removes all roughnesses. Saints cannot quarrel about being happy in the Lord, though they may quarrel about doctrine or discipline. We ought all to look onward, and have the heart filled with the glory. The effect of this is to put us into suffering, though we can say it is not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us. It is not the divine essential glory, of course, but the manifested glory, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Verse 19 shows the sons exhibited in the family glory. In the world it is known by the dress of the children what is the wealth and grandeur of the father. It is the parent's pride and delight to deck them out and show them forth. Well, God has children, and He must display His sons in His glory. When He transfigures them, He manifests them. It is then, and not till then, the creature is introduced into the liberty of the glory of the sons of God. This, as far as creation goes, is not intelligent, for it has been brought by man's sin, unwillingly, into all misery and bondage. It must also wait, for it will not be brought back until man has been. If a chain were suspended from the ceiling, and the first link be broken, which connects it with those above, the whole chain would immediately fall to the ground.

When man fell, all creation was involved. It has often struck me how as all the misery of the creature, sickness, bodily suffering &c., came by man, so all the deliverance comes by man. There will be a blessing on the fruit of the ground and not a curse, by and by, certainly in Jerusalem. The Cain-curse it is that was taken away by the flood, as Noah, (i.e., “this shall comfort us") the name given by Lamech to his son, seems to imply. It is not that they get rid of labor, but they get comfort in it. No doubt there will be very great fertility and fruitfulness; not that there will be no labor needed there, but they shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; but they shall build houses and inhabit them, and they shall plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them. “The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.” It is clear that “the creature” goes beyond our bodies; the creatures outside our bodies are groaning. There are two curses spoken of. The first was spoken to Adam, the second, to Cain. The first was on the earth in general, but the second did not extend beyond the

family of Cain. The two curses are very different. Cain was a tiller of the ground— “Now art thou cursed from the earth. When thou tillest the ground, it shall not yield unto thee her strength.” It is true Cain had the earth, after it was cursed, after he had killed Abel. The two presented, as heirs of the earth, were Cain and Abel. These were two parties, and they soon showed who should get on in it—the righteous man or the vagabond—for Abel is slain; but Cain takes possession, builds a city, and makes progress in it. God blessed Israel in the earth; but what do we see? The godly forced up to heaven, because the, ungodly were in prosperity, and this, too, while prosperity was the mark of God's favor to the righteous; and so David says, “This I understood not, till I went into the sanctuary of God.” Well, they will have the heavenly blessing. The temporal promises were not even possessed by Abraham. God's temporal government was blessing on the earth. (See Ezra, Nehemiah, &c.) Solomon did not get higher than earthly blessing. The prophets rise up to heavenly blessing; not that they reach to the heavenly Bride—the body of Christ; for the Church never was the subject of prophecy or promise. The Church is founded on the defacing the difference between Jew and Gentile. Now to have attempted to deface the Jew before, would have been wicked. It was done in the cross. Meanwhile the Christian suffers. But, see how the energizing power of the Holy Ghost fills him with this “earnest expectation.” He so sees the love of God and thought of God in the thing that is coming, that his neck is stretched out, as it were, looking for it. God is a faithful Creator, and so He will bless according to God. The intelligence does not know the remedy, though the heart feels the groaning. Paul knew God in the sorrow pressing on his spirit. If he links it with the glory, it never can come till the manifestation of the sons of God, when the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. It is not liberty by grace, but the liberty of the glory; “for the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who subjected the same.” My will was concerned in it; if it had ruined itself willingly, it would have remained; but God is there, and He is good. The creature offended; then the Holy Ghost inspires the whole creation with hope, so that all are looking out for the manifestation of the children of God. That is what they wait for. They groan, but not intelligently. We have the key to the groaning. The text may be read thus: “For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God, in hope that the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God; for the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him that subjected the same.” There is a parenthesis. If it had chosen all, then there would have been no hope of recovery; but it is “waiting in hope,” and not only they, but we ourselves also wait, because we have the creature about us; “even we ourselves groan within ourselves waiting for the adoption.” “The Spirit itself maketh intercession with groanings which cannot be uttered; and he that searcheth the heart knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to God.” It is recorded in the history of the experience of an old saint, that he had lain a whole day groaning, without uttering a word, and, at the close of the day, there came out simply, “my God!”

“The creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption.” Everything connected with it—sickness, death, suffering. It was “made subject to vanity.” He calls it all vanity. Take the flogging of horses in an omnibus to see how fast they can go, or how many they can carry, calculating the cost, what they shall gain by the journey, and the like. What is all this but “creature” groaning and vanity? Unless God sustained them, how could even the angels bear to look on and to witness it all? Look at what is called military prowess. Think only of 20,000 men being killed by

their fellowmen in a single fray! Man walks in a vain show, and toils for death; thus spending all his strength to die! The creature is subject to vanity, and cannot get out of it, until brought into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. There is more villainy and misery, I suppose, in Manchester or London, than anywhere in the world, even where men are still in a mere state of nature. Blessing of another nature, doubtless, comes in; but that is another question. Civilization has pushed men even to the extremity, so that they are at their wit's end—up to such a point that there must be a break out at last, which men will find out to their cost. Luxury, indulgence, and pride have crept in, living for comfort, without any regard or care for the poor: men everywhere are feeling it, and evil passions are breaking out and showing themselves in various forms. God has mercifully spared this nation, because they do care more in this country for the poor than in any other; there are poorhouses, or unions, hospitals, and infirmaries. This is not the case in other countries of the world, where the people are kept down by mere power or influence, by the priests or the army; only let these be removed, and all goes. Men are saying, Peace, peace, and all the while trembling with fear, looking for those things that are coming on the earth, for come they must; and God alone knows what will turn up in a year's time. It is not because “signs” are not properly meant for us, that we are not to discern the signs. The Lord said, rebukingly, “How is it ye do not discern the signs of the times?”

“The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together.” How astonishing it is that Christians can go on trying to better the world, with so many positive texts of Scripture against them! “The whole creation groaneth,” &c. What an amazing difference! He is speaking of “the weight of glory” which shall be revealed in us; and then at once turns and says, What a groaning creation I am in! It is his realizing the glory that fits him to enter into the sorrow of the groaning creation around. Christ, coming in glory, lifts him above it all. When Christ was here, every outgoing of His heart was stopped (except that grace would make a way): they turned away from Him and rejected Him; though He had cast out a whole legion of devils out of their land, they could not endure His presence, but “besought him to depart out of their coasts.”

The groaning goes beyond the saints—the whole creation groans. If I have the Holy Ghost, I may be full of joy and full of hope; but this does not hinder my groaning as a creature; the more I joy, the more I feel this wretched body is an earthen vessel that cannot hold the treasure. We have but the “firstfruits of the Spirit.” We have already the sprinkling of the former rain; when we get into glory, then will come down the latter rain.

There is no groaning in my connection with God; it is all rejoicing, and nothing else, in that respect. “Rejoice in the Lord always.” I am not waiting for the redemption of my soul, (that is the state of the quickened man in Rom. 7,) but for the redemption of my body; we have redemption by blood already, but not so as to glory; we are quickened in our souls as His children, but God will never have us as He wills until we are conformed to the image of His Son—this cannot be to what Christ was in the grave, but to what He is now. Christ is a glorified man. (There is no such thing as a glorified spirit, as some speak; there may be a glorious spirit, but a glorified spirit—what is it? who can tell?) Just as the coming of the Lord, as a hope, had been suffered to drop out of the Church, so the hope of being conformed to the likeness of Christ has been allowed to vanish. Now the evil of this is, it dissociates from Christ the spirit in heaven and the body in the grave; it is as Christ was before He rose; but the moment I get my mind filled with the thought, I am to be conformed to Christ as He is in glory, it associates me with Him now. The thought of His coming makes me

happy. There is such a thing as delighting in God; but Christ fills up the scene between. He may make the person of the Lord precious to me—not merely His work but Himself; and then I shall not be talking about the immortality of the soul, (however true this may be, as indeed it is, but my body is mortal,) I shall be waiting to have “this vile body changed and fashioned like his glorious body.” There is no hope but that of being conformed to Christ. Death is not a hope. “Our conversation is in heaven,” and there we hope to be. My hope is to be with Him in heaven, bodily. I have all for my soul now in Christ.

“We ourselves groan within ourselves.” It is very experimental to see all this groaning, provided I see the hope that enables me to go on. The Lord groaned deeply at the grave of Lazarus, but He had power to carry it in spirit to God, and was strengthened. He came to the place of death and found all sealed up, and a stone laid upon it; and He groaned in spirit. Men put away their dead as loathsome—to get rid of them quickly.

The apostle had received the Spirit of adoption. Christ was “declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead;” so we are declared to be sons, and are waiting to be raised up, bodily by Christ. We must never confound the groaning here spoken of, with the groaning of the soul for its own salvation, which we have already; but the redemption of the body, is our hope, for Christ is made unto us of God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Redemption comes last as in itself comprising all, and not of the soul only. When they talk of hope among men, there is uncertainty always attached to it; as, one may ask, Do you expect to get this, or that? The reply is, I hope so; but meaning to imply uncertainty as to its being realized. Now this can never be the case with regard to our hope, for there is no uncertainty if God has said it. The full result is salvation; I have only the earnest of it now. I must wait patiently for it. Abraham had not a place to put his foot on, though God had given him the whole land: “He looked for a city,” &c. When hope is settled, you go on quietly to-day, expecting Him to come. The Holy Ghost has fixed our hearts on this hope, and we are waiting for it. Whilst we groan, the Holy Ghost itself groans, so that while it is a groaning creation, that is not all. If you groan, your groanings are according to God, and are as divine as your hopes, though in a different way. But as the Son became a man, and as a man down here, had these feelings, so the Holy Ghost (he does not become a man) dwells in me; and these groans are precious, because in these groans it is the positive intercession of the Holy Ghost; and “He who searcheth the heart, knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit,” so that if God searcheth my heart, He finds the Holy Ghost there.

It is wonderful how God has insinuated Himself into everything: filling us with His hopes, His sorrows, and affections. If it is God who listens, it is God He bears. How thoroughly He is come in to possess man's soul! It is God's love outside us, and His love is shed abroad in our hearts. We dwell in God, and God in us. He has given us His thoughts and feelings, so that we are wrapped up in God, “Because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts.” God's love! if it is not His love, it is of no use; if it is net in me, it has no reality. Scripture sometimes speaks as if it was of us, and at other times as of God. Thus it is my heart groans, while it is said, “The Spirit maketh intercession” —O! the wondrous ways of God! “Have I been a wilderness to you?” It is a great comfort to know they are not selfish groans in me, because while I am groaning with all around me, I might have the thought, Take care there is no unbelief there,' but it is the Spirit's groan in us. Selfish groans we find in Rom. 7. There it is all I, I, I—no Christ, nor Holy Ghost, until the end of the chapter. Rom. 8 is full of Christ and of the Spirit.

Chapter 76

# Thoughts on Galatians 3

In speaking of redemption there are always two questions to be considered: first, the great truth of the work of Christ on the cross; and, secondly, the application of His work to us. The last is principally that in which Christians go astray. It is the manner of availing ourselves of the blessing that is denied. The Galatians did not deny Christ; they were Christians, but they were mixing up the law with the gospel and connecting ordinances with works, which two always come together. When the heart is not satisfied with works, then it ekes out matters by ordinances. But ordinances cannot give peace to the conscience. God will not let you mix them with Christ. The apostle here shows the real ground of peace. Promise is contrasted with law. “Received ye the Spirit by the law or by faith?” (Ver. 2.) The promised One is come; and, the work being accomplished, the Spirit is given as the consequence.

Mau is so attached to his good opinion of himself, that God had, as it were, to say, Well, if you will have a law, here it is for you. They ought to have cried, Oh! we cannot keep the law, we are sinners, ruined; instead of this they presumptuously answered, “All that the Lord hath spoken we will do.” What could such self-confidence end in but death? On the other hand, we Christians are not under law; we are not under promise, but under the effect of the accomplishment of the promise. He begins with the effect (ver. 2); “Received ye the Spirit,” &c. We are under the effect of redemption, viz., sin put away by Christ's sacrifice, and the Holy Ghost present as power for walk, &c. Did we get it by the law or by faith?

Verse 3. “Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh F” Whenever the law is brought in, so is the flesh also. I never put myself in any way under the law, but I am condemned and lost, I cannot help it; whereas God must have perfect obedience and nothing less. “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” If we get off this ground, it would be God accommodating Himself to sinners and allowing sin. When we start upon the ground of man's responsibility to God, we always fail. The Galatians professed to have found redemption by Christ. Jesus Christ had been evidently set forth crucified before their eyes. (Ver. 1.) Again, had “they suffered many things in vain?” (Ver. 4.) Was it all a mistake When had they this power? It was in the Spirit. The law never pretended to give power. “He, therefore, that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to Him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.” (Ver. 5-9.) When he turns to the ground of faith, then we find the promise, “In thee shall all nations be blessed.”

Here are thus two great principles in contrast. If it is a promise, what I have to do is to believe it. it is another who accomplished it. God undertakes this, and He accomplishes it by Christ. It is all on God's side. This is the difference between promise and the law. “Abraham believed God, and it

was accounted to Him for righteousness." And so if I believe God, and it is counted to me for righteousness, "So then they that be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." It is not as many as do bad works, but "as many as are on the ground of law-works. The law is good, but we are bad; and hence all is ruin on that ground; for it is written, "Cursed is every one that continueth not," &c. I cannot keep it so as to be saved.

According to Deut. 27:1-10, they were to write upon the stones, with which they built the altar, all the words of the law on mount Ebal, where was the law: the letter was not on mount Gerizim, where half of the tribes were to bless. (Ver. 12.) But there was nothing there—the letter was only on the mount of cursing. In chapter 28 is both blessing and cursing, but these have nothing to do with Gerizim; they are the blessing and cursing of God's government, as regards their daily walk. We may come under chastisement in our daily walk. It is in vain to mix yourself up as the accomplisher of the law with God as the accomplisher of the promise. If your soul rests upon what God is in Christ and nothing else, you get the blessing. If you choose to stand on what you do yourself, how can you escape the curse?

Ver. 13. "Christ has redeemed us," &c. Then comes the accomplishment of the promise. Man was either, like the Gentile, lawless, or like the Jew, under the curse of the law. What is required by the bond-men of sin and Satan is redemption. The way God gives us blessing is not by enfeebling the law, but by Christ's enduring the judgment of guilt for us. The curse that we deserved another has borne! I do not fly to a promise for peace to my soul. Peace is the accomplished result of Christ's work (Col. 1), and, if you will, of the promise. Christ has been made a curse for me, and I am redeemed entirely from the curse of the law. The curse is utterly taken away. We ought to be astonished at such grace!—laid in the dust, as regards ourselves, but in perfect peace with God. The curse is altogether put away and gone; for Christ has borne sin and death. Then what remains? The blessing of faith as to all that results from His work. We are not merely regenerated by the Spirit; but we have received the Spirit as the seal of the curse being gone—of redemption accomplished.

In verse 17, be speaks of God's way of dealing, in order to show how sure it is. "To Abraham and his seed were the promises made." In Gen. 13:2, 3 the promise is made to Abraham—nothing about the seed. "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." In Gen. 22 there comes a figure of the seed in Isaac. In verses 16 and 17 it is said, "Because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son [a type of Christ], I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven," &c. These are the "seeds as of many." "Thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies." In verse 18, on the other hand, nothing is said of a numerous seed. "And in thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed." Here it is in one seed, Christ. In chapter 15 is another set of promises, but the promise is to Abraham in himself. But after Isaac had been offered, we have the seed [Christ] without any conditions at all. This promise, confirmed of God in Christ 430 years before the law came in, the law cannot disannul or make of none effect. The law being come, God could not bring in the promise till the curse was put away. Christ was made under the law, as a living man. The promise of God is in a Christ who had to die. But He is risen, the curse being borne. Then wherefore serveth the law? (Ver. 19.) To bring out transgressions, to convict of sin, to prove man a sinner, a self-righteous, good-for-nothing sinner. The effect was to bring out the sin

that was already in the heart. “Transgression” is a different thing from “sin,” which is really said in 1 John 4 to be, not transgression of the law, but lawlessness. If I have a son who is idle and runs about the street, it certainly is a bad habit; but if he refuses or neglects to do what I bid him, this is positive transgression. It is not only ■νομ■α, lawlessness, but παρ■βασις ν■μου, i.e., transgression of law.

Thus, then, the promise came first, next the law, and then the accomplishment of the promise. The law was in the hand of a mediator, till the seed should come, to whom the promise was made. (Ver. 20.) Again, a promise does not want a mediator; for it is all on one side. “Now a mediator is not a mediator of one; but God is one,” who is the accomplisher of the promise. In Ex. 19 God says, “If you obey my voice.... I will bless you.” The mediator comes with this statement from God, and God says, If you do all this, I will bless you. Israel says, “All that the Lord has spoken, we will do.” Here is a promise of our God, conditional on something being fulfilled by man. The result is a total failure; because man has been brought in, engaging to do something which he is sure not to accomplish. The moment there is the legal mediator, man is engaged in a condition, and has no possibility of fulfilling it. But (ver. 21) the law is not contrary to the promise. The truth is that man was in a condition in which he could not earn the promises, because he could not keep the law. God proposes law and man breaks it. God accomplishes by Christ not merely the law but redemption, so that the original promise of blessing flows out to the Gentiles by faith, who had nothing to do with the law. After faith is come, even the believing Jews are no longer under the law. We have put on Christ. We are not before God as sinners in our sins. He only thinks of us as in Christ. He does not see sin in us, because it is put away, but we see it, hate it, judge it, though we know it has been judged in Christ. He puts the saints in the place of promise in this way. They are in Christ, and, therefore, they are the seed of Abraham. (Ver. 29.) All the promises find their center in Christ Himself. The moment I am in Christ, all the promises of God are mine too, and I come into the full blessing of all the promises of God. “If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

If I put myself practically under the law, my conscience gets tortured. The more spiritual I am to discern its holiness, the more miserable I become. One proof that a soul is converted is when he feels and says God ought never to give up His holiness, even if he is destroyed by it. It is nothing but pride for a sinful man to go about to establish his own righteousness. Can a bad tree bring forth good fruit? This unbelief hinders the soul from resting on the accomplishment of the promise. If the curse had not been borne, it would have been upon you; but it has been borne, and there is no curse to the believer. Such is your position, because you have put on Christ. If you attempt to mix anything of your own with Christ, you will always be unhappy; it is, besides, unholy to think of it, because it is not acknowledging that in “your flesh dwelleth no good thing.” We are not our own at all; we are bought with a price. Whenever a man thinks he has a right to do anything of his own will, he is robbing God. We should render to Him our bodies; it is our reasonable service.

After promise the law was added, and this was, till the seed, Christ, came. This is very important, indeed, for us to be settled in. We never shall have solid, settled peace till the whole man is plowed up and searched out, and we get clearly to see that we have no strength in us. Then we are cast over on accomplished righteousness in Christ, nothing less than God's own Son made sin for us. To know this puts me down in the dust; but it gives me unchangeable peace. And what, then, is the claim of Christ on us? We ought to realize that we are given up to Him, body, soul, and

spirit, even as we are purchased by His blood.

Chapter 77

# Fragment: Giving up the World and the World Giving Us up

Our business is to act on God's word, looking to Him for grace and strength as regards ourselves and others.

Chapter 78

# God for Us: Romans 8:31-39

IN this portion of Scripture the apostle sums up the exercises of heart, and the work of grace, first in these exercises of heart, and then in the revelation of real liberty through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, which we enjoy as redeemed from all that we were in the flesh, from sin and Satan and the world, and from law too. But then, having gone through all this, and having shown the way by which we, having the Spirit, are children of God and heirs, joint-heirs with Christ, and possessing the consciousness of the bondage and corruption which we still have here, he closes the whole by showing how, before it, and in it, and above it, and beyond it all, God is for us. He brings out this great truth to show, not that Christ is in the heavenly places, but that He is in the difficulties. He shows, (and what a blessed thing this is, for by it he gets to God Himself!) though he goes into the troubles of time, that, before trouble was, and before you ever were, it is Himself that is for you; and if so, no matter what is against you! After going through the exercises of soul before redemption and showing redemption accomplished, he takes up the great truth that overrides it all and goes through it all; and this is not what we are for God, for we were condemned, and, as he says in this same chapter, enmity against God—not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be—but through means of the process by which He discovered to me my misery, He has brought out the revelation of what He is for me. And the conclusion be draws from the whole is, “If God be for us, who can be against us?” And you will find that in the way in which he looks at it, he takes up every side of the question. He does not content himself with looking at the bare fact, though that is blessed in itself, but he takes up every side.

And it is exceedingly precious, beloved friends, to see the way in which God is for us. Not only nothing can escape Him, but He occupies Himself with everything that concerns us. Just in the same way if a person were ill, a friend might go to inquire for him to know how he did; but if it were a child whose mother were occupied about it, it would have all her care and all her thoughts, for her heart is there. She is for it, and would give everything she has for it, and would not let you come into the house if you made a noise. Yet that is only a human mother, who may forget her sucking child. At the same time it is the character of that perfect love of God in its condescending character. Nothing can escape Him and He neglects nothing. Surely we may say, “If God be for us, who can be against us?”

“He that spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all.” First, I find here that God is a giver. Well, I say, He has given His own blessed Son. I get God as a giver in the highest possible way, so that nothing is anything after this. Observe the reasoning too: the apostle reasons from what God is and does to the effects on us, and not from the effects on us or from what is in us to God. If I reason from what I find in myself, I say I am a sinner. God will not have me: He must condemn me, though there may be some little hope. Still I draw conclusions from what I find in myself, and then, though there may be some true thoughts of God, it is partly truth and partly mistakes. That is not faith, beloved friends. It is so far true the soul knows that God is a holy judge; but then the real conviction of sin makes us feel that God cannot have us. Take the prodigal son. He was converted—he came to himself—he knew his father's goodness, but he immediately

begins to draw conclusions from what he was. So he resolves to say, I am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants." He thought that this was a more proper condition to be in at his father's house. His confession of sin was all right, but the conclusions he drew were all wrong. That is what persons are doing now. it is perfectly natural and true also, if that were all that was to be known. But they mix up the truth with human notions, just as the prodigal mixed up his sense of sin, which was all right, with his thoughts of his father which were all wrong. When we thus reason, we have not met God; for when the prodigal met his father, he was on his neck and the best robe was put on him. Till then he never got the father's own testimony to His dealing from what He was in Himself. This is the way the Spirit reasons when drawing conclusions for God. The soul may be thinking that it is humble, when reasoning otherwise; but it is only proving that it is not cast upon grace by an adequate conviction of sin. The apostle had gone through it all; and he says, God has given His Son, and I should like to know what He will not give after that. If I have got hold of this—God has not spared the very best and brightest thing in heaven—I must say, What will He not give with Him? If I have got debts, I do not like to look at my books (if I am not honest); for I know what I shall find there. What is there presses hard upon me; but if some one comes and pays my debts, I am not afraid when they are paid, to let my creditors see my books. I open them up; and if I find the great amount of them, the more I see of them the more I think of the man who paid them. So it is in redemption. The effect in me when I see the greatness of what has been done, is to make me think more of Him who is for me; and so repentance goes on growing all a man's life; for the more I know God, the more I see the evil of sin.

But first I said it is God giving. If He gave His Son, glory comes in as a kind of natural consequence. If I. really feel and know what Christ is, the more I see this. Our being in glory with Him is His seeing the fruit of the travail of His soul; and if we are not in glory with Him, He is not seeing the fruit of His travail—that does follow.

But further, the apostle says, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" He is for me both about the sins, in putting them away, and about righteousness. It does not only say, he is justified of God, but God justifies. So what matter if Satan accuse, as he did Zechariah. "This is a brand cast out of the fire," says the Lord. Are you going to cast it in again? We can triumphantly ask, Who can condemn us? We cannot, of course; it is absurd to think of it. That which is justification here is that Christ is my righteousness. I am in Christ who has glorified God, and is standing before God. As He said, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him; and if God be glorified in Him, He will glorify Him in Himself, and shall straightway glorify Him." That work on the cross has glorified all that God is; and now Christ is in the glory, and I am a righteous man in Him. Not only I have got what I was in Adam put away, but "as He is, so are we in this world."

Then comes another thing; for we can expect everything after the gift of His own Son. Then comes this fact—there are difficulties on the path: still it is the same thing, "God is for me," But mark here how he changes the term, "It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Why does he change the term? Of course it does mean the love of God in Christ. But why not say the love of God? Because we have got here the One who has taken the place at the right hand of God, after having been down here in the difficulties. We have difficulties on all sides:

persecution in the family, not open, perhaps, but that which is as hard to bear: Christ had it too. You say, “They think me mad;” Christ's friends wanted to take Him, they thought Him mad, too. And so the apostle brings down this very love of Him who came down: “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” Here I have found the divine love coming down to get the experience of what we are passing through. I want to know the sympathy of Christ. I do not get that when God is forgiving me. God has no sympathy with my sins; but in trials I do want to know that Christ suffered, being tempted. “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” Principalities and powers? Christ was tempted by them and overcame them for me; so they are no stoppage in the way. Life? he went through it, too; He had plenty of sorrow in it, and so much the more sorrow we have, the better for us. But still He has said, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.” Life cannot separate me from Christ, for “to me to live is Christ.” Death? That cannot separate me, that will bring me to Him— “To die is gain.” Persecutions? I not only triumph in them, but Christ is with me in them.

In all these things I learn to know myself as an unprofitable thing, and the faithfulness of Christ. I may know a man to be kind, but if I go on knowing him for thirty years, I get the experience of it; not that he is changed, but I know him better. I find One who got me out of the grand difficulty; He intercedes for me now; He does not repeat what He did at the first, but a kind of confidence grows with every day's experience; not that I ever learn that faith is not faith, but that I find Him unchangeably the same. I am ashamed of myself for my want of confidence in Him, and the communication of His grace gives me a familiarity of knowledge of Him (speaking most reverently) and a confidence, a happy confiding feeling. We are more than conquerors, for we are learning Him our everlasting portion, and ourselves that we want to get rid of. Creatures are all against us, but then they are but creatures. God is for me—not here in the love of a sovereign which thought good for me when I thought not of Him, but it is the love of God in Christ, in Him who passed through all difficulties for us—life, death, &c., and for us, met outrage, oppression, resistance, and persecution. Now I see that the very thing which would try me is that through which He passed for me, and it is a witness of the love which passed through everything for me—whatever concerns the person God loves and Christ cares for. In that way we have to pass on to the glory, to Christ if you please, in the consciousness that Christ has brought us into it. Else we are like the children of Israel in Egypt. When they passed the Red Sea, that was over. They had left Egypt.

Redemption brought them out. Speaking of the work as done, redemption is behind us; in another sense it is not: the forgiveness of sins is, but that is not all of redemption, though included in it. But it is that we are taken out of the condition in which we were into another, just as Israel was. Though still in Egypt, they were not touched when the judgment came. But that was not all. He took their bodies out too. And so He takes us out of the flesh (I do not mean physically yet, though Christ is out of it in every sense). So the Lord brought the Israelites into a new condition altogether, into the wilderness. There they had the cloud all the way through and the manna. There their garments did not grow old and their feet did not swell; everything was provided by God. They had to gather the manna, it is true; just as diligence is required by us in divine things. Then they crossed the Jordan where conflict begins, and then it is we find that the Lord comes to Joshua as Captain of the Lord's host. When He thus comes as Captain, the command is, “Take off thy shoe from off thy foot, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground”

That is the character of the ways of God. It is not a question of redemption here. He has brought us to Himself, but having come, that which weighs with us must be according to the holiness of God. Because we are called to fellowship with God, and fellowship means common happiness, common thoughts, common feelings. The Father's delight is in His Son; and we have fellowship with Him in that. Christ's delight is in the Father; and we have fellowship with Him in that. So our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Christ Jesus. “If we say we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.” The apostle at once brings the character of God to bear on the person. The effect of redemption is to bring us to God. Being brought to Him, we can say, “Search me, O God.” For He does search, not that He should impute, but that He may cleanse; and therefore we desire that He should. And then it is a blessed thought, beloved friends, that while He has gone through all my difficulties here, He is suiting me for my place there. In every sense this is true, that if the soul is not sufficiently brought to a sense of sin and to find Christ everything as regards righteousness, it does not understand grace. The Lord only give us to know (I am not speaking of knowledge now, but) in our hearts and consciences, that we have to do with God. Not as Israel had, for now the veil is rent from the top to the bottom, and we ought to walk in the light because we have been brought into it. This is what I do earnestly desire for us all that we may know perfect redemption, and have the consciousness that the effect is to bring us into fellowship with the Father and the Son, so that everything contrary to His holiness may be judged and put away.

Chapter 79

# Fragment: God's Bringing in a New Power

When God brings in a new power, those who have clothed themselves with the old are the last to acknowledge the fresh way in which He is working. The Samaritan was the only one of the ten lepers who got to the source of the power, the divine person of the Son of God, even though the others got the blessing individually

Chapter 80

# God's Call Out of the Earth

In the midst of the increased and still growing corruption of the whole scene around us, and of the threatened dissolving of all things, it is much laid upon the mind to consider with simplicity and clearness the character of our calling.

The call of God out of the earth, and God's assertion of title to the earth, are things that greatly differ, and should be morally and practically distinguished by the saints.

The call of God proceeds on the principle that God Himself is outside the earth, and that He is not seeking it, but seeking a people to be His in His place outside and above it. The earth, therefore, by this call, is left just as it was. For it is a stranger to the purpose of God.

This call of God out of the earth was exhibited in the family of Seth, before the flood. Cain's house was in possession of the earth, and Seth does not interfere with them. Not at all. All he and his generation have to do with the earth is to call on the name of the Lord while they are on it (not to engrave, like Cain, their own name there—Gen. 4:17), and then to lay their dead bodies in it.

So was it exhibited afterward in Abraham. He is called of God. But such call leaves the Canaanites without a rival. He does not contend with the potsherds of the earth. He does not dispute their right as lords of the soil. He desires only to pitch his wandering tent upon the face of it, or to lay his bones in the bowels of it.

And so the Church or heavenly family of this dispensation. Their call leaves the Gentiles in power. The Church has nothing to say to “the powers that be,” but either to obey un-reluctantly, or to suffer patiently, according as the demand made by the powers be such or not as involves their subjection to Christ.

This determines at once our duties. We render to the powers ordained of God their dues, without in any wise seeking to disturb them, knowing also that even if they behave themselves unrighteously, we are not constituted their judges.

But the character of our service is likewise determined by this call of God. Service to God is wanting in its true character, if it do not intimate that He is not now re-asserting His title to the earth; or, in other words, our service to Christ must be to Him as the rejected Christ. For He is such an One all the time He remains in the “far country.” The cry has followed Him there from the earth, “We will not have this man to reign over us.” And is that cry to be answered by the servants who occupy their talents during His absence? (See Luke 19) Surely not. They serve Him in the patient sense of His rejection all the time, and “they are not ashamed of his chain.”

In like manner, moreover, this determines what our habit, should be. Our habits should tell that the earth is not our place, as our services should tell that it is not our Lord's place.

This affords a holy and serious admonition to our souls.

Our call does not connect us with the earth. Our necessities do so, it is true. We need the fruit of the ground, the toil of the hand, and the skill of the heart, to provide things needful for the body. Our necessities, thus, connect us with the earth, and we may attend to it for the supply of such necessities. But our call does not connect us with it, but rather separates us from it.

To link the Church and the earth is acting at once on apostate principles. To aim at changing the character or condition of Christ in the world, or to serve Him save as the rejected One, is not service rendered in spiritual discernment.

These things we may know well and admit easily. But if we refuse to link the Church with the world, are we daily watching to refuse to link the heart with it, the hopes with it, the calculations of the mind with it? If it be easy to see the Church now on the eve of losing the world, and to see this without regret, is it alike easy to see our interests losing it, our name and distinction losing it? Such an one was Paul. He would not reign as a king yet; but he had learned how to have and how to want, how to abound and how to suffer need.

In God's dealing by Israel, there was an assertion of title to the earth. Joshua went into “the possession of the Gentiles” and took with him “the ark of the Lord of all the earth,” that his sword might make it the possession of the Lord and His people. But Paul went into the possessions of Jews and Gentiles, not to disturb their tenure of anything there, but to take out of them a people unto God, to link souls with the disallowed Stone, and to teach them that their blessings were spiritual and heavenly.

So, according to the Lord's teaching. See the two parables in Luke 19; 20. In settling Israel, the Lord gave them a vineyard, a portion of the earth, and told them to till it for Him, rendering Him dues as the Lord of the soil. In settling the saints of this age, He gave them talents, such gifts and opportunities of service as were suited to the fact of His absence and rejection by the world, having no estate or kingdom here till He should return.

Practically to forget such distinctions, or to act on the principle that the Church is God's instrument for asserting His claim to the earth, is apostasy from her calling of God.

In His ministry the Lord was judging Satan, but refusing to judge the sinner. And, according to this, at the end of His ministry, He tells Peter to put up the sword, and Pilate, that His servants could not fight.

The way of His saints is to be according to all this. They are to judge morally or spiritually (i.e., defilements within themselves), but not contend about the interests of the world. The apostle condemns them for not doing the one and for doing the other (see 1 Cor. 5; 6), with this difference however—their duty in the first matter is peremptory (1 Cor. 5), their way in the second is left more to their measure of grace (1 Cor. 6). And according to this also the apostle tells us that our weapons are not carnal but spiritual, our warfare not with flesh and blood, but with spiritual wickedness (2 Cor. 10, Eph. 6). We are really or spiritually defeated, when we fight carnally: for the devil has raised in us that temper which has sent us forth to the carnal fight.

Chapter 81

# God's Claim of the Earth

God's assertion of His title to the earth is one thing, as I have observed in the preceding paper, and God's call out of the earth is another. Both have been again and again exhibited in the progress of the divine dispensations.

Our history, I may say, began with the first of these. Adam in the garden was required to own the rights and sovereignty of God, by constant obedience touching the Tree of Knowledge.

Again, this was exhibited in Noah. In him the Lord was re-asserting His own rights and inheritance in the earth, and taking up the earth again, as He had done at creation, as the scene of blessing.

And again, in further process of time, this was exhibited in Israel. The Lord was then becoming the sovereign of the soil again, and in His elect nation witnessing His claims to the earth.

And the same will He do by Israel the second time, when, in millennial days, as the prophet speaks, the king of Israel will be the God of the whole earth. “Then the earth recommences anew, under the authority of God delegated to Jesus,” as another has strikingly expressed it.

In one sense, of course, God has ever asserted His sovereignty in the earth, because it is always true: “The powers that be are ordained of God.” But at times, His assertion of His place and title in the earth forms the character of the dispensation, and at other times His call of His people out of it forms the character of the dispensation. This is what I mean—the sword went to the Gentiles, when Israel lost themselves; but the glory did not go with it.

Now we may observe, that whenever God arises, as in a form of dispensational action, to assert title to the earth, He begins by judging the scene. This, of course; because the place of his purposed power and glory having corrupted itself, He must take the offense away and purify it. His presence could not brook iniquity. His call is not accompanied by such judgments; because all the connection which it takes with the earth, or the scene here, is to draw the elect out of it.

Noah's lordship of the earth was accordingly preceded by the flood, which carried away the world of the ungodly. Israel's inheritance of Canaan was attended by the judgment of the Amorites, and the sword of Joshua executed the commission of the Lord. The coming kingdom of the Lord and His Christ will be prepared, as all Scripture verifies, with a like clearing out of all that offends.

Beside, however, this prefatory or cleansing judgment, there has a law been delivered, suited to this assertion of God's title to the earth and to the maintenance of His name and right in it.

When Noah was set up, like Adam, as the representative of God's claim and power on the earth, a law was given to him, as to Adam, for his guidance in his place: more complex, necessarily; because the condition of things had become so. Sin had entered, and sin had to be restrained or punished; as redemption, which had become God's principle, or the principle of divine religion among men, had to be testified and celebrated. With Adam all that was needful was the one command, just sufficient to maintain the witness of God's supremacy in the midst of man's lordship

and enjoyment of the garden and the creatures, that all might be in right moral order. But in Noah, when God's rights in the earth come again to be asserted, sin having entered, other things were required, and laws for the government of such a place, as well as ordinances for the maintenance of religion in so changed a scene, have to be instituted. These we accordingly find in Gen. 9:1-6.

The pursuit of this line of thought I feel has its interest for us.

In the progress of the ages, I will, therefore, go on to observe, when Israel becomes God's witness on the earth, as I have already noticed, an economy of laws, statutes, and ordinances, both civil and religious, is established. A nation had now been taken up. The legislator had to contemplate manifold relationships, and as manifold contingencies, with all the variety of private and public rights and injuries, together with the maintenance of divine religion and worship. It had been a much simpler thing, as Noah came forth from the ark with his family, and a much simpler thing still, when Adam was set alone in Eden, than now it could be, when the host of Israel (say, 600,000 strong) crossed the Jordan into their inheritance.

Accordingly, the statute-book is longer. Fitting it is that we should find it so. And so we do. Ex. 21; 22:23, give us the statutes which, at the beginning and before they entered on their possessions, had been decreed for the ruling of this elect and redeemed nation, in their civil relationships, and in their national religion. Ordinances of divine service pointing to “good things to come” accompany this economy or covenant. But these chapters are the statute-book, the book that was sprinkled with blood in the day of the covenant between the God of Israel and His people (Ex. 24:7).

Between this day and the day of Deuteronomy, Moses had had all the experience of the wilderness. We may well expect him to give a parting word after such experience. He does so. But the book of Deuteronomy is not to be read as a second or enlarged edition of the statute-book. It may rehearse, in its own style, many of the earlier provisions, and give new enactments and ordinances. But still it is not, merely or properly, an enlarged edition of the former book. It is rather a discourse by the legislator, in the assembly and audience of the nation, as well as upon their past history, such as their travels, fortunes, and conduct, as upon their laws, ordinances, and hopes—a word full of affectionate appeal, of earnest encouragement, and of holy, serious admonition, the father rather than the law-giver being heard to speak, soliciting as well as directing the people in the way of obedience and blessing.

Thus was it as with Moses and Israel.

Between the times of Moses and Solomon, many changes had passed. As to my present purpose, I may say that the principal of them was this—that the nation had become a kingdom. The promised land had been gained—reached and conquered. The Lord had been found faithful to all His covenant engagements, and Israel rebellious again and again. Terrible evils had been committed, and sorrowful discipline endured under the judges and king Saul. But in season the Lord arose, in the riches of His grace and the might of His Spirit, and in David righteousness prevails, and in Solomon peace follows it.

The book of the law goes up to the throne with Solomon, according to the ordinance (Deut.; and necessarily so. For the throne in Israel being for the Lord, the law of the Lord most be owned there. The scepter rules in His name, and must, therefore, rule according to His mind. Solomon, therefore, is not a law-giver. He is not a second Moses, though he is “king in Jeshurun.” In the

throne God is greater than he. God's law was to go up to the throne with him, that he, even there, might be God's liege subject. And the law with him on the throne was like the command to Adam in the garden. Each of these ordinances spake this word or uttered this voice, that there was One higher than the highest; and any attempt to give the law a lower place than the throne itself would have been, in its way, a taking again of that tree, of the which the Lord God had said, “Thou shalt not eat.”

Solomon, therefore, was properly no law-giver like Moses in the book of Exodus. Neither does he discourse on the laws, enlarging them or their sanctions, like Moses in the book of Deuteronomy. He does not, after such manners, “sit in Moses' seat.” But he may, like him, be the father of his people. He is their teacher in the rules of wisdom. He has them before him, that he may discourse to them on the conditions of the earth, where they had their citizenship or conversation. He tells them of human life, its duties, trials, labors, and vicissitudes in its manifold enjoyments and connections. He unfolds to them the springs of human action, the thoughts and tempers of men; and warns against the snares and principles of the world. After such an order as this, is the wisdom which king Solomon delivers to his people who stand before him. The same Spirit, who, in Moses, dictated the rules of civil life, and gave laws to a nation, with statutes, judgments, and ordinances, through Solomon, can comment on the whole scene around, that they who have their citizenship in the earth may be ordered there in righteousness, equity, and truth. The law of God is with him and over him on the throne, but he comes down from thence into the midst of his people and their ten thousand relationships on the footstool, and there, in the Spirit of God, reads lessons of righteousness and instructions of wisdom touching all that he surveys.

Such I believe to be the Book of Proverbs.

Chapter 82

# God's Dwelling With Men

Rev. 21:1-8

In this part of the chapter we have the end of all things, when the mediatorial work of Christ, even as king in subduing all things, is finished, and He has given up the kingdom that God may be all in all; when the final result is produced in the new heaven and the new earth; when the former things have passed away; when everything is in its own essential blessedness in the presence of God, and we have not only got blessing, but it is in glory. It leads us in a peculiar manner to see the way in which the thought and counsel of God has been at all times to make man His dwelling-place. This is not always observed

in Scripture; but when God's ways are brought out, and also particularly His holiness, (as it is said in the Psalms, “holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, forever,") then we have the purpose of God unfolded to make man His dwelling-place; and therefore we find the goodness and love of God finally displayed. “Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”

It is figurative, no doubt; but there is this full and complete effect of God's own dealing and working in the removal of everything that can create a pang. But there is more in this than that the tears are wiped away: God shall do it. There is the compassion that has caused the removal of the sorrow, and that is more than that the sorrow is gone. It is God has removed all. If the evil is gone and the sense of pain, it is God who has put them away from the heart. “And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain.” Not only has God taken away the evil, but it is never to be any more. That is, there is now full and perfect security and blessedness. All the evil is gone, and all those timings too through which man was exercised to bring him to a point where he could really meet God. The love of God takes the place of everything, and, filling all things with Himself, precludes the possibility of evil even when coming in again: the contrast of man's paradise of old, as we all know.

Then come two great principles in verses 6, 7: “I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and be shall be my son.” First, there is the one who is athirst, and then the one who overcomes. These are the ways in which the Spirit works; and God always answers the workings of the Spirit. Wherever the Spirit acts in producing desires and wants, it may be at first after holiness or forgiveness, and then after communion and enjoying God, they are all perfectly satisfied in God. Therefore it is said, “I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life.” It is not merely, mark, the water of life, that is given here; but there is given “of the fountain,” that which springs up in the presence of God. What a thing to find! Thus the soul is perfectly satisfied with the fountain of blessedness for which he is thirsting, even God Himself, whom he is rendered capable of enjoying. He is at the wellspring.

The second principle is that he that overcomes shall inherit. Here we find not desires satisfied, but difficulties overcome. It was so with Jesus Himself, as it is said, “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father on His throne. “He that overcometh shall inherit these things,” as associated with Christ, “and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.” He comes into immediate connection with God. In the one we have the satisfaction of spiritual wants, in the other the relationship wherein we stand. This is the general thought. Such is the state and condition of those spoken of; but there is another point which deserves to be enlarged on a little more, and that is the personal happiness found in it. There is no longer a Mediator, no longer the need of one; there is no more the need of mercy and grace found to help in the time of need.

When we come a little closer, there are other things that claim attention. We have here, “Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people,” &c. His dwelling-place is with men. It is no more an individual nor a national thing. Of course the wicked are put away; but God's dwelling-place is no longer with the Jews, but with men. And this too is to be noticed, that the Church has a very peculiar place.

The thought of God was to be with men, dwelling and abiding with them. Christ dwelt here among men, but it was a short time, and now He is cast out; but that will be another thing. Nor will it be as He appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Even Christ's stay was to end; but not so the dwelling of God by and by. Neither is it simply men made blessed; but God will dwell with them. Such is the distinctive, eternal character of blessing; but also the Church is to possess it in a peculiar way, already remarked on this passage. It is not life only, but the presence of God with men as His abiding-place to reveal Himself and bless them fully.

If we look back at Adam and his dwelling-place, we shall not find this. God did not, could not, stay there. Man was then put under responsibility to see if God could stay there. The question of obedience had to be settled; and we know how it was settled. Man disobeyed and was cast out. The test was the stability of the creature; it was no question of a divine work in grace. God, therefore, in no wise dwelt there. But on man's sin He revealed the assurance of the Second Man, the Lord from heaven. As the first man, Adam, had failed under the serpent's craft, the last Adam was to come and destroy his power.

There was this revelation; but the world went on so badly that the flood came and took them all away, save Noah and his family whom God rescued in the ark. Yet the next thing we hear of the world is that men set about in the plain of Shinar to defy God, centralize man, and possess the earth in their own might and for their own name; just as men will do by and by in a yet more daring way, but the Lord will confound them also, as He did at Babel. Thus, we see, by His judgment, the world ordered into nations and tongues; and the very fact of the existence of different tongues shows that men are separated into nations. This took its rise at Babel; so that the children of men could no longer understand each other. And still there are these peoples and tongues, nations and families. Thus the world was settled then.

But another thing comes out: “The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham.” He said, as it were, You must have done with all this: it is the world: you must leave your country, and kindred, and father's house: I must have a people in the world. This was the call of Abraham. But though we hear of the calling of God, and the election of God, and the promises of God, we have no such

thing as God dwelling with Abraham or the patriarchs. We know, in fact, that Abraham did not leave his father's home at once, though he did quit his country; in other words, he was not done with the flesh. But when Terah was dead, then he blessedly went on as a pilgrim, and God visited him in a lovely way, showing him His goodness and grace; not, of course, in such spiritual depth and fullness as now, but brightly and beautifully, as in Gen. 17; 18 He was the olive-tree or stock of God, as we read in Rom. 11. Still there was yet no dwelling-place for God. He visits and gives him the promises. This was all right so far as it went; and though Abraham's faith failed in Egypt, yet in the main he walked blessedly as a pilgrim. But though God visited him and talked with him, there was yet nothing of redemption seen as a groundwork for God to abide with men.

At Egypt came the question which was to be the type of redemption: so mercy put the blood on the lintel as a figure of Christ. Then the children of Israel go through the Red Sea as the sign of the death and resurrection of Christ. Then we find redemption—the active intervention of God to make good the promises made. We have not now a promise of something to be given, but actual deliverance, as it is said in Ex. 19:4, “Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto Myself.” So it is said (1 Peter 3:18,) “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.” Not our poor vile bodies, they are not yet brought to God; but our souls are truly redeemed. A work has been wrought so absolute in its nature for the putting away of sin, that now there is not a single thing (morally I mean) between God and him who has part in it; and not only is there nothing in us by which sin can be imputed, but we have been brought nigh to God. Say, are you brought nigh to God? You say, “I am hoping to get there.” Then you have not been brought there, for He does not bring half way. But Christ has brought us nigh to God. He represents us in the presence of God. The putting away of sin is accomplished or it never can be, for Christ cannot die over again. The work is done, but also the people are brought out. All that hindered God having them is put away by blood-shedding; but also they are taken out of the condition in which they were and are brought to God “to walk in the light as He is in the light.” And so it is with the believer now.

It is a very different thought to say “One day I hope to come,” from saying, “I am come.” It is all grace, that we know, but now there is nothing between me and God—of course, there is the blessed Mediator—but I mean there is no evil; it is all cast into the depths of the sea; and we are in His presence “holy and without blame.” And what is the consequence of this? That God can dwell among us and in us. If you look at Ex. 15:2, you will see how He brings it out, consequent on their deliverance from Exodus, “The Lord is my strength and my song, and he is become my salvation; be is my God, and I will prepare Him all habitation.” And in Ex. 29:45, God declares that this was His own thought: “And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God, and they shall know that I am the Lord their God that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them; I am the Lord, their God.” This is just the language applied to the Church. We shall see the Church brought out later. But He brought Israel into the land. to dwell among them, and He did dwell among them, as we know, for the Shechinah just means a tabernacle or dwelling-place of glory.

We get this immense truth, which we are almost afraid to look in the face, that when sin is put away and we are brought to God, He dwells in and among us. Just as Solomon said, “But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee.” (2 Chron. 6:18.) What a truth this is, that God has so perfectly sanctified the people

in order to manifest Himself, that He comes and dwells among them! And where was the Lord to dwell? In Israel; and all nations were to come there and see His glory, as it will be again in the latter day. It was all spoiled and corrupted: that is another thing; but it was set up that He might be inquired of by the nations. You will find another thing connected with this, that, except the setting apart of the Sabbath, the first time holiness is spoken of is in Ex. 15 Every saint had it, of course, in his heart and ways; but it was not brought out before. But the moment they sing this at the Red Sea, “Who is a God like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like unto thee, glorious in holiness,” the command is “Sanctify yourselves;” that is, walk in holiness. This great truth comes out that in redemption the person is brought to God. We also get these companion truths that the people are sanctified fully, and God is dwelling among them.

There is a people set apart for God, and what characterized them was His own dwelling among them. This itself is an immense truth. It is thoroughly followed out in Christianity, not in figure, but in the reality of truth, through the true blood-shedding of the Lamb of God and perfect cleansing from sin and true deliverance through the death and resurrection of Christ, whereby we are brought nigh to God. But now another thing comes in, that where one gets this full blessedness is in Christ. Not Christ in us, but we in Him. And you will find this connected with the fact that He is dwelling with us. There is not a spot left on the man that is set apart as redeemed and purchased and perfected forever, Christ having borne their sins in this work of redemption. The believer stands in all the efficacy of Christ's work. Suppose you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and your sins have not finally and definitely been put away, they never can; or else Christ must die again, and He never can. But, blessed be God, He has put away sin, as we find in Heb. 10:11, “And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices which can never take away sins; but this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, forever sat down on the right hand of God.” He is not standing, but is set down, for the work is done. There we find perfect cleansing through the blood-shedding, as it was said to Israel, “When I see the blood, I will pass over you.” But then we find another thing in the death and resurrection of Christ. I have One passed out of this world; (of course, in spirit, He never was of it, this blessed, Holy One, but as to His actual presence here;) He is gone as man into another scene, as risen, having passed through the Red Sea, or death, and gone to God as man. And we see not only the putting away of sin, but Christ entering into another scene; and now we see not only God dwelling with man, but man with God. Christ has gone into God's presence as the Redeemer, presenting Himself to God for us, and we stand in His presence in Christ. How is this? He sends the Holy Ghost as the Comforter, and our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost. We have this wonderful and blessed truth as the result of redemption accomplished and sin put away, and we partakers of the death and resurrection of Christ. He is gone into heaven presenting His own blood. We are cleansed, and our bodies the temple of the Holy Ghost, and thus we become individually His dwelling-place. It is true again of the Church of God, as it is said, “In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” Eph. 2:22.

Thus the Church of God became the habitation of God. This is a wonderful and blessed position, and we got it in a special manner by the Head being in heaven, as the Lord Himself said, “At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.” (John 14:20.) This expresses our union with Christ, as it is said in Eph. 5:30, “We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones.” This is the special and blessed character of the Church. It is the habitation of God, and

will be so till the day it is taken up to be with the Lord. This is, indeed, a wonderful thing, and shows us what manner of persons we ought to be in all holy conversation. The individual may fail, and the Church of God may fail, and has failed, so as to have become the very seat of Satan (I mean those professing to be the Church now); but that has not altered the truth that wherever we find the true Church, it is the habitation of God. It is not merely that life is there hidden as we get in Colossians, but manifested, as in Ephesians, it is brought out. It is the Holy Ghost in the individual man, though His presence may, perhaps, only be known by a groan. I am not speaking now of how all this has been corrupted and spoiled. That is true also, but so is this other thing with regard to the individual, that Christ is in him and he is in Christ. This is true of the Church, too, if it knows its place. It is more than being the mere dwelling-place of God. We have union with the Head in heaven. Being members individually, we become collectively the body of Christ. Hence the exhortation, “Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God.” Therefore, the Church ought to be as a city set on a hill.

Thus we have got two things. First, God dwelling among us; but secondly, and what specially characterizes the Church, it is one with Christ. But let us follow farther. When we come to the kingdom, we have this union fully accomplished, being in heaven in the body. We go into our Father's house; not only does He dwell in us, but we get associated with Christ, a place in the Father's house. I can say, The Head is in heaven, and He is going to take me there to His own dwelling-place; just as He taught us before He went up, “In my Father's house are many mansions, I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself.” Not only so, but we have boldness to go there now in spirit, and He will come again and receive those whom now He is not ashamed to call brethren, when He comes to display His glory in connection with this world, and the heavenly Jerusalem becomes the dwelling-place of God. As John says, “I saw no temple therein.” Supposing there had been a temple and God dwelling in it as among the Jews, there He was hidden, so that even the high priest could not go in but once a year; and even then none saw Him. Though glory was there, it was a glory which was hid. It was then in darkness except what light the glory itself gave. Here “the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple.” If I may so speak, His own glory is the temple. Therefore, there is no light there; “The Lamb is the light thereof,” or the light-bearer, as the word should be rendered. You get a perfect and blessed picture of this in the transfiguration. We see Peter, James, and John, men on the earth; Moses, Elias, and Christ representing man in glory, and then they enter the Shechinah, which, I have no doubt, was the cloud which overshadowed them, of which they were afraid as they entered. As for Peter, he was so astonished that he did not know what to say, and proposed to build three tabernacles, where each could preside as three oracles; and then comes the excellent glory which overshadows them, and they hear the Father's voice saying, “This is my beloved Son, hear Him.” In this scene we see the three things which shall be in the kingdom. We find here (Rev. 21) that same thing, the heavenly Jerusalem coming down, and we have the purpose of God when all is done. We know that it is the Church for it is called the Bride, the Lamb's wife and only the Church is suited to be thus associated with Christ.

The tabernacle of God is with men; not only He is with them, but there is the tabernacle, the Church, and He dwells in it. Here is the full and blessed result of God dwelling with men, and also the tabernacle; for we have then been taken up and given this heavenly character. It is a great truth that there is even now this dwelling-place of God. It is not only that we have life and are

happy in heaven, but here we are the habitation of God. Let me ask, What is the full fruit of redemption? God dwelling in us. And look at the practical effect of this. “The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost,” and is the only spring of our thought and feelings, so that nothing else can come in. And cannot we understand how holiness ensues? Of course it must, and divine judgment too, as it is said, “Judgment must begin at the house of God;” for nothing that defiles can be in His presence anywhere, and of all places not there where He dwells. Thus holiness is connected with redemption, because it is connected with God's dwelling-place.

You will see how it is founded on redemption. Adam innocent could not get it. He listened to Satan, and ate the forbidden fruit, and so was driven out, and an entirely new thing comes in—redemption. The Son of God came and brought the responsibility of man to its full, final test. They would not have Him. He would not condemn till the iniquity was full; but when they rejected the Son, it was full. They afterward despised the Holy Ghost, but at the cross it was full. Then comes in the truth of redemption, taking man out of that scene of judgment by One glorifying God perfectly. Now that redemption is wrought, the sin is put out of God's sight and deliverance is wrought, which we enter into by faith; and persons who are now brought to God by the power of redemption, are not now as man under responsibility to answer for himself and find he is good for nothing, but through the work of Christ they are brought into the new creation, as it is said, “If any man be in Christ he is a new creation.” (2 Cor. 5:17.) He belongs not to the old creation, (of course his body does; but I am not speaking of that, the man himself does not,) but to the new creation, as it is said, “That we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.” (James 1:18.) The Church of God is that.

We see that God has not done some little good for us, but He has reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ. We have become His dwelling-place, and what do I get as to this holiness which comes in? I am not my own, I am bought with a price. I am sanctified to God, and I must bring the heavenly atmosphere to bear on my ways, habits, and feelings, and grow up unto Him in all things who is the Head, and know more of Christ every day. What a character of holiness belongs to the Christian and to the Church of God! “Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God.” Let me ask you how you treat this guest. I am now speaking reverentially of God's presence. How often do you think of it in the day, that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost? If the queen were to come, and for a time take up her abode with any of us, we should think of nothing else. I am now speaking of the respect which every right person ought to feel towards her. Supposing I were to forget her presence, it would be a shame to we, and the fact of neglecting her would fill me with shame and bitterness. But what of the Holy Ghost who dwells in us? We think not of it half the day. We think of it, if we do all things so as to please the Lord. I am called to walk worthy of this. I must keep the temple pure. We fail, it is true, and then comes in the intercession of Christ. But that is the character that belongs to us. Oh, if our hearts only thought of it, His presence in us is far more blessed than when God dwelt in the temple. Though not so palpable, it is far more real! Do you believe that the Lord Jesus sent down the Comforter to dwell here? Of course, as God, He is everywhere. Do you believe that the Son came down? As God, He was everywhere, and yet He came down; and so with the Holy Ghost. He has come down, and where does He dwell? In our bodies and in the Church of God. And what kind of things ought these to be?

Where is He, this Holy Spirit? Has He gone and left the earth? No, blessed be God, and never will, till Christ comes and takes up the Church, and then the Holy Ghost will be taken up too, though He

will not, even then, cease working. But He is with us even now, and will be till then, unless we say that God has abandoned the earth, which is not true. Where, then, is the sign of His presence, the witness that He is here? There are no such things as miracles now, and I do not expect there will be again, except in the devil's power. But, practically, what are we to look for We are to see how far our hearts in walk, ways, spirit, and manner, are walking on the earth in the power of the Spirit. Only let us see that all these things are the fruit of accomplished redemption. How could we talk so if we were only looking at ourselves But the Holy Ghost comes as the seal and value of Christ's work. He produces fruit after, when He comes witnessing to the efficacy of Christ's work. Just as the priests under the law were first washed with water, next sprinkled with blood, and then anointed with oil. The Spirit comes, not as the seal of the fruits He produces, but as the seal of Christ's work, and then the fruit follows. And this is the way in which we get peace. It is by the Spirit testifying to the efficacy of Christ's work. Being convicted of sin, we flee to Christ and submit to God's righteousness, looking at the value of Christ's blood; and then peace comes, the Holy Ghost being the witness and seal. And then the exhortation applies, “Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed to the day of redemption.” So it was with the children of Israel. It was not said to them, “See the progress you have made; see you have left Succoth; see you have packed up the dough in your troughs;” no, but “See the salvation of God!” That which distinguishes the effect of redemption is the presence of the Holy Ghost. We enjoy that as the fruit of Christ's work. Is that your case? Do you believe that you are redeemed? You speak of Christ as the Redeemer. What has He done for you? Has He left you in Egypt? He has taken you out of it if you are a believer, and He is gone into heaven, there to appear in the presence of God for us. All exercise of heart before we believe is to convince us that we are without strength. And what can we do? If we are really powerless, what can we do but “stand still and see the salvation of God?” Then I can say, I am not in Egypt at all. I have got the journey through the wilderness, and exercises of heart there, and conflict in Canaan when I have left the wilderness, but always with the certainty of being redeemed.

The Lord give us to know that the place we hold on earth by redemption is to be the habitation of God through the Spirit individually, and as the Church of God, and to feel “what manner of persons we ought to be in all holy conversation,” and that “holiness becometh” His “house forever!” God will carry this on till the time of the new heaven and the new earth; and even then He speaks of the tabernacle of God being with men in connection with the place we have got into in Christ. The Lord give us to know by faith now that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Ghost; that we are not our own, but bought with a price!

Chapter 83

# Fragment: God's Love and Christ's Love

Scripture is far more accurate than we think in its language. It is never said that God loved the church, nor that Christ loved the world. Christ's love of' the church is connected with relationship; God's love of the world with His character

Chapter 84

# Fragment: God's Thoughts of the Blood of Christ, Not Ours

We must think not on our thoughts, but on God's thoughts of the blood of Christ. The Israelites were assured that He would see the Lamb's blood.

Chapter 85

# Grace

When we think of grace, we think of our interests in Christ; when we think of glory, we think of our interests with Christ. The first subject is really the deeper, the more personal and affectionate. It takes. us to the heart of the Lord; the second takes us to His circumstances.

And yet, it may be a symptom of weakness, if we too fondly and too exclusively hang over the subject of grace. And it is a symptom of strength and simplicity, if we find ourselves attracted by the thought of glory, and feel ourselves at home in it. Because, if we can, in such a spirit, deal with glory, and ponder it with ease and delight, it shows that our souls have already dealt with grace and are established therein.

These are true notices of the state of the soul, I judge. Still, however, as I said, grace is really a deeper, more wondrous subject than glory.

When the glory is reached, it will be the grace that will be abstracted, and be the animating subject of everlasting songs and recollections. And so even now. The soul that makes glory its theme, without affectionate glances at grace will but weary us; while be who can affectionately triumph in grace, and makes that his theme, unequal perhaps to go beyond it, will still be grateful to the heart. Thoughts of grace may dwell alone in the soul, but thoughts of glory may not.

The strongest, richest, happiest condition is when the soul can use all the arguments, all the incentives, all the attractions which grace and glory alike minister to it. This is Paul's state, characteristically I may say, in 2 Timothy. He urges his dear son to “be strong in the grace,” disclosing some of the riches of it, and also holds out to him “the crown of righteousness.” And this 2 Timothy was Paul's last word, his “swan’s song.”

Those histories in the Old Testament which illustrated grace are more our constant delight than such as exhibit glory, though this, in its measure, will depend on the state of the soul, and in some cases, as I said, may betray our weakness.

One is too disposed to walk in company with the watchful spirit, the self-judging spirit, the spirit which is full of care that a good conscience be kept. But our company should also be the recollection of the boundless grace of God. That should rise and gladden the heart abidingly. Our journey to glory should be taken in the sunshine that the conscious grace of God imparts to the way-faring man.

It is then we honor Him, and answer the expectations of His heart, and the purpose of His plans and counsels. For nothing can He value like His grace. Why does He promise that His eye and His heart shall be the temple perpetually? (See 2 Chron. 7) Is it not because in the temple there was the witness of His grace? The place of angels did not afford His eye that object. And yet angels as creatures were more beautiful, and heaven as a place far more magnificent, than the priests and the temple at Jerusalem. But angels and heaven did not tell Him of His grace in the way that the temple did. And there lay the attraction. That was the secret why His eye and His heart affected

that spot so intently.

The revelation of this grace of God, the style of the revelation of it, is as wonderful and different from all beside, just as is the grace itself.

The love of God disclosed in the gospel is a love which passes knowledge. And yet the story of it is told without glowing expressions to give it effect, or any help, as from language or description, to set it off to the heart.

This is a wondrous thing. Attempts are not made in Scripture to carry the sense of this love to the soul beyond the simple telling of the tale of it. It is told, but told artlessly. This is the style, the general style or method, of the Book of God.

Take one instance of this, from the house of God to which I have already referred. Take Ex. 28, where we get the dress of the servants of that house. These garments of the high priest, who was the mystic Christ, the Son of God serving in the sanctuary, are full of deep and precious mysteries. They express to the intelligence of faith a love that passes knowledge. And yet, throughout the chapter, there is not the slightest effort to produce an impression correspondent with that—none whatever. The dress of Aaron is simply hung up before our eye, without any description to attract attention to it or command the heart.

Is this human? Indeed it is not. This style is as much above man's, as the grace it unfolds.

And this grace in the sanctuary of old was the very way of Christ in the day of His personal ministry. He never used language, if I may so speak. His style had nothing of a glowing, eloquent declaration of His love about it. There was nothing of ardor either in manner or word to enforce on the disciples the conviction of His affection. But there was ample materials for the heart to assure itself of that precious truth. All His way (passed in calmness, and, as far as could be, in silence) was a material which one, who could appreciate it, would have used for the demonstration of a love that thoroughly passed all description. Wondrous method of the God of all grace and all perfections! It is the office, the covenant business of the Holy Ghost, to interpret all this mysterious love. It is for Him to take Jesus and show Him unto us. Christ made no effort to persuade us of His love. That was not His way. The Lord of the old sanctuary, as we have also seen, made no such effort. Each of these passed before the eye of faith calmly, and, as it were, silently, but the Spirit and the renewed mind find ample matter to discover, and to feed upon a love that passes all knowledge.

And happy and profitable it is to have it vividly impressed on the soul, that it is in company with the God of grace we pursue our journey day by day, or take its successive and changeful stages. The 23rd Psalm would witness this. There the saint addresses himself to his journey, not knowing what may betide him, but in the assurance of this, that, be it what it may—want, sorrow, failure in righteousness, or conflict, nay, death-like circumstances and conditions—still God in grace is ever near to supply the strength, the comfort, or the restoration.

We get the same doctrinally, or as taught us by the apostle. Being justified by His death, we shall be saved by His life. (Rom. 5) It is not merely the grace of God at the cross that is to be remembered, but the grace of God in Christ's life in heaven that is to be used and enjoyed every day. The life of Christ in heaven for us measures and accompanies the life of a needy and defiled

saint on earth.

So in Heb. 4. If the two-edged sword make inquiry and disclose the corruption in us, the high priesthood of Jesus is ever at hand to answer for them. As under the law, the ashes of the heifer were laid up in a clean place, outside the camp, for the constant use of the one defiled by the touch of death. The relief was ever at hand, relief provided by grace. Let what judge or accuser may raise his voice to condemn, he is always met by the intercession of Him who is seated at the right hand of God. (Rom. 8) The accuser is heard, comparatively, at a distance, but the Intercessor is seated in the place of dearest intimacy and highest dignity. And thus, in another form, grace displays itself, and accompanies us all along the way.

Here, however, I am drawn aside a little. I have just said that the voice of the accuser or judge is heard, comparatively, at a distance, and not from that place of nearness and dignity from whence the voice of the Intercessor comes. But I do not, when I say this, forget that the accuser of the brethren is in heaven. I know it; but still I say he is at a comparative distance. The vision of the Messiah in 1 Kings 22, the opening scenes in Job, the Lord's word in Luke a. 18, the teaching of the apostle in Eph. 6 and the action in Rev. 12, all tell us that our adversary, our accuser, is in the heavenly places; but those heavens are a lower heavens than the Father's house, or the place of the excellent glory. There is a region to which the prince of the power of the air has title and access now, as of old he had title of access to the garden of Eden; to carry on his accusings there, as once he conducted his temptations in the garden. This region is called heaven, or the heavenly places, where spiritual wickednesses are. (Eph. 6)

This, however, is a lower heaven. This is not the Father's house. This is not the residence of the excellent glory. It may be the seat of power or of government, but it is not the place of the excellent glory.

And I understand this to be the place to which the holy Jerusalem descends, to take her connection with, and government of the millennial earth. (See Rev. 21)

She had, however, descended ere she reached that spot, a witness that she belonged to a higher place, and so she does. She is more properly or personally an inmate of the Father's house, which is in higher regions, for the place of the family is higher than that of the government.

The marriage of the Lamb takes place in the Father's house. (Rev. 19) A marriage is a family action and suits a family dwelling. But when the marriage is celebrated there, the Bride is introduced to the plan of dominion, which is a lower place, because she is seen as descending to it.

Now it is this lower place, this lower place of government, or of connection with the earth, this region occupied by the Lamb's wife in the day of her manifested glory, which constitutes the heaven or the heavenly places of the principalities and powers of darkness in the present time. From that heaven they will be cast down; and then, in due season at last, that place will be occupied by the redeemed and glorified Church, the Lamb's wife, which is to have the government of “the world to come.”

And I may add, the scene eyed by Peter, James, and John, on the holy hill was a scene laid rather in that place of power or of government in the Father's house. And this I say for two reasons. First,

the excellent glory or the place of the Father was separated from that hill (see 2 Peter 1:17); secondly, the place of that scene was within the ken or vision of the earthly people, and so will the place of the holy Jerusalem or the Church in government be, but so will not be the Father's house, or “the excellent glory.”

All this has value for us. It witnesses to us that the family scene is above the courtly scene, that the place of affection is higher than the place of power. But all is grace.

“Join thou, my soul! for thou canst tell

How sovereign grace broke up thy cell,

And burst thy native chains:

And from that dear and happy day

How oft by grace constrained to say

That grace triumphant reigns!”

Grace, like everything of freedom, delights to use its freedom. This we may see in such a scene as that of the eunuch in Acts 8. Grace also delights in displaying the variousness of its ways: this we may see in such a history as that of David. The soul that is established in grace, as another once said, will be found rather reasoning from what God is, than from what we ourselves are. O precious occupation of the heart, to be going over and over again the grace and glory we receive from Him!

Chapter 86

# Grace and Government

As soon as our hearts have personally found Christ connected with the glory of God, there are two things which we are called to enter into and distinguish. The first is the place of grace in which we stand as the children of God; in other words, the Church's or Christ's position. The second is the government of God. This last unfolds itself in various ways. There is the millennial time, when a “Prince shall reign in righteousness;” and it shall be said of the Lord, “Thou past taken to thee thy great power.” Then shall “the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord.” All this blessing will be the effect of the government of God.

In another sense, God is always governing in providence now. “The hairs of your head are all numbered.” But do we not see a righteous person often put into the greatest trouble? This is not the normal effect of God's government. In the millennial time there will be the proper natural results of the Lord reigning. In another sense, for us now, “the Father judgeth every man's work.” He has, no doubt, committed all judgment to the Son; but yet the Father chasteneth His children. (Heb. 12) Christ says, “If any man will servo me, him will my Father honor.” “He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father,” &c. This refers to the consequences of the child's conduct. It is the Father's government of His children; it is the Father's care watching over His children for their good, and is not like the government of the world in providence. God is dealing with the wicked now in grace.

I have said this of the children's position with the Father, that we may more undistractedly look to the Christian's position. The position of the Church shows the fullness of God's grace. If I am one with Christ, there is no question of being accepted. If I am one with the Judge, I cannot look forward to the judgment with the thought of being condemned. Now it is certain that the Church is the body of Christ, “the fullness of him that filleth all in all.” “We are members of his body,” &c. You must see the amazing bearing and import of this truth—one with Christ, to realize the privileges it brings us into. It carries us into a place unlike any other, as to acceptance, righteousness, &c. When once we have this divine teaching in our souls, all is simple. It becomes a matter of faith, and this produces a consciousness of relationship. If it is merely objective truth, it is of no value to me. I must be in it to know it and use it; and so with all these truths, you must be in them. You find the very prayers of a man betray where he is. A man cannot say “Father” in his soul, if he has not the consciousness of relationship. We cannot and ought not to have the enjoyment and feelings and affections belonging to it, if we have not it. The moment, through the teaching of God, I have got into it, all is mine; not merely knowledge, but all peaceful and holy affections flow.

So with the Church of God. We shall never enter into it, if not on the ground of grace. I cannot suppose too much and too great blessings when I see them flowing from God Himself. If from ourselves, what could you or I expect? I should be ashamed to think of anything I can have if I bring myself in; but if I bring Christ in, oh, then I see nothing too much for Him.

In every possible way God had put man to the test; and now all is done with, as to myself (not as to the Father's government), and God is dealing in the way of grace.

In Scripture we have the fullest, and most detailed history of all that cur hearts are, the history of Israel, &c. All was the proving of sin, but now it is the putting away of sin. Righteousness was not yet declared when God was proving man. It was not accomplished. Where was righteousness to be found before? Never, till Christ sat down on the throne of God. Innocency there had been—grace there had been, for He was spit upon &c., but righteousness there was not. It was prophesied of, promised, but not one righteous could be found. All that the trial of man resulted in was that, weighed in the balance, he was found wanting.

See Jacob's sons, law given, and the calf made before Moses came down from the Mount. See priest, prophet, king. All flesh was grass. At last God's Son came, and then they said, “Here is the heir, come let us kill him.” The end of that was, “now is the judgment of this world.” It is not executed yet, of course, but the consequence of this is that the righteous One has sat down above. It is all over with the world. They see Him no more, except when He comes in the glory of His power. Christ the new man is accepted, according to His prayer “glorify thou me.” “I have glorified thee on the earth,” and He was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father. There is our righteousness: all God's ways having found man a sinner, even to the putting Christ to death, the righteousness of God is now declared—it is “unto all, and upon all them that believe.” Man has come short; man is set aside, root and branch, irreclaimable; but there is another man. Thus it is all grace from beginning to end. He is the source of the life and accomplisher of righteousness, and He has taken His place on the throne of God, and that is the foundation of the Church of God. So that now it is not merely the fact that a person who believes is saved, but he is one with the Head in heaven. This is the immense privilege of our position, and now is sent down that other Comforter to dwell in us and to abide with us forever. We are one spirit with the Lord. The Spirit unites us to Him, the Head, and we are one with another also—one body. Here I get the leading truth of what the Church really is” raised up together and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ.” In this epistle there is nothing said of men living in sin, as in other places; but it speaks of being “dead in trespasses and sins,” before this movement in the soul by God. God comes and finds the soul dead in sin, and He quickens it together with Christ. It is the whole power and working of the grace of God. We must get at the source, the perfect grace of God, before we can see where the Church is set. We must be brought to that. Flesh can have no part. “They that are in the flesh cannot please God.” “We are not in the flesh but in the Spirit.” We have conflict with it indeed, but we are not in it; and now “henceforth know we no man after the flesh,” &c. The place of Christ at God's right hand is our place. Workings within to the humbling of the soul must go on till we come to this: no good thing is in us: “dead in trespasses and sins.” Then, as of Israel, it can be said, “What hath God wrought?” Where and how am I to learn it? When I was dead, without any movement, Christ comes down. Not only is He come, but “made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” He has come down: now what are we to expect? According to what God is: let us not reason from what we are of ourselves. “If God is for us, who can be against us?” If God “spared not his own Son,” &c. We may reason from what He has done to what He will do; and if I say, How can He save me from my sins? I say He must, when He has done that—given His Son, and raised Him from the dead. Set down at God's right hand is the key, as well as the ground of the Church's place. What has God done all this for? For my sins. He was dead: He died for my sins; but why does He go up again? He is righteous, and has taken His place in heaven. The one righteous One was rejected on earth, and the one righteous One is taken to heaven. God was not ruling in righteousness on earth, and it would have been no adequate testimony to Him,

the only righteous man, for Him to have taken the righteous rule on earth then; but He would give Him a place in heaven, far above “principalities and powers,” &c.

It is an accomplished righteousness, and therefore a preached righteousness. Because He was accepted, He could send down the Holy Ghost, which we received after He went up. He had been sealed Himself as the righteous One down here; but now the Holy Ghost comes down and seals us, because we “are made the righteousness of God in him.”

Two things we have in consequence of this—the Spirit of adoption in our hearts, and union with Christ. We are not only blessed by Christ, but we are raised up together with and made to sit together in Him in heavenly places. All this is to show we have it with Christ. Thus we are more than children of the Father, we are members of Christ. The Spirit was sent down to unite all the members in one body to the Head. If I am in the Spirit and not in the flesh, and you are in the Spirit and not in the flesh, how many Spirits are there? One. It is one Spirit in you and in me. One Holy Ghost has been sent down, uniting the members to the Head in heaven. There is not only life, that was given to Adam, but the Holy Ghost is sent down to gather together in one body. The other form of our relationship to Christ is the Bride, united thus with Him in all He is and has. Is He righteous? so am I. Has He life? so have I. I cannot think of having any life, any righteousness, any glory, but what Christ has. What a place this gives us! We were dead but now are put into the same place with Christ. “As he is, so are we in this world.” This gives boldness in the day of judgment. In the earthen vessel surely we are, but “as he is, so are we” — “bone of my bone.” There is an allusion in Eph. 5 to Gen. 2—We have entire association with Christ; not only as a man cherishes his own flesh does Christ care for us.

Eve was not lord in the garden of Eden, but Adam was. She was not the inheritance. What was she then? A helpmeet, dependent on him, taken out of him, enjoying what her husband bad as her portion. So is the Church with Christ. The title is in Him, but it is His delight to confer it on her. He has more delight in her having it than Himself. Not only then is the Church safe—of course that—but who will be the Judge? Christ. How does He judge? According to the righteousness He has given me. I get before the judgment-seat by being glorified. What does the apostle say: “Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord” —does he speak of himself? No!— “we persuade men.” If I see the terror of the Lord, I shall persuade others to take care and not despise the gospel. The glory of that day is the means of our present manifestation before God.

How entirely different our thoughts when we see this our portion! There, in Him, is in principle what the Church is—righteousness accepted, and not that we have accepted it, but God has accepted it, and then the Holy Ghost has been sent down. The Bride is not yet complete. There are souls yet to be gathered in, while His long-suffering continues (when complete we shall be no longer here). There is another aspect of the Church: “Builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” This is the earthly character (Eph. 2); and however man may have spoiled it all, it does not alter the fact on God's part. God has a dwelling in His Church. In paradise on earth God did not dwell. God was in heaven and man upon earth. Adam could not say, “How amiable are thy tabernacles,” &c.; but directly God works in grace, He brings man into His house. Man is to dwell with God, God will dwell with man. (Ex. 15:17; 29:45.) God has given us a “promise of entering into his rest.” God has a rest in grace. The fruit of grace is that He is going to bring us into this. If I can fathom God's heart, I can fathom grace. There is something in the blessed God we never can

measure. Jesus is the measure. He has come down here, and He is gone into that blessed dwelling-place of God: therefore He says, “Let not your heart be troubled. I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am,” &c. There is a man gone before into the place where He will have us with Him. God cannot rest here, for He cannot rest where all is not according to His mind and heart; but there all will be according to Himself.

(Ex. 29 and afterward Solomon's temple, but see Acts 7:48.) God had a house till they sinned it away; but now God would have a house—the Church, the habitation of God through the Spirit.

Man having been placed in responsibility and in all failed, God now brings in all the blessedness of what He has done, by His own power. Is He glorified in His saints? He will be admired in all them that believe. Is the Church now what it was at first, when “great grace was upon them all?” If you get half-a-dozen people together really in the Spirit, it is a triumph of grace—great occasion for thankfulness. It may indeed be said, Where is the beautiful flock? But God will have it. Down here, in its earthly character there is failure, but in the body there is no failure, it is not yet complete, for when the Church is gathered, the long-suffering will be over. Therefore we know it is not all gathered; but the Church at Jerusalem at the beginning was as much a habitation of God as when complete. There was no Achan in the camp then. Now “false brethren have crept in unawares” (Jude), and these are specially the objects of the judgment of God. But all this does not alter the character of the habitation of God.

Eph. 4 gives administration of grace, in the gifts bestowed for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith, the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. The apostles and prophets are the foundation, and then all that is needed is given. We may see weakness now, but there is nourishment in Christ the Head, and that cannot fail.

In 1 Cor. 12:13, is one body, not merely having life; but “we are all baptized into one body,” Jew and Gentile. Then he puts the whole train of gifts for the display of power. The apostles and prophets are carefully shown in Eph. 2; 3:4, to be the foundation; evangelists, pastors, doctors are to continue till the body is perfect. Whatever may be withheld in a time of ruin, the Lord gives not what would take His people out of it, but fully and perfectly what they want in it.

Now, having seen the privileges of our position, we must remember the obligation never ceases to be what Christ has set us to be—to walk in holiness. The presence of the Holy Ghost never ceases to be the Comforter who abideth forever. The power s never absent. How is it then there is such weakness? “Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God,” &c. “If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.” If my eye is not single, I cannot tell what to do or how to do it. The power is according to the will and holiness of God. The comfort is when God's thoughts supplant ours.

There is something strange in the want of confidence in divine love amongst saints—no consciousness of relationship. In the midst of failure, which one must and ought to feel, there is the Father's love. Has not God said He would go with the people, because they are a stiff-necked people.

I am in a place of relationship with God, and that nothing touches. The superstitions, &c., of men all around cannot touch us, if one has a sense of God's love. But what of the forgiveness of sins, &c.? Why I know I had it twenty years ago. The atonement? Why that is the ground of it. “He that is born of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.”

Every one now who has faith in Christ is a member of the body of Christ. Love then naturally flows to all.

Chapter 87

# Fragment: Grieve Not the Holy Spirit of God

“Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God.” when we taste the sweetness of such communion, how careful should we be! A few minutes', yea, but one minute's, allowance of vanity, worldliness, &c., how it will incapacitate for such enjoyment!

Chapter 88

# The Guileless Israelite

After, the Spirit in the evangelist had introduced the blessed Son of God in a series of glories that are His, either in person or in office, causing Him to pass before us as He is in the Godhead, as He was before the world began, at creation, in patriarchal days, in the ministry of the Baptist, and in His own ministry, and then noticing the world, and the Jews, and the elect, in their several relations to Him (John 1:1-13), the Church seems suddenly (as moved by all that she had been listening to) to utter her faith respecting Him. (See chap. 1:14)

The confession she makes is very simple—that she had apprehended in the Son of God a peculiar order of glory, “the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father;” and according to that, she proclaims, that being made flesh, He had been in the midst of us, full of grace and truth.

This is the Church's or the saints' confession to Him. She had listened to a rich rehearsal of Him glories, and was in spirit ravished, but opening her lips, it is of His grace, the glory of the Son of the Father, she speaks. Something like this is in Rev. 1. The glories of Jesus are rehearsed there it the hearing of the saints, His worth and excellency “Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first-begotten of the dead; the Prince of the kings of the earth.” And then again the voice of the Church breaks in with the celebration of the praise of His grace' Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood.... be glory and dominion forever.”

Such interruptions evince the deep attention which the soul had been paying to this revelation of the glories of Christ, and in that character they finely admonish our souls, and warn us against listlessness when Jesus is the theme.

This, however, is not the only value of verse 14. It is, in a great sense, the key to the whole of the Lord's public ministry in St. John's Gospel, i.e., From chapters 1 to 9. For it may be easily perceived that the great business of the Lord through those chapters is to beget in us such an apprehension of Him as suits sinners; so that if He be approached as a Teacher, or a King, or a Doer of miracles, or a Judge, He refuses the approach, and lets all know that they are welcome to Him only when they come as sinners to a Savior, or (in the language of this verse) when they discern in Him the glory of the Only-begotten of the Father, seeing in Him a fullness of grace and truth.

This might be shown from all the cases recorded in those precious chapters. But I am looking specially now only at Nathanael.

In the ardor and generosity of a new-found heavenly joy, the earliest disciples are for telling out the news and bringing others to share the presence of Jesus with them. In this way Nathanael is brought into the scene. “Philip findeth Nathanael and saith to him, We have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” Philip had already shared the joy with Andrew, and Peter, and others, and he now delights to communicate it to Nathanael.

But the work had been already begun, the journey had already been entered upon, in the person of Nathanael. Philip's word rather found his soul in a quickened condition than produced any such thing. His answer— “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” —is not the language of popular prejudice, though such words may have been, I doubt not, common on the lips of scorners; but it is the language of a soul just emerging from a spot where deep searchings had led to some humbling and disturbed experiences in the heart and conscience.

The Spirit of Christ had sent Nathanael to the fig tree ere the voice of Philip had called him. And there, in that solitude, he had been convicted of sin. He had been there in the temper of Israel when the families shall be apart, and their wives apart, under the Spirit of grace and supplication: or in company with those who in the day of repentance shall mourn, tabering like doves on their breasts. (Zech. 12; Nah. 2) By confessing, he had been acquiring (in the divine reckoning) the character of a guileless Israelite. (Psa. 32:2.) And moving forth from his solitude in such a mind, meet who he may, he could not forget himself. Little disposed must such a soul have been to join in the language of the scorner, or to esteem any other (Nazarene or Galilean, or even heathen man or publican) worse than himself; but he might well be prepared to listen to anything, however strange, even such tidings as that the chief good, the good of all good, was to be found in Nazareth. For all things were now becoming new to him. He went therefore at once, at the bidding of Philip. He would walk to Nazareth, for a convicted soul can call nothing common or unclean, but itself. If Nazareth be vile, Nathanael in Nathanael's thoughts is viler still. Anything or any place may be good enough for him. He rises at once to “day and eat,” to have fellowship even with Galilee. Precious is such workmanship of the Spirit of God! precious such experience of the soul—conviction and confession apart even from wife and children, under the operation of the Spirit of grace and supplication! precious in Christ's esteem. It is perhaps the first, but it is a sure, stop onward to Him, begun in His own Spirit. The Spirit had sent Nathanael under the fig tree, as He afterward sent Zacchaeus up the sycamore. This readiness of Nathanael to go to Nazareth is very beautiful and very significant of the state of his soul. Jesus knows him as thoroughly as He knew the rich man of Jericho. He had been in spirit with him under the fig tree, as He had been in spirit with Zacchaeus along the road, through the crowd, and up the sycamore.

Therefore He at once salutes Nathanael on the ground of the divine estimation of him. “Behold an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile.” As He salutes Gideon in his day— “The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor.” In God's esteem, the poor threshing man of Manasseh was a mighty man of valor, for He had so purposed it. And so, in the reckoning of the mind of Christ, Nathanael was a guileless Israelite: in a divine way he had been acquiring that name under the fig tree; and in that name the Son of God knows him.

Nathanael recognizes himself in the words of the Lord. And does not this tell us the consciousness which accompanies or marks a genuine spirit of repentance or conviction? How can a soul that is indeed unburdening itself in the fear of God be guileful? Does not its very relief depend on the entireness and truthfulness of its confessions? Would it be what it is if there were any practicing or concealing “I said I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord,” is the word of guileless confession.

This was nothing peculiar to Nathanael. It was nothing characteristic of him. It was the necessary common attribute of a true spirit of repentance or conviction. There is “no guile” there. And the fig

tree having been the place of this Israelite's confession, the Spirit of Christ knows him as a guileless one; and his own spirit, without wrong, recognizes such a thing. The Spirit cannot but bear witness with his spirit that this is so. Scripture tells us this (Psa. 32), Jesus verifies it, and the soul of an elect one, under the operation of the Spirit of grace, experiences it. But who is in the secret of the soul? The wives are apart while this is going on. (Zech. 12:12.) The dearest intimacies of the heart do not understand it; nor is it a season for using their confidence.

The “sorrow lies too deep for human sympathy.” God is thought of by the soul under such an exercise; and therefore as Jesus shows himself in the secret of it, saying, “Before that Philip called thee, whiles thou wert under the fig tree, I saw thee,” Nathanael at once stands in the discovery of the glory (like Jacob, or Joshua, or Gideon of old), “Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel.”

Beautiful process for the discovery of Jesus! Learning Jesus as the One that is in the full secret of our guilt and misery, and yet that He stands near us, not to make us afraid, or to lay His hand heavily upon us. Such an one was Jesus to Nathanael. Such an one was He to the Samaritan also. It was such a discovery that she made of Him. He had told her all things that ever she had done. Be had manifested in full light the crimson color of her sin, and yet He was so near and so gracious that His presence was heaven to her! “Is not this the Christ?” she could not but say. “Rabbi, thou art the Son of God,” Nathanael could not but say. This was a real work; simple as well could be, but real. It was conducted by the Spirit in the conscience. Sin was discovered, and the Son of God was discovered in peaceful connection with the discovery of sin. It was the lesson of the brazen serpent. The bite of the fiery enemy was felt, but in the very place and moment of all that conscious mischief, the Son of God was present with healing. Nathanael joins in the utterance of verse 14. The glory had been at his side, as near to him as it was to Moses at the bush, or to Joshua under the walls of Jericho; but Nathanael had beheld it in its true character, “the glory of the only-begotten of the Father.” The Word made flesh had been with him, full of grace and truth; this he knew and believed and owned; and he has only to find that such a spot as that was within a step of the glory. “Because I said, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these.” “Hereafter [henceforth] ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of man.”

What a short journey to glory! Two stages simply and rapidly made! The spirit of conviction separates him from all but God and his conscience under the fig tree; and then the spirit of faith discovers Jesus, the Son of God, in the grace that can talk with him, while knowing him in all his guilt and misery as a sinner.

“Whom he justified, them be also glorified.” The fig tree flourishes just outside heaven, such a fig tree as Nathanael visited. It was the breath of heaven that nourished it; it was the Spirit of God that separated Nathanael to that sanctuary; and the Spirit of God can lead at once to the glory of God.

Chapter 89

# Fragment: Harmonies of the Gospels

I object totally to all harmonies of the gospels, as such; because they are the confusion of accounts which are each written with a distinct divine object. The facts are put together by the Holy Ghost with an evident purpose, each gospel presenting both Christ and the ways of God in a different light. To throw them all together is to destroy this purpose, and obscure the intelligence of the gospels.

Chapter 90

# Fragment: Having Upon the Heart the Sufferings of the Church

If I have upon my heart the sufferings of the church, little or much, I suffer with Christ. It is a little “filling up of the sufferings of Christ.” oh may we lay it to heart and bear as much of the burden as ever we can, and go on with him through the ups and downs of the present time! His heart continues with us; may ours continue with him. When the disciples should have watched with him, they slept; and when they were awake, they ran away. He would give it to us to remain with him abidingly and he has given it us.

Chapter 91

# On Hebrews 11:1-6

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

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

There is another character of sin brought out here. It is not rebellion against a law, as in Adam. There was the absence of faith in Cain: while it is said of Abel, “by faith be offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.” What substance have you of things hoped for? This question does not disturb one who has real faith. I do not ask if you live up to these things—that is another question; but have you faith? The Jews had killed the Holy One and the Just; but they believed that He was the Holy and the Just One, for if they had not, they would have said, when they were charged with having killed Him, Oh, He was not the Holy and the Just One at all; but their very confession of “what shall we do?” proves that they did not deny His being so, and it made them fear. They were not what they should be, but they were pricked to the heart; and the effect of it is they cry out, “What shall we do to be saved?”

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

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

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

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

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

Cain went out from the presence of God, and what does he then? He builds a city: and what next? You cannot have a city without having something to amuse. Then comes Tubal-Cain with the arts and sciences, and Jubal with pleasant sounds— “he was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ.” There was no harm in the music, &c., itself; but why did they want it? What was the source of it? What use did they make of it? It was to make them content in being away from God. Is not this “harm” enough? Adam, after he sinned and heard God's voice, hid himself among the trees in the garden: there was no harm in the trees, but there was harm in his hiding himself. There is harm in man's trying to make himself comfortable away from God. The prodigal went and joined himself to the citizens of the far country; but when he was in want, no man gave to him. There is none to give him where the devil reigns. Man never can satisfy himself in that country. Bring God in; and what is the result? It gives the consciousness of the truth. It makes him feel and say, “I am perishing with hunger.” This is the first effect of faith coming in. Mark, too, the next consequence. How thoroughly he would hate all those things which governed and attracted his heart before! There is nothing a soul will detest so much as the very things he loved most before. When a soul comes to God, he finds out what it is to have left God—that he might do according to a will that is utterly corrupt—his own will. This is the effect of such a discovery. He thinks of the contrast and of his father's house: “How many hired servants of my father's,” &c. The sense of the contrast comes in when God is made known. Then comes the sense of sin—I am this wicked person. There is not only wickedness, but it is I that am this wicked thing; and then the discovery of ourselves, just as we are, would be more than we could bear; we need the revelation of God's grace. We could not bear to see all otherwise. There was One and only One who could. The conviction of sin comes into the soul in the sight of the blessedness of Him who is without sin.

Let us look a little at these religious characters brought before us. Cain and Abel were both alike as to outward character and circumstance. They were both under the sentence of banishment from the presence of God. They both had employment, and both seemed to have been outwardly decent characters. They both came to worship, too, and Cain brought that which cost him most, that for which he had worked. God had sent him forth to till the ground, and he tilled it; that was all right, and it was right for him to bring an offering. The difference between them was not in all that. In outward character, too, Cain was just like Abel; nothing came out amiss until he killed his brother. What was the mistake in Cain? There was no sense upon his heart that he was driven out of Paradise because he deserved it: he might not have known that he was driven out even, for he thought he had nothing to do but to go to God, as if it was all right with Him. This is just what men are doing now. They are driven from God's presence in favor, going on with their occupations,

tilling the ground and the like, and, when the time comes round, thinking to come and worship! What would a father feel about his child who had been disobedient to him one day, and coming the next, just as if nothing had happened, expecting to be received as though all was right between him and his father? This is just what men are doing with God, But, dear friends, you are out of Paradise, and can you think to come and worship God as if nothing had happened? Are you expecting to get into heaven just the same as (not one whit better than) Adam was when he got out of Paradise? If you got into heaven, you would spoil it; but the truth is, you are making your own heaven down here.

Abel was not a bit better than Cain as to his position and nature; but there is one great difference he owns it all, and obtained testimony that he was righteous. “By faith he offered to God a more excellent sacrifice,” &c. It might have been said he was not so right as Cain in a natural sense, as to his calling, for God had not set men to keep sheep, and he had to till the ground; but he brought a sacrifice from the flock, a bloody sacrifice. He had a sense of being out of Paradise; but, more than that, he had a sense of being an outcast for sin. He felt he was a sinner. He had a sense of having broken with God and God with him, and he knew Him to be of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. He owned that God had not done wrong in turning man out, and that it would be wrong to let him in. He owned that death hung over him as his proper desert.

It is God's sentence upon me, and my ruin is my desert. These things had such a reality to his soul that he would have known it would have been presumption for him to go to God as though nothing had happened. Then he had something more still; for he had learned, through the grace of God, that there was something needed between him and God, and that this something was there. Sacrifice was the only way. See the other side of this blessed truth. Not only he could not go without a sacrifice, but, beyond this, it was there: and we know who this is—the Son of God. God says, I cannot look at sin; but there is one thing I can look at—an offering about sin, and that is my Son as a sin-offering. Faith apprehends this, and there was no thought of coming in any other way. “There will I meet with thee,” God said to Moses. And what did he put at the door of the tabernacle? The altar of burnt-offering, the sacrifice for sin, God had there; and faith rests on this as the only possible way of approach. There was no climbing up some other way. There is but this one door by which to enter, and it is through that sacrifice, by which the holiness of God is fully maintained, as well as His love manifested, in the highest way. I want to see my sin put away in His sight, just as I see it brought out first in His sight; and here is the perfect sin-offering, and there is no place where this wonderful question of good and evil has been judged as at the cross of Christ. The sacrifice is fully accepted. He has borne all the wrath and put it away. Hear Him saying, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” There was perfect obedience and perfect love. He was a perfect sin-offering—and there He is now at the right hand of the Father. “Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.” His offering for sin has forever settled the question of sin. He has made peace about my sin and for my sin; and has He done it in part? Would that be like God? No; it was complete. “When He had by himself purged our sins, he sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high.” When I see that, I cannot go to God as Cain, just as I am; and yet I must go to Him if I am to have happiness or blessing. But I also see that God has provided Himself with a burnt-offering. It is taken out of our hands as it were: it is God's own perfect work; it is His settling of sin, and I can rest in the result of what He has offered. This is faith. Now we go to God by Him. This is, as it were, offering Christ. God gives me the resting-place; and

the convinced sinner cannot come to Christ without finding all his sin put away forever. The sacrifice of the burnt offering is there, and the moment I am there I come with the sacrifice, and can be happy in His presence, though with a perfect knowledge of His holiness.

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

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

Chapter 92

# Scripture Query and Answer: A Heretic

Q. What is the meaning of Titus 3:10, “A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject; knowing that he that is such is subverted and sinneth, being condemned of himself.” Does this refer to the holder of Wicked doctrine as to Christ or foundation-truth? Or does it mean a person who goes out and tries to make a sect or party for his own opinions? Some seem to shrink from the last, as if it were over-severe and would condemn men otherwise estimable. B. A.

A. There is no doubt whatever that the apostle means, not a holder of blasphemous doctrines, (which is the point in John's Epistles.) but one who endeavors to make a party. If any Christians, pretending to spiritual intelligence, count this a light sin, they are themselves to be pitied, warned, and prayed for. What is self-will but sin against God? and what self-will in one professing to love Christ is worse than despising the Church of God, by essaying to form a church of his own on views of his own? All saints are ignorant, more or less; and the Church of God contemplates them all, save in case of excision for wickedness in doctrine or practice, which all are responsible to judge. To go out and set up a party for particular views, even if true in themselves, apart from the assembly of God on earth, is rebellion against God, and that in what is nearest to God save His own Son. To make light of the sin, or sympathize with it, is to trifle with God and His Church, and expose oneself to the same, however confident one may be in strength or wisdom to keep out of it. It is meanwhile sparing oneself and one's friends at the expense of God's Word, which it is evil unbelief to count over severe. Some think a far worse class, even blasphemers of Christ, “otherwise estimable.” Let such beware.

Chapter 93

# Scripture Query and Answer: Distinction Between High Priest and Advocate

Q. How do you distinguish the office of High Priest and Advocate, especially as reference is made to sin? “If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father.”

In what sense can we be said to act in our priestly character towards each other? We cannot say we are priests to each other; but may we not be for each other before God?

In the type of the heifer, the clean person was to sprinkle the unclean: is this, spiritually, a priestly act?

4. Practically, we are not always in priestly condition of soul. May not, then, a spiritual believer draw near to God on behalf of one who practically cannot, without allowing the thought of any one coming between the soul and God?

F.

A. The main difference between Hebrews and John 2:1, is that Hebrews refers to our drawing near to God, and includes the whole analogy of the priestly service, even including the sacrifice. Christ stands between us and God to this effect, and for the whole means of obtaining mercy and grace to help. The Advocate is with the Father and supposes a believer and a son, and is for the maintenance in practice of this relationship, i.e., our life in it, and in point of fact refers only to the case of one who has sinned being in that relationship, one who has the privilege of fellowship. It refers to fellowship with the Father, not approach to God. I do not say the advocacy is confined to this case of sins. It is stated as a general fact, but it is only applied to this case.

We are and ought to be priests for each other before God, intercede for each other, wash one another's feet, bear the failures of our brethren on our heart in intercession.

The sprinkling is not in itself, however, properly a priestly act: if my conscience is pure before God, I may apply the word according to the holy power of Christ's sacrifice to the heart and conscience of another.

4. The last question is answered already. We could not be priests at all, if we would not do this. But no one can doubt, if he loves another, he can intercede for him—in Christ's name and in virtue of His sacrifice, but still plead and intercede for him.

Chapter 94

# Scripture Query and Answer: Forms of Baptism

3

Q. In what respect does the form of baptism, in Matt. 28:19, differ from the fact given in Acts 2:38? T.

A. Our Lord, in the Gospel of Matthew, gives the formula according to which a. disciple is to be baptized unto His death; and this in contrast with the Jewish confession of one God, even Jehovah. In Acts 2 it is said by Peter to be “upon the name of Jesus Christ.” So, in Acts 8:16, the Samaritan professors are said to have been baptized “unto the name of the Lord Jesus,” as Cornelius and his household were “in his name.” These are ways of describing baptism suitably to the Acts of the Apostles, where the Lordship of Jesus is one of the main objects. But there is no ground to doubt that Christian baptism was always formally “unto the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” To omit or change that which the Lord enjoined so solemnly in resurrection, is a bolder act than becomes a Christian. This, certainly, ought never to be left out, however right it may be to testify to His Lordship also.

Chapter 95

# Fragment: How We Should Act

When we give up the world, we despise it, but if we go on following Jesus, the world despises us, and then comes the trial. Paul, however, could say, “Even to this present hour we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and have no certain dwelling-place.”

Chapter 96

# Immanuel

Isa. 7-9:7

IT may be profitable for our souls to meditate for awhile on this beautiful strain of the Prophet Isaiah, which we have called Immanuel." Blessed it is to have an "ear to hear" and a "heart to understand" our God, as He unfolds to us His counsel and faithfulness and purposes in the word of Prophecy, addressing us as His friends in showing us "things to come." "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 to you."

We must take a backward glance at the elect nation of Israel, to ascertain for ourselves, from the historic writings, the circumstances and the condition of the people here addressed by the Lord through His prophet. Ever faithful in the midst of their unfaithfulness, He had established this link between Himself and the people, whereby He might reach their consciences, on the occasion of the failure of the priesthood, as we find by 1 Sam. 1-3. In 2 Sam. 7 we find the Lord attaching certain promises to the house of David, the king of His own choice, after He had given him rest round about from His enemies; well calculated to draw forth his heart in worship to the Lord as he pours forth those beauteous words in 2 Sam. 7:18-29, and well calculated to cheer the hearts, and strengthen the faith of those of the nation whose hearts were resting in Him.

But when we open the Book of the Prophet in which he prophesied, (2 Kings 15-20 Chronicles Isaiah, and also the historic Scriptures of the periods 26-32.,) and glance backward at the career of that royal house, we find a sad, dark tale of evil, brightened truly, here and there, by a bright spot, as now and again a faithful one sat upon David's throne, and tried for a time to stem the torrent of evil, which bid fair to overwhelm the nation in its tide, alas! to return with redoubled energy as the faithful one was gathered to his fathers, until we come down to the days of Ahaz, who represents the royal house at the time of our prophecy. Sad indeed had been the story of this representative—sad had been his career step by step, till at last he set up the altar of a strange God, and shut up the doors of the house of the Lord and put out the lamps. During his unhappy reign the Lord, ever faithful, addresses, by His prophet, "the house of David," to whom the promises had been made, and in whom they would be fulfilled.

The prophet brings before us in chapter 7:1 the circumstances in which the message finds him—Syria and Ephraim in league against Jerusalem. Little confidence had he in the word of the Lord. The prophet and the symbolic child Shearjashub (the remnant shall return) meets Ahaz with this message from the Lord, well calculated to assure a faithful heart, and draw it out in grateful praise. Terrible as had been the failure, Jehovah was ready to meet the heart that would respond to His faithfulness, and trust in Him. "Take heed and be quiet, fear not, neither be fainthearted, for the two tails of these smoking firebrands, for the fierce anger of Rezin with Syria and the Son of Remaliah Thus saith the Lord, it shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass. For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin; and within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken, that it be not a people. And the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of

Samaria is Remaliah's son. If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established." He looked for some response from the heart before Him, some feeble "Amen" to His faithful word, a little link of faith, to permit Him, so to say, to bring to pass all He had promised; but no response was there. Again, He would try this faithless one. (Ver. 10,11) The Lord Himself would propose to him to ask a sign: no matter how great, either in the height or in the depth. Faith would not ask a sign, requiring it not; faith walks alone with God. But still poor flesh would seek a sign, for flesh cannot walk except by sight and sense. And the Lord proposes to Ahaz to ask a sign. But no! Ahaz would not do this. His heart is too far from God to recognize His faithful word. He would not "tempt the Lord." Ah! how pious the flesh can seem to be sometimes! and yet that same word is ever true, "the carnal mind is enmity against God" even in its fairest forms. Well, said the Lord, you will not ask a sign of me, so I will give you a sign unasked. "The Lord himself shall give you a sign." "Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know how to refuse the evil and choose the good." And before the child (Shearjashub) should know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land the king abhorred should be forsaken of both these confederate kings. But the Lord would bring upon that faithless house days that had not come since the day that the house of Israel, the ten tribes, had revolted from His father's house. The days would come when the Lord would stretch forth His hand with the rod of His anger, the Assyrian. He would shave the head and the hair of the feet, and the land of his delight would be so bereft of its people, that the feeble remnant that would be left would eat butter and honey to the full in the land.

But still no response came from the king to the Lord Jehovah. "How often," said He, in the day of His humiliation afterward, as He wept over the beloved city, whose day had then gone past, "How often would I have gathered thee and ye would not." They would not believe, and He could not therefore establish them. But the Lord God of their fathers had not yet pronounced the solemn sentence. "There was no remedy." He would not yet stay His hand, "because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling-place, although they had despised His words." And again He gives another sign, another symbolic child, whose name was Mabershalalhashhaz. (In making speed to the spoil he hasteneth the prey.) Ere this child should have knowledge to cry, My father and my mother, the riders and spoils of these two fierce firebrands, Syria and Ephraim, should be taken away before the King of Assyria. But they refused the soft-flowing waters of Shiloah, those promises to the house of David given to cheer the heart of the faithful one till Shiloh would come; and they rejoiced in an arm of flesh, in Rezin and Remaliah's son. So the Lord Jehovah Himself would interfere, and instead of the refreshing streams of Shiloah, He would bring upon them the fierce torrent, which would reach to the neck, overflowing his channels and his banks—the King of Assyria and all his glory. He would pass through Judah, and the stretching out of his wings would "fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel."

But now the Spirit takes the occasion before Him to bring in the whole history of the nation, going onwards till the last days, including the rejection of Jesus, the Lord of hosts Himself, and the place it put that feeble remnant in who trusted in Him, and those who believe on Him. The people would associate themselves in vain, and the nations who would be gathered together then; but they would be broken in pieces and come to naught; their counsels would fail, and the word would "not stand because of Immanuel." (Verse 10.) He was there.

But when that day would come, what would the feeble remnant do, those who had “trembled at his word” while trusting in Him, sorely broken, what would they do? With gracious care He would tell them what to do, and teach them to stay themselves upon their God, to walk not in the way of the apostates, to fear not their fear nor be afraid, but to sanctify the Lord of Hosts Himself and to fear Him. How beautifully analogous are the words of Jesus in Luke 12! How the New Testament flashes back its light upon the Old Testament, and the Old reflects the brightness back again upon the New! “Be not afraid,” He says, “of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him which, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you fear him.” And again afterward, when that remnant, absorbed into the Church of God, are taught, as strangers and pilgrims, to look no longer for an earthly deliverance, but for an heavenly reward, “even the salvation of their souls,” — “are begotten again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus out of the dead;” and as strangers and pilgrims journeying onwards to the inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, they are taught the lesson, “But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake happy are ye, and be not afraid of their terror (those that do evil) neither be troubled, but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts.”

But to return, “Many would stumble and fall and be broken.” The builders would reject that chief corner stone, but “he that believed on Him would not be confounded;” “unto you therefore which believe He is precious, but unto them which be disobedient the stone which the builders disallowed the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense even to them which stumble at the word.” They would “stumble and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken.” And the Lord would hide His face from the house of Jacob. “Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples;” they would learn to wait for Him while He hid His face, and to look for Him. Truly He has hidden His face from that once-loved house, the house of Jacob, and still beloved for their fathers' sakes; for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. We must be prepared for this—to find the prophets passing across the dispensation in which we live, and connecting the time when the nation was before God as a nation, with the latter days, when the present dispensation shall have passed, and the nation of Israel is before Him as a nation again. Now He hides His face from them. The Spirit in the prophet brings us along from the circumstances in which He finds them, where God addresses the house of David, which represented the nation, till the rejection of Jesus, the Lord of hosts Himself, come in grace and lowliness into their midst and then He passes over the entire period during which Jehovah hides His face from the house of Israel, till the circumstances of the last days.

“Behold I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and wonders in Israel, from the Lord of hosts which dwelleth in mount Zion.” This the Spirit uses in Heb. 2, when telling us of the grace of Jesus, who had passed through humiliation and death, when passing to the headship of all things: not that He needed it Himself, it was His by right; but when He would associate others with Himself and bring many heirs to glory. Primarily it referred to Isaiah and the symbolic children, given as signs and wonders to awaken the conscience of the nation then. And thee in verse 19, he passes on to the time when the Lord of hosts has again turned His face towards His elect nation. He finds them still a froward generation, children in whom is no faith. Their spot is not the spot of His children, apostate still in heart to their God: but still a little remnant would be found to whom the word of the Lord would be the joy and rejoicing of their heart. The apostates would say to them, “Seek ye to them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep and mutter.” Ah!

should not a people call unto their God? “To the law and to the testimony if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” The old apostate spirit of idolatry shall have returned in sevenfold intensity to his house from whence he had gone out; and they would pass through the land hardly bestead and hungry, and they would curse their king and their God, and look upward, finding trouble and darkness in that day of Jacob's trouble; dimness of anguish, and they should be driven to darkness. How analogously does the prophet, in Rev. 16:10, 11, speak of this. The kingdom of the beast “was full of darkness, and they gnawed their tongues for pain and blasphemed the God of heaven, because of their pains, and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.”

Nevertheless the dimness would not be as of old, in the former ravages of the Assyrian. The Lord of hosts had now taken the thing in His own Almighty hand. The great light would now shine forth upon a people who were walking in darkness, upon those that had learned to fear the Lord, and to obey the voice of His servant, walking in darkness, having no light. Those that had learned to trust in the name of the Lord and stay upon their God, (Isa. 1:10,) upon them the light would shine. Light in the harvest time, when men divide the spoil. “Thou hast multiplied the nation and to it (margin) increased the joy; they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil.” The oppressor's yoke would then be broken—the yoke of their burden, and the staff of his shoulder, and the rod of the Assyrian—by Him against whom it had boasted itself. It would be like the day when Gideon took his 300, with empty pitchers and lamps within. The sword of the Lord had scattered the mighty hosts of Midian, not merely like the battles of the warrior, with confused noise and garments rolled in blood: this would be with burning and fuel of fire—the fire of God's judgment would be there. (Compare Isa. 10:12-27.) Thus would the delivered remnant, with their faces in the dust, learn that the same Savior God had walked through the land of Zebulun and Naphtali, in the way of the sea beyond Jordan in Galilee of the Gentiles, in His day of humiliation, and had passed through death to be their Savior. But now, in the day of His glory, they would learn to say, “Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, (so long and deeply faithless,) and upon His kingdom to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.” “The work of righteousness shall then be peace: and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever.” P.

Chapter 97

# Infidel Opposition to Christianity

The kind of opposition men make to Christianity proves its truth in the main, proves the consciousness of a real claim of God in it on the soul.

No doubt men have attacked Paganism as false. They have resisted Mohammedanism, though its sword was its principal argument, so that there was less of this.

But the constant and laborious exercise of free criticism, the close and sifting examination the Bible has gone through for ages, the anxious research after errors or contradictions within, proves anxiety to show that it is not what it pretends to be. Why all this anxiety? Those not immediately under the influence of Mohammedanism, are long satisfied that it is false, and leave it there; but these minute researches after a flaw in the Scriptures continue—are repeated—renewed. Men take it up on every side. Astronomy and geology are called in aid. Geography is ransacked; history, antiquity, style, manuscripts of all kinds, foolish writings of the fathers, absurd writings of heretics, apocryphal imitations of its contents; nothing left unturned to find something to discredit it; wise writings of philosophers to prove they could do as well, or were the source of the good, or even of the alleged absurdities of doctrine; every other influence sought out which could have moralized humanity, that it may not be supposed to be this. Why all this toil? Why, if it be a doctrine like Plato's, should it not have produced its effect, and our philosophers be as cool about it as about other things? It has—their conscience knows it has—God's claim and God's truth in it; and they will not allow that the true God, that Christ is the source of it; for then they must bend, and admit what man is.

And this shows itself in the most curious way. Though they pretend to think nothing of Christ, or that He was an imposter, they will not allow that the authorized books of His religion give a true account of the doctrines of the religion. If I read the Koran, I am satisfied to take it as the account of Mohammedanism, absurd as it may be; and I say Mohammedanism is absurd. So of the Vedas and Puranas.

But when the Christian books are in question, they are no doubt charged with error, contradiction, &c.; but the free critics will not even allow them to teach real Christianity after all! They are not a true, not an authentic account of Christianity! Why (if it be a mere fable, an imposture) so difficult about the exactitude of the account of it? Surely the main propagators can give a sufficient account of the imposture and its doctrines, for anything that concerns us. But no There is the consciousness that God is in Christianity. The conscience, in spite of the will, knows it has to do with God here; and it wants a true revelation, a real and authentic account of what God is. It is right. But though curiosity and a favorite subject may absorb many for a time, or an individual all his life, men are not so continuously, so perseveringly anxious to get at the truth of a fable. They do not reject the sacred books of any other religion, as not being a true account of that religion. They take them as they are, because they know they are a fable. Or even if it be known to be the work of men's minds, it is the same. A stranger to Lutheranism takes the symbolical books of Lutheranism as being Lutheranism, let him agree to or dissent from them. Why not the Christian

books as stating Christianity? An infidel cannot let God and His truth alone, because it is His truth. He is a zealot against it; for his will is engaged. He is a bitter zealot, because his conscience is uneasy. He will laugh at a Mohammedan carpenter, who thinks he only has the true religion; he will curse a consistent Christian who thinks be has, and denounce and abhor such if they do not let him amongst them when he denies their Lord, and only wish for energy and all needed to proclaim their deeds. Why this difference?

Chapter 98

# Fragment: The Inspired History

Inspired history is true history, and gives the evil as well as the good. A mere panegyrical history would prove itself not inspired, like the legends of the saints or a human biography. As to prophecy, it is, I may say, constant invective against evil. That the patience of God went on rising up early and sending prophets, till there was no remedy, unbelief casts in God's teeth. I adore Him for it, as for all His goodness.

Chapter 99

# Scripture Query and Answer: Is It Right for the Unconverted to Pray?

Q. Is it right for the unconverted to pray? And can we take Cornelius as an instance of an unconverted man praying and his prayer being answered?

- A Constant Reader.

A. Man is bound to pray, as he is to serve God and do His will; but while unconverted, he does neither, save in form. “Behold, he prayeth” was the Lord's cogent evidence to Ananias that Saul's heart was turned to Himself.

But it is a mistake to suppose that Cornelius was a mere self-righteous formalist, before Peter went to his house in Caesarea. He feared God, and his prayer and his alms came up for a memorial before Him. He was no more unconverted than the disciples were before Pentecost, or the Old-Testament saints Cornelius, like the rest, had eternal life; else there could be godliness and acceptable prayer without spiritual life. Yet he needed to hear words from the apostle, whereby he and all his house should be saved. (Acts 11:14.) Salvation is more than being quickened; it is the conscious possession of that deliverance through the work of Christ which the gospel now announces. Cornelius may have been safe before; he was “saved” after he received the message of grace and the gift of the Spirit.

Chapter 100

# Is the Christian in Adam or in Christ? and What Is the Result of This As Regards His Standing and Walk?

A deeply important question strikes the thoughtful Christian mind at the present day, when words are multiplied without knowledge—a question which affects the whole tone and character of Christian practice, and the steady, solid peace of the soul. The question is, Is his standing before God in the first or the second Adam?

Is he in the first Adam, responsible before God, since he chose the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the error of his way, and was driven out from the presence of the Lord God, the ruined head of a lost world, his access in such a state, cut off forever from the tree of life, death his portion here, and the second death his end? Or is he in the second Adam (who entered, in divine grace and love, into the place of responsibility, death, sin-bearing, and judgment, in which he lay, but who has passed out of that state, risen, ascended, glorified, seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high, head of the new creation of God), and is he made partaker, as born of Him, of a risen life, justified, sanctified, and waiting to be glorified?

Deeply important questions these, not only for individual peace of soul, but for walk and practice before God. May the gracious Lord vouchsafe His own guidance and teaching while we endeavor to answer these questions according to His truth and for His own glory.

In Rom. 5:12-21 we find these two great fountains, or heads of nature and of faith, contrasted. And the effect of the acts of Adam and Christ upon the two families; viz., that which ranges itself under the headship of the first Adam, and that which ranges itself under the Second. The question of sin and its results—death, and of grace and its results—life and righteousness towards each family, is discussed. “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned But not as the offense, so also is the free gift. For if through the offense of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. For if by one offense death reigned by one, much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. Therefore, as by one offense upon all men to condemnatiou, even so by one righteousness upon all men to justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.”

Thus the effect of the transgression of Adam was not confined to himself but passed upon all his posterity, constituting them sinners before God. Even so Christ's one accomplished act of righteousness and obedience, which reached unto death, the death of the cross, was not confined in effect with Himself, but flows to ninny, constituting them righteous before God. And as Adam, fallen and driven out from the presence of God, entered upon the headship of the family of nature, after his disobedience unto death; even so, Christ, enters upon the Headship of the family of faith, the new creation of God, after His one accomplished act of obedience unto death, the death of the cross.

Let us now look at the first of these. We turn to Gen. 3, and there we find Adam created in innocence, set in the garden of Eden, an earthly paradise, surrounded with blessing and good; and in this paradise there were two trees, the tree of life and the tree of responsibility (of knowledge of good and evil). He was left there to maintain himself in a position and in a condition in which he had been placed. He had access to the tree of life, but had no promise. He had simply to enjoy what God had given him, and own the Giver in His gifts which surrounded him. He was given to understand that he had no further responsibility than to observe the command of God, to abstain from eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, failing which, death would be the effect and consequence of his breach of the command. This was the measure of his responsibility. He had no position to attain to or object to gain by his obedience to the command. Alive in a certain condition, and observing it, be maintained himself in that condition. He was not told to “Do this and live;” but, alive in the position God had placed him in, he was to retain it by doing as commanded, and so enjoy all the blessings of his position. Satan now comes upon the scene. He suggests the thought to his mind that God was withholding the richest blessing in prohibiting him to eat of the tree of responsibility; that His love was not such a love as he supposed; and, moreover, that God had not been truthful as to the result He had placed before him; for that, instead of death, God knew that they would become as gods, “knowing good and evil.” Man's heart, already turned away from God, opened itself to these suggestions—doubted the love that was thus withholding the best blessing from him—despised the truth, and offended the majesty of God, and aspired to be a god himself, knowing good and evil. Satan thus obtained the place in his mind that God should have had. Adam's heart—turned away from God—readily hearkened to the suggestions of Satan and fell! He thus constituted God his judge by his fall. If God had judged His creature before this, He would have been judging Himself; for He had made man after His own image and likeness and had pronounced His work “very good.” This was His judgment upon His own workmanship when it came forth from His hands. But when Adam transgressed, he constituted God a judge, and obtained the knowledge of good and evil—good, without the power to accomplish it; and evil, without the power to avoid it. His conscience, thus obtained, told him that he had made God his judge; for when the voice of the Lord God was heard in the garden, the man and his wife felt that the covering they had made to hide their nakedness, and which had, perhaps, satisfied them for the time, was no covering when God spake. So when challenged by God he says, “I was afraid, because I was naked.” Conscience awoke under the voice of God, and thus drove Adam to hide amongst the trees of the garden. The knowledge he had obtained when he fell had no power to make him draw near to God, but rather drove him from His presence. It was the sense of responsibility, united to the knowledge of good and evil. And so we find that God “drove out the man,” cutting off his access to the tree of life. It was a blessing and a mercy, in such a condition as that which he now had attained; access to the tree of life would only have perpetuated a life of misery and separation from God and good. The man and his wife pass out from the presence of God with a knowledge they can never unlearn, and with a nature that never can be innocent again. We cannot return to innocence, and we never can unlearn the knowledge of good and evil. Nor can we ever return to paradise again, such as that from which Adam was driven. The man and his wife, thus driven out, become the root and head of a lost world. Their sin does not stop in effect with themselves; but condemnation passes upon the whole race, which is driven out from the presence of God in them. Death is their portion in this world. Judgment, the second death, the lake of fire is the end. In the judgment-resurrection (Rev. 20) we find the two things brought on the

scene again, the principle of the two trees—life and responsibility. The book of life is opened, and the books, I doubt not, of their responsibility. They are judged out of those things which are written in the books, according to their works, “and whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”

Let us now look upon the Second. We turn to Luke 4, and there we find the last Adam—Christ. Instead of a garden eastward in Eden, surrounded with every good, as we saw at the beginning, we find Him led of the Spirit into the wilderness, and there He is confronted by Satan, who had succeeded in gaining the ear of the first Adam. Satan and Christ, then, stood face to face. The proof was there to undo Satan's lie at the first, that God was withholding the best gifts in prohibiting to the man access to the tree of responsibility; for Christ, the Son of the Father, was there! The Son had come to prove God's love as a Giver; and the Son, who was the brightness of God's glory, and the express image of His person, had renounced everything, and humbled Himself—took upon Himself a bondsman's form—to vindicate the outraged majesty of God—outraged by the first man, who had aspired to be a god. Confronted by the enemy, He stood in His inheritance, and found it in Satan's hands. “The devil. . . showed him all the kingdoms of the world. . . and the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them, for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it” (Luke 4:5-6), defiled by sin, and in ruins. Had He put forth His power as God, there would have been no conflict; it would then have been merely the question of God's power, and that of a rebellious creature. But all the tempter's wiles were put forth against the self-emptied, obedient man, who had come to obey, and to conquer by obedience where the other had failed; and not only so, but in circumstances of trial and difficulty, where dependence and perfect subjection to the will of God were needed. By His obedience He bound the strong man who was in possession of His goods, and presented in the midst of a ruined, sin-defiled world, a perfect, spotless man to God. Satan then departed from Him for a season. He found nothing in Him to act upon, or by which he might draw Him aside. With a perfect will as man, He did not put forth His will; He waited upon the will of God; and by the words of His lips He kept Him from the paths of the destroyer (Psa. 17), and triumphed where the first man had fallen, and in the midst of the circumstances brought in by his fall.

But, again, and now at the close of His ministry— of His course through a sin-defiled world, Satan comes again. Had He picked up any of the defilements of the scene through which He had passed? Had the Lamb of God contracted a spot or a blemish to unfit Him for God's altar? And were the terrors of death in the hands of Satan, and the horrors of the moment when the Father's face, which had shined upon Him all the pathway through, would be averted? When He would be forsaken, not only by those whom He loved, but also of God? Would all these be sufficient to turn Him aside from the path He had taken upon Himself to walk in? We follow Him to Gethsemane, at the close of the pathway through the world, and there we find the dependent, obedient Man again, meeting with “the prince of this world.” He had tried to allure Him from the pathway of obedience at the first; but here he tries his other power, which he had wielded so effectually in the hearts of men; and he tries by the terrors of the hour of darkness to drive Him out of the obedient place; but no! “the cup which my Father hath given me shall I not drink it?” He who was the Prince of life, and had a title to it personally, accepted the responsibility of His people inherited from the first Adam, that He might vindicate the truth of God, who had said, “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” For here we find those early principles of the garden again—life and

responsibility. His presence in the world was the proof of the love of God. He had emptied Himself, as One who alone could do it, to vindicate the majesty of God. But there was His truth to vindicate as well, and we follow Him to His cross! There He offered to the righteousness of God a perfect, spotless victim; and He received from the righteousness of God the cup of wrath—the blow of divine judgment and wrath on account of sin. Spotless Himself, He was made sin on the cross. He could not be made sin otherwise than this. He stood there responsible for the glory of God on account of sin; and as the substitute for His people's sins. Let us look at His cross. There the full evil of the heart of the first Adam, estranged from God, burst forth in its unmingled enmity against perfect good. The judge, into whose hands God had entrusted power and judgment, uses it to condemn the guiltless! Priests appointed to “have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way” (Heb. 5:2), set on their false witnesses, and plead against a righteous man, and urge on the multitude to clamor for the blood of One in whom no fault had been found. Disciples who had followed and leaned upon, and loved the Man who stood there, find the place too dangerous now. The most warm-hearted amongst them denies Him at the voice of a serving maid—His “friend” betrays—the others forsake Him—and there He stands alone at the hour of the consummation of Adam's wickedness! The cross of a rejected Christ exhibits the hatred of man's heart against God and good. It displays ourselves by nature to ourselves. There we can read of what the heart of man, under every circumstance, is capable. It tells us of what we can be urged on by Satan to do under the plea of religion, loyalty, or what you will! But I follow on, and I find something more. I find God in judgment, and man in sin-bearing, face to face. The sword of divine judgment satisfying itself to the uttermost, and yet glorified in the sacrifice that presented itself to its demands. The cup of wrath wrung out and drunk to the dregs, and yet all the while the cry of conscious guiltlessness, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” The truth of God—His majesty—love—holiness—every moral attribute, was displayed, vindicated, and glorified in the death of Christ!

We read in Luke 23 that there were crucified with Him two malefactors, the one on the right hand, and the other on the left. Let us pause for a moment and contemplate this scene. Around the cross of Jesus every expression of fallen man grouped itself; some “reaping the due reward for their deeds,” others mocking the Man who had professed His perfect trust in God, and yet, strange to say, who was there forsaken of Him. In Him we find the spotless Man who had “done nothing amiss.” He had renounced all that He might go down to the place of ruin in which the sinner lay. There the crucifiers and the crucified met, in the place of moral death and darkness that surrounded the cross. One amongst that company of fallen children of Adam was destined to be something more—to be the first trophy of the victory to be held up before the world as the spoils of the hour, snatched out of the hands of the enemy; one of the blaspheming malefactors who had joined with his comrades in railing upon the One who hung beside him, with no better a portion than himself. Before the scene closes, his convicted conscience confesses that he was only reaping the due reward for his deeds, but that the Sufferer between him and the other malefactor had “done nothing amiss.” Blessed position, the first step of faith; a convicted conscience consciously guilty, and a spotless Christ, met together in the same place of death and ruin; the one reaping what he had sowed, the other full of grace! The first step of faith, a convicted conscience, led to faith's second step; it turned from the darkened scene within to light outside itself. Faith opened his eyes, “and turned them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.” (Acts 26:18) “And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom.” He

had forgotten the cross, the pain, every surrounding circumstance in the scene; and instead of the darkness that hung around the cross to the children of Adam around, it was light to his soul; and in the far distant future he sees the Man who hung beside him, coming in His kingdom, and he merely asks to be remembered at that hour. Little did he anticipate the answer that awaited him. A place in the kingdom, perhaps a very lowly place, was his hope. “Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.” The veil of the temple was rent for his soul, and already he had passed into that Paradise of God with his Lord. Happy thief, thrice happy thief! The ruffian soldiers broke his legs, to be sure, to hasten his death, and to please religion in the world that was about to keep high sabbath! But Christ had converted the gloomy postal, the entrance to the second, death to the sons of Adam, into the entrance to the, Paradise of God.

But the soul of Jesus had passed away meanwhile, and the spear of the soldier is answered by the blood that expiates, and the water that cleanses. The responsibility was borne, and life and atonement come from a dead Christ. “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” (1 John 4:9-10) Here we have the two things again life and responsibility: the one communicated, the other borne and atoned for. Life, when dead in trespasses and sins; propitiation, when responsible and guilty. The responsibility of the first Adam borne for His people, and the sin that attached to the responsibility put away; the whole scene cleansed of the first man and his belongings, and the Second man introduced into the glory of God.

They take His body down from the cross and lay it in a tomb in the garden. Let us contrast the two gardens—that of Gen. 3 with that of John 19. In the one was placed the first Adam, innocent, with access to the tree of life; but he chose the tree of responsibility, in the error of his way, and fell. In the other, lay He who had a right to the tree of life, but who had answered the responsibility in the dust of death. To the one, the garden eastward in Eden became the portals to a lost world, which ends in the lake of fire. To the other, the second garden becomes the portals for His people, not to Paradise regained, but to the Paradise of God.

The life was gone to which the responsibility attached, and the sin that accompanied the responsibility with the life—sins borne, sin put away, to the glory of God. Sin had constituted God a Judge at the beginning; to put away sin had also constituted Him a Savior. Adam's sin had made God a Judge, but grace in presence of it made Him a Savior.

We have traced Him to the tomb, and God had been glorified in Him. The mercy-seat had been set forth and the blood had been sprinkled upon it; the claims of the throne had been answered as well as the end of the worshipper, and now God comes in and takes up the surety from among the dead, and seats Him at His own right hand in heaven. In divine love He took the place of death and ruin in which the children of Adam, fallen, lay; and the righteousness of God takes up the Man in whom He had been glorified, and seats Him in heaven. “And God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved), and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” (Eph. 2:4-6.) Dead together—we in sin—He for sin—quickened together—made partakers of a risen, justified life, beyond the reach of death, sin, judgment, wrath, everything, (Christ having made satisfaction for all these, before He left the place of death,) we are

now one with Him in heaven. Dying for us on the cross we are one with Him in life, and “there is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.” (Rom. 8:1.) We are in the second Adam, not in the first; in the Spirit, not in the flesh; under His headship. Responsibility was borne by Him in grace. Propitiation flows to us from the death of Christ, and His people are introduced into the new creation of God. “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature (creation): old things are passed away; behold all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ.” (2 Cor. 5:17, 18.) God has substituted His own righteousness and the person of the Second Adam for the sin and person of the first!

What now is the result of all this in practical life?

Before we answer this question, we must look back and ascertain what it was that applied to Adam, fallen, under the sentence of death. Man, alive and innocent in the garden, had but to retain the state or condition in which he had been placed; but to man fallen and driven out from God's presence, with a conscience which he had received when he fell, is addressed the law, the requirement from God to him, a sinner, and which proposed life in the things of it, and gave him a rule to walk in, which would have been his righteousness if he observed it. In the law we find again the principle of the two trees, life and responsibility. It came in between Adam and Christ to propose the question, Had fallen man any righteousness for God? And it proposed “life in them,” upon the condition of man, thus responsible, fulfilling perfectly its requirements. His conscience tells him that he ought to fulfill all its demands; and he owns his responsibility to be all that it requires of him—to love God with all his heart, and his neighbor as himself; that he should not lust, &c. Had it been addressed to Adam in the garden, it would have had no meaning whatsoever, for it proposed to give life, whereas Adam had not forfeited life; and it prohibited lusts which had no existence. To man, fallen, alone has it any application. It prohibited lusts in a heart that was full of lust, and brought to light and defined the lusts of a heart that had departed from God. It found him a sinner, and instead of bringing life, as it proposed on man's observing it, it brought death to his conscience, constituted him an offender, a transgressor; for “by the law is the knowledge of We read, “The law entered (i.e., between Adam and Christ) that the offense might abound,” not sin, for sin was there. Consequently “death reigned from Adam to Moses,” by whom was given the law. It could not, therefore, give life, and, as a result, it could not give righteousness; for “If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.” (Gal. 3:21.) “It is not (therefore) made foe a righteous man,” (1 Tim. 1), but belongs to the first man, fallen and driven out from God, and has its direct application to none else.

What then is the guide for the practical life of the Christian, who has been made partaker of the risen, justified life of the Second Adam? The very essence of this flows from the fact that he has been brought to God in Christ, and planted in a new condition altogether in and by virtue of redemption. The life of the first man was forfeited; but Christ took the responsibility which belonged to His people, and bore it fully to God's glory, when He went down into the place of death in which they lay as children of fallen Adam; and now life is come to them from the death of Christ, and their responsibility springs from the position in which they have been placed. As in earthly relationships, the responsibility of the child to his father flows from the relationship which exists—from the fact of his being a child; the wife's to her husband, from the fact of the relationship she is in—that of being his wife. So the true Christian responsibility is founded on the existence of the relationship and the position be is in. Life has been communicated, and he is before God, in the full light of His

presence, in the Second Adam risen from the dead and gone up into the presence of God. It is the principle of real responsibility which sets him to act up to the place he is in, and to judge everything inconsistent with that place in his ways. It is not that he is to live up to what Adam, innocent, ought to have been; or to what the law required from fallen man; or according to the course of this world. But as dead to sin, dead to the world, dead to the law, in the body of Christ he is to let the life of Jesus be manifested in his body; to live the life that has been imparted to him, which was exhibited in Christ—a life that connects him with heaven, but is to be exercised in the world, and thus to bring forth fruit unto God. The law desired fallen Adam to love his neighbor as himself, and gave no higher standard or aim with regard to his neighbor than this. The new man has Christ for the measure of his walk and practice, and is not merely to love his neighbor as himself, but to renounce and surrender self altogether, even as Christ did— “to lay down our lives for the brethren.” He is told to be an imitator of God, as a dear child, and to walk in love, having Christ for his example and standard; and abiding in Him, be ought so to walk even as He walked—surrendering self, life, everything, for His enemies. F. G. P.

Chapter 101

## IT is proposed in the following series to communicate some thoughts on the most comprehensive as well as the grandest of all the prophets. Even if they contribute scarcely more than a copious table of contents, there are hearts thankful for the least real help to the better understanding of the Word of God. This object will be gained not by occupying the reader with the thoughts of man, but by furnishing suggestions which necessarily lead back to Holy Scripture, and derive any little interest or value they may possess from that Word which lives and abides forever

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Of the manner and style of Isaiah, others have spoken largely. If little is said of this, it is not that the warmest expression of praise seems to me overcharged, but because I consider it altogether needless, at least, for such as are likely to read these pages. It is more to our purpose to consider briefly the general structure, or, at any rate, the chief parts and divisions of this prophecy. There is an appearance of disorder in the arrangement of the book as it now stands; and many of those who have commented on it, have complained and suggested their rectifications. For my part, I see no sufficient reason to doubt that, under the semblance of confusion here as elsewhere in Scripture, we have a deeper system than one of time or circumstance. Thus, in the Book of Exodus, the ritual for the consecration of the priests comes in abruptly in chapters 28 and 29, after the Spirit of God has given part of the account of the sanctuary and its vessels, and before He supplies the rest. And yet this seeming interruption subserves, as nothing else could, the moral object of the Spirit, which would have been frustrated by a merely obvious and mechanical arrangement, to which most minds are so prone. “The foolishness of God is wiser than men.”

So in the earliest division of our prophet, which embraces the first twelve chapters, we have the preface of chapter 1 followed by chapters 2 - 4, which dwell on “the day of the Lord.” Then comes chapter 5, “the song of my beloved touching his vineyard.” Now it is evident that this strain, (proving by repeated instances that, for all yet done, Jehovah's anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still,) is interrupted by chapters 6 - 9:7; after which episode it is resumed till we have the close in the destruction of the Assyrian, the reign of Messiah, and Israel's joy and praise (chap. 10 - 12) “in that day” once more.

Now we have no date to this “song,” but we have both to chapter 6 and also to chapters 7, 8. Chapter 9 may have been revealed before the song, as many suppose it to have been the first vision the prophet ever had. This I neither affirm nor deny, not seeing sufficient evidence in the Word nor in the nature of the case to warrant either conclusion. But it seems plain that there is a moral order of divine beauty in the collocation as the chapters now stand. Chapter 5 is the case stated between Jehovah and His vineyard, and shows Israel tested by the painstaking care God

had all through bestowed upon them. “What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it?” He can only thenceforward lay it waste, though His vineyard be the house of Israel, and the men of Judah His pleasant plant. Worse woe follows woe; and God summons the nations front far to chasten His people, over whose land hung darkness and sorrow. Then, before the conclusion of these judgments on stricken Israel, given in chapter 9, we have Israel tested in a wholly different way in chapter 6. For we have there the glory of Jehovah-Messiah manifested, (compare John 12,) the people blinded judicially for their unbelief, and an elect remnant withal which did not appear in the preceding chapter. Thus, if chapter 5 convicts Israel on the count of their ill-return to all God's past good and faithful care, chapter 6 condemns them yet more, whatever grace may do spite of all, by the manifestation of Jehovah's glory in the person of Christ. This, accordingly, leads to a lengthening out of the interruption, which shows us Immanuel, the virgin's child, on the judgment of the Assyrian, spite of desolation inflicted by him for a time, and the complete deliverance of Israel and their establishment under the Messiah AFTER the day when He was a stone of stumbling to them and the law was sealed among His disciples.

Then, as we have seen, the broken links of chapter 5 are taken up again from chapter 9:8, and the general history of the nation renews its course, after we have had, from first to last the special account of the Messiah, His rejection by the Jews, and the final blessing under His reign. The resumption, after so complete and weighty an episode, is made very evident, because the Spirit of God goes back to the very struggles of the prophet's day and the judgment of Israel. In chapter 10, the indignation of the Lord against Israel ceases in the destruction of their last foe, the Assyrian. Lastly, in chapter 11, we have the Messiah again shown, first in His moral ways, and then in His kingdom, followed by Israel's song of praise, in the millennial day. (Chap. 12)

The second great division comprehends chapters 13 - 17; but, like the first, it admits of various sub-divisions or separate subjects within itself. Thus, in chapter 13, 14, we have the fall of Babylon and the overthrow of the Assyrian, with Palestina dissolved, terminating in mercy to Israel and the establishment of Zion. This clearly indicates that the last days are in question both for judgment and for deliverance, whatever preliminary accomplishment in the past may have borne witness to the truth of the prophecy. But that which has been falls so short of all that is involved as to evince itself but the shadow which the coming events cast before them. Next follows “the burden of Moab,” in chapters 15, 16. Then, in chapter 17, comes “the burden of Damascus;” but just as proud Moab must stoop before Him who sits on the throne in the tabernacle of David, so the mighty rushing waters of the nations shall avail as little to sustain Damascus as to overwhelm Israel, though at the lowest ebb, when they look to the Lord God, and He rebukes the oppressor. The next chapter, (18) may be viewed in connection with chap. 17. Nevertheless, it has its own special place, as showing us Israel restored, not by the Lord at first, but by the influence and intervention of a maritime power. But this policy, and its promising fruit, come all to nothing, and the nations plunder and oppress as before, and the Lord takes up Israel, and works in His own grace and might. We have “burdens” after this, but they are not quite similarly presented after this great gathering of nations seen at the end of chapter 17. But, first, in chapters 19 and 20, Egypt is judged, (the Assyrian being the instrument,) before its final blessing. Again, in chapter 21, we have the “burden of the desert of the sea,” by which is set forth the capture of Babylon; “the burden of Dumah,” and that upon Arabia. Then, in chapter 22, “the burden of the valley of vision,” Jerusalem itself is taken; and Shebna is set aside for Eliakim, the type of Antichrist overthrown, and the

government of David's house being transferred to the true Christ. In chapter 23 Tire's burden comes before us. Then, in chapter 24, the Lord is seen dealing with the earth, and the world languishes before His mighty hand; and more than this, for it is the hour of His visitation for the host of the high ones on high, as well as for the kings of the earth on the earth: indeed the day is come for His reign in Zion and Jerusalem. Can one wonder, then, that chapters 25 - 27 are the sequel for Israel's songs of victory, celebrating God and His character, and their deliverance and its character also? A song of joy closed the first division, and songs of praise close the second; and as we had in the first part the sorrowful song of the beloved to His vineyard, fruitful only in sin and shame, now all is changed; and “in that day sing ye unto her, a vineyard of red wine: I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment, lest any hurt it; I will keep it night and day.”

It is evident that, as compared with the first division (1 - 12), the second (13 - 27) embraces a sphere incomparably larger; the first being occupied mainly with Israel, the second beginning with the great power that ravaged and ruled Judah, going on with each of the nations that had relations with Israel, and ending with the judgment of all nations when the world is dealt with, and the very powers of the heavens are shaken too; but when Israel, sifted and chastened, is gathered in at the great trumpet blast to worship the Lord of Hosts in Jerusalem.

The third division is occupied with the details of that which happens to Israel at the end of the age. Chaps. 28 and 29 give us the two final assaults on Jerusalem: the first of these coming from the north and overwhelming Ephraim in its course, is successful against the guilty city, spite of (rather because of) its covenant with death; the second, when all seems lost, suddenly brings the LORD of hosts to their rescue, and the multitude of the hostile strangers of all nations pass away as a dream. In chaps. 30 and 31 the unbelief that sought unto Egypt is judged, and the Assyrian, its scourge, the mighty leader of the coalition against Israel, falls under God's hand. Then in chap. 32 Messiah is seen reigning in righteousness, and the last pre-millennial effort of the enemy (chap. 33) is turned to his own destruction, and divine vengeance takes its course in Edom on all the other haters of Israel. (Chap. 34) Thereon the blessing is now so rich and all pervading, that the wilderness itself rejoices for Israel, and blossoms as the rose: sorrow and sighing flee away. God is come with a recompense, and His ransomed ones are come to Zion with songs, everlasting joy upon their heads. Such is the fitting conclusion in chap. 35.

The fourth division consists of the historical matter intercalated between what may be called the first and second volumes of our prophecy. These are their main facts: the historical Assyrian rebuked of God before Jerusalem, (chaps. 36, 37); the raising up again of the Son of David, who was sick unto death, (chap. 38); and the solemn intimation of the Babylonish captivity. (Chap. 39)

After this transitional series of events, and founded on their weighty moral import, we have the remainder of the book. (Chaps. 40 - 66) The two great controversies of God with His people are here brought to issue. The first is idolatry, which Cyrus avenged in the overthrow of Babylon, whither the guilty Jews had been carried, alas! because of their desertion of the Lord for idols of the Gentiles. But providentially raised up as Cyrus was, God points to His servant who shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. After this, however, the promised Messiah is dropped for the present. Israel meanwhile had the responsibility of being Jehovah's servant, but Israel was blind. Therefore had He given them up for a prey; but now they are delivered, the fall of Babylon being the pledge of a still mightier deliverance yet to come. This closes with chap. 48 In chap. 49 the

second and still graver controversy opens—the rejection of the true servant, even the Messiah. This makes way for a blessing to the Gentiles in the wisdom and grace of God, the raising up of Jacob being now counted a light thing. “I will also give thee for light to the Gentiles,” &c. Zion, however, shall never be forgotten, but be restored. This, again, closes with chap. 56. (Compare its last verse with the last verse of the preceding part, namely, chap. 48:22.)

Chapters 58 - 66 are the conclusion. This, and indeed the whole of what we have called the second volume, are second to no other part in magnificence, interest, and practical profit. The contents of the last part may be thus summed up. The Holy Spirit directs Himself (in chaps. 58, 59) to the conscience of Israel—reasons, if I may so say, of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come. Their hypocrisy was the hindrance to their blessing, and their sin would bring on their punishment. Yet when all hope of salvation might justly be taken away, the Redeemer would come to Zion in His own sovereign mercy, and His Spirit and His word abide with Israel and their seed forever. Chapter 60 most appropriately reveals their consequent glory and righteous condition. Next, chapters 61 - 63:1-6 form a section in which the character of Jehovah-Messiah is traced from His first advent in grace, (with the blessing and glory He was ready and able to bestow on the people and their land,) till He returns from the scene of the judgment executed in Edom, “the day of vengeance of our God.” Then, from chapter 63:7 to the end of 64 the prophet goes out to the Lord in earnest intercession for His people, finding an only hope in His mercy and faithfulness. The last two chapters (55, 56) are the answer of the Lord, who explains His dealings throughout; His grace to the Gentiles, His long-suffering toward Israel (rebellious and yet to return to their old idolatry and worse); His sure rejection and judgment of the mass but with an elect remnant spared; the introduction of His glory in the new creation of which Jerusalem is the destined earthly center; a reiteration of His sympathy with the elect and of the vengeance He must take on the abominations of the latter day, when, if He suddenly bless Zion, He will as suddenly come and plead by fire and sword with all flesh. After this judgment of the quick, the spared shall go forth and declare (not His grace but) His glory, and all the dispersed of Israel shall be brought back, and all flesh too shall worship before Jehovah, with the solemn permanent witness before their eyes of the doom of apostates. Such is the general scope, such the special divisional character of Isaiah the prophet.

Chapter 102

# Notes on Isaiah 1-4

There is no doubt that the Holy Ghost treats of Israel, more particularly of Judah and Jerusalem, throughout the visions of Isaiah. Often, it is true, we hear of judgments on, sometimes of divine grace toward, the Gentiles; and this last not merely when Israel shall be the center of blessing for the earth, but even while, as now, the Jews are set aside for a season. Still it is certain from the express language of the prophet, that the book, as a whole, applies to God's ancient people, and not to the Church of the firstborn.

Nevertheless, all Scripture being alike from God, we shall find the most precious instruction here as elsewhere, humbling lessons for the heart of man, and on God's part unfailing mercy, goodness, and patience, but withal solemn, sure judgment of all evil. Everywhere and at all times God's glory shines out to the eye of faith, as it will to “every eye” in a day which hastens fast. But the only wise God has been pleased to bring out His mind and display His ways in a variety of forms, which create no small perplexity to the narrow mind and unready heart of man. Some are apt to forget the past, as if the revelation of present privilege were all; many more would merge the actual calling of God in a vague amalgam, in an unintelligent monotony, which confounds Israel and the Church, law and gospel, earth and heaven, grace and glory.

Doubtless, now that the Son of God has appeared, it is meet that we should hear Him; and it is vain to talk of knowing the law and prophets, Moses or Elias, if He have not the central and supreme place in our hearts. And it is to hear Him, if we believe that the Spirit of truth is come to guide into all truth; much of which even apostles could not bear, till redemption was accomplished and the Son of man ascended where He was before. It is due, therefore, to the New Testament that we should look for our special portion there, the revelation of that mystery which was hid from ages and from generations. But we cannot forget, without dishonor to God and loss to our souls, that there are certain moral principles which never change, any more than God can act or speak beneath Himself, whatever may be His condescension to the creature. Thus, obedience is always the right pathway for the faithful, and holiness is inseparable from the new nature; but then the character of the obedience and the depth of the holiness necessarily depend on the measure of light given of God and the power of the motives He reveals for working on the heart. What was allowed in Levitical time and order is largely out of place now if we heed the Savior's authority. And this is at least as strikingly true of the public worship and service of God as of private life and duty. In many measures and in many modes He spoke in the prophets to the fathers; now He has spoken in the person of His Son. Hence, unbelief assumes the character of resistance to the fullest love, light, authority, and grace, revealed in Him who is the image of the invisible God—Himself God over all, blessed forever, while the faith which has bowed to Him thus displayed, loves to hear the earlier oracles and to reflect the true light which now shines, along with the fainter but equally divine luminaries which pierced through the darkness of man's night; for all the blessed promises of God are now verified in Christ.

In the prophecy before us God is still dealing with the people as a body; and, therefore, He pleads with them because of their iniquities, setting forth a full, searching, and even minute portraiture of their evil ways. For if prophecy encourages the faithful by the sure word of coming blessing from the Lord, it casts a steady, convicting light on the actual state of those who bear His name; its hopes strengthen those who bow to its holy sentences. Hence, if handled in a godly, reverent manner, it never can be popular, though notions drawn from it and used excitingly may be so. But the Spirit addresses it to the conscience in God's presence, and there is nothing man more shrinks from. Indeed this is the character of prophesying (1 Cor. 14) in a measure, as well as of prophetic Scripture; and the Corinthian preference of the more showy sign-gifts told the tale of their own moral condition.

Need I point out particularly how Isa. 1 illustrates the foregoing remarks? What an expostulation on the part of God! Heaven and earth are summoned to hear His complaint against His guilty people. The dullest of their own beasts of burden put them to shame. In vain had the largest favors been shown them: “I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.” Equally vain had been His chastisements. (Ver. 5-9). Land, cities, inhabitants, all was in the prophet's vision a waste and ruin through sin, with the merest remnant shielded from destruction.

Has not this a voice for us? It is not only that the Church of God began to be called out and formed when all was a failure—man, Israel, the world, judged morally in the cross; but, besides, for us, the house of God is in disorder, the last time of many antichrists is long since come. The Christian witness has more deeply and widely departed from God than the Jewish one, and in spite of immensely greater privileges. What remains but judgment for the mass, with the reserve of grace for those who humble themselves under God's mighty hand? Does this produce hardness of feeling? On the contrary, a spirit of intercession is the invariable companion of a holy heed to prophecy, the offspring, both of them, of communion with God. He loves His people too well to look with indifference on their sin, of all men; He must vindicate His outraged majesty; and those who are in the secret of His mind cannot but go forth in importunate desire for the good of souls and the glory of the Lord. But real love has no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness; rather does it reprove them. Neither does that love which is of God measure sin as nature does, but feels first and most of all that which slights the Lord Himself.

As to Israel, they were worse than the heathen, as bad as the worst. “Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah.” It was not that they lacked zeal in religion; it was not that they did not seek a remedy for the evident pravities of their day. But their remedies were worse than useless. (Ver. 10-15.) If they approached the doom of Sodom, morally they were Sodom, and their sacrifices, feasts, and assemblies odious to the Lord, who refused to hear their prayers. There was no real repentance, no trembling at His word.

Yet the Lord deigns to call them to repentance, and the fruits suited to it, promising to help them if they were broken down and obedient, and threatening to devour them by the sword if they refused. The universal corruption is then laid bare; and, finally, the Lord shows He must deal with His adversaries, as well as Himself restore Zion, when idols and their makers perish together under His mighty hand.

We have already seen that, though the people are assured of the blessing of God, if truly repentant, the prophet shows that judgment must be executed first on the wicked: then shall Zion

be redeemed of the Lord. Chapter 2 follows this up and predicts thereon, not only the restoration of their judges as at the first, and Jerusalem, called the city of righteousness, but the mountain of the Lord's house exalted and all nations flowing unto it; “for out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations and shall rebuke many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not rise against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.” (Ver. 3, 4.)

This is plain, if we are simple. Abandon the context, blot out, if you will, the fact that this portion is prefaced as the word that Isaiah, the son of Amoz, saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem,” and all is confusion. No doubt, to apply these glorious terms to the feeble remnant's return from the Babylonish captivity refutes itself. But the views of many Christians are not less untenable. What, for instance, can exceed the poverty of Theodoret's scheme? He tries to find an answer in the flourishing unity of the Roman empire when our Lord first appeared, and the conquered races that composed it being no longer at war but engaged in agriculture and in the unhindered (!) diffusion of the gospel far and wide. Yet I know nothing better in the attempts of men since, unless the Popish interpretation be thought more homogeneous, inasmuch as it is all supposed to be verified in the Catholic church; or unless the interpretation of others be preferred, which makes it all mystical, and imagines its accomplishment in the unbroken oneness and peace of all believers, in their perfect holiness, and their entire subjection to the Scriptures, whether on earth in the midst of truth, or, as some think, in heaven, when every conflict is over.

Take it now in its natural import, and all difficulties vanish. When judgment has done its work, Zion shall be the fountain of divine blessing for all nations, and the center to which they shall gather, when universal peace prevails, and Jehovah shall be king over all the earth. The contrast of all this, the Lord predicted, should go on till the end of the age. “For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.” Such are the evident facts now. By and by, when the new age dawns under Messiah's earthly reign, (Rev. 11:15,) “nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.” It will be an order of things of which the world has had no experience, and if the casting away of Israel were the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead? (Rom. 11) The flowing of all nations unto Zion cannot mean the gathering out of them, which Scripture speaks of as the Church of God, even if there were not a divine judgment executed on all (and the Jews especially) before that, and if this era of peace, and blessing, and Messianic rule were not coincident with the supremacy of Israel, which supposes a condition wholly distinct from that of the Church, wherein there is neither Jew nor Gentile, but Christ is all and in all.

That which follows strongly confirms the reference to the future blessing and glory of Israel under the new covenant, and the King who shall reign in righteousness; for the prophet, (chap. 2 5,) after that happy picture, invites the house of Jacob to come and dwell in the light of the Lord. Then, speaking to Jehovah, he owns why He had forsaken His people, instead of setting them on high, even because they were replenished from the east with all that man covets and worships. Their sin was unpardonable. Lastly, he calls on them to hide in the dust because of the day of the Lord, which undoubtedly has not yet fallen on the pride and idolatry of man. The passage needs only to be read in a believing, reverent spirit to convince a fair mind, that neither Nebuchadnezzar nor Titus, nor the gospel has anything to do with accomplishing the all-embracing judgment of man

which is there portrayed.

But universal as the prostration of human pride shall be, chapter 3 indicates that most crushingly shall the blow fall on Jerusalem and Judah, and this not only in their public, political life, but minutely and searchingly on the daughters of Zion in all their haughty littleness of vain show. So complete would be the desolation, that the dearth of men is described as exposing women to a boldness contrary to female modesty. But this time of tribulation is followed by an outshining of beauty and glory, and abundant mercy for the saved and holy remnant. (Chap. 4) Even as the cloudy pillar once covered the tabernacle of the divine presence, so the Lord will create on every dwelling-place of Mount Zion, and on her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for upon all the glory shall be a defense. To attempt to refer to the gospel these revelations of coming glory for Israel, after purging trial, is in the highest degree a distortion of scripture: During the present dispensation they are enemies for our sakes, as regards the gospel, while, as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of the fathers. When that day comes, the fullness of the Gentiles shall have come in, and so all Israel shall be saved. It is a total change from this day of grace to judgment-day, whatever the mercy of God to the rescued out of Israel and the nations: “In that day shall there be one Jehovah and His name one.” It is the deliverance, not the destruction of the still groaning creation. “All the land shall be turned as a plain from Geba to Rimmon, south of Jerusalem; and it shall be lifted up and inhabited in her place, from Benjamin's gate unto the corner gate, and from the tower of Hananeel unto the king's wine-presses.” It is not the past nor the present; it is not the eternal state but the millennium. It is an epoch of glory when the Lord will hear the heaven; and they shall hear the earth, and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil, and they shall hear Jezreel. Divine judgment shall have washed away the guilt of Zion, and the glory shall return more blessedly than at the first and forever. What can contrast more with our day of suffering grace?

# Notes on Isaiah 5-6

These chapters illustrate most strikingly the ways of God in the judgment of His people. They are quite distinct. Indeed chapter 6 comes in abruptly in outward form, itself distinct from what follows down to the seventh verse inclusively of chapter 9, all which portion forms a sort of irregular parenthesis, but a parenthesis of profound interest and instruction; after which the strain of woe, begun in chapter 5, is resumed in the thickening disasters of Israel and the land up to their mighty and everlasting deliverance, which yet awaits its accomplishment in the latter day.

But if chapters 5 and 6 are distinct in character as in time, the Spirit of God has been pleased to set them in immediate juxtaposition with a view to our better admonition. In fact, they are the two-fold principle or standard of judgment which God is wont to apply to His people. In the one He looks back, in the other He looks forward, as it were; in the former He measures by all He has done for them what they should have been towards Him; in the latter, He judges them by His own glory manifested in their midst. The one answers to the law by which is the knowledge of sin; the other to the glory of God, from which every soul has come short. (Rom. 3:20.)

In chapter v. the prophet sings a song to Jehovah, his well-beloved, touching His vineyard. Moses had already (Deut. 32) spoken in the ears of Israel a song which celebrates in magnificent language the sovereign choice and blessing of God, the sins and punishment of the people, but withal His final mercy to His land and people, with whom the spared nations are to rejoice. Our chapter takes in a narrower field of view.

“My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill; and he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein; and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.” There was no failure on God's part. He had established Israel in the most favorable position, separated them to Himself, removed stumbling-blocks, crowned them with favors, vouchsafed not only protection but every means of blessing: “What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it?” Yet was all in vain. The result was only bad fruit. They, like Adam, transgressed the covenant. It was the same story over again. Human responsibility ends in total ruin. Man departs from God and corrupts His way on the earth. “And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard; I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: and I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned nor digged: but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.” (Ver. 1-7.)

Thus the nation, as a whole, is weighed in the divine balances and found wanting. So manifest and grievous is the case, that God challenges the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the men of Judah (ver. 3) to judge between Him and His vineyard, though they themselves are the degenerate trees in question. There was no more doubt of the goodness shown to Israel than of their obligation to

yield fruit for God. But obligation produces no fruit meet for Him. What was the consequence on such a ground as this? Nothing but woe after woe.

The truth is that, on the footing of responsibility, every creature has failed save One, who was the Creator, whatever might be His lowly condescension in appearing within the ranks of men. And what is the secret of victory for the believer now or of old? We must be above mere humanity in order to walk as saints, yea, in a sense, be above our duty in order rightly to accomplish it. As of old, those only walked blamelessly according to the law who looked to the Messiah in living faith; so saints now can glorify God in a holy, righteous walk, as they are under grace, not law. The sense of deliverance and perfect favor in the sight of God strengthens greatly where there is a new life.

It will be observed, accordingly, that there is nothing of Christ here as the means and channel of grace. Consequently all is unrelieved darkness and death; and the prophet presses home the evidence of overwhelming, constant evil in the people of God. Not a ray of comfort or even hope breaks through, but only their sin and His judgment chime continually. Detailed sin is retributively dealt with. There is a woe to such as joined house to house and field to field, reckless of all but their own aggrandizement. Jehovah shall desolate so that their coveted vineyards and lands shall yield but a tithe of what they put in. There is a woe to the luxurious bunters of social pleasure. Captivity shall drain them, and hell itself shall swallow up the mean and the mighty—multitudes without measure. And as for the bold sinners, who scoffingly invited the Lord to make speed, that they might see His work, as for the moral corrupters, and the wise in their own eyes, and the unjust friends of the wicked, and foes of the righteous, there is woe upon woe; “because they have cast away the law of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel, therefore is the anger of the Lord kindled against this people, and he hath stretched forth his hand against them, and hath smitten them.” But the woes are not exhausted. “For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.” Such is the sad and recurring burden, as may be seen in chapters 9, 10. The avenging nations may be far away; but, “behold they shall come with speed swiftly.” “And if one look unto the land, behold darkness and sorrow, and the light is darkened in the heavens thereof.” Such is the lot of man, aye, of Israel, where Christ is not.

Chapter 6 opens a very different scene. Not that the people are one whit better; in fact, it was only when Christ appeared, that man fully disclosed what he was and is. The law proved that man has and loves sin; Christ's presence proved that he hates good, bates God Himself manifested in all the purity and lowliness, and grace, and truth of Jesus. It was not only, then, that man was himself failing and guilty; but when an object was there in every way worthy of love and homage and worship, the perfect display of man to God and of God to man, He was a light odious and intolerable to man, and man could not rest till it was extinguished as far as he could effect it. Still we are on ground sensibly and strikingly distinct; and this because the manifestation of Jehovah is in question, not the responsibility of Israel merely. Both chapters show the people judged, but the principles of judgment are wholly different.

It was not in Uzziah's palmy days that the prophet received this solemn commission, but in the year when the once prosperous but now smitten, leprous son of' David breathed his last. Then, however, Isaiah saw the Lord sitting on a throne high and lifted up, and the mere skirts of His glory filled the temple. No vision more glorious had ever burst on human eyes; but if the attendant

seraphs embraced the fullness of the earth as its scene, His holiness was their first and chiefest cry.

The effect was immediate on the prophet. It is no longer woe unto these or those, but “woe is me.” He is profoundly touched with a sense of sin and ruin—his own and the people's. But it is uttered in His presence whose grace is no less than His glory and His holiness, and the remedy is at once applied. “Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips; and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar; and he laid it upon my mouth and said, Lo this hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.” Nor this only: for thus set free in His presence, he becomes the ready servant of His will. “Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for me? Then said I, Here am I; send me. And he said, Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes: lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert and be healed.” Such is the charge, and we know how surely it was fulfilled in the judicial blindness which fell on the nation when they confessed not their uncleanness and beheld no glory nor beauty in Christ present in their midst, and refused the testimony of the Holy Ghost to Him risen and exalted to the right hand of God. Compare John 12 and Acts 28. But the Spirit of prophecy, if it pronounce the sentence of God on the people's unbelief, is notwithstanding a spirit of intercession. “Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate, and the LORD have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land; but yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and shall be eaten [or consumed]; as a teil-tree, and as an oak,” &c.

Thus, a remnant is clearly indicated here, mercy rejoicing against judgment, and God making good His own glory in both respects. But that returned remnant must be thinned under the pruning hand of Jehovah. Still the holy seed shall be there, the stock of the nation, when judgment has done its work.

Chapter 104

# Notes on Isaiah 7

IN the last chapter we saw the glory of Christ revealed, and the assurance of a holy seed after the judgment of the land and people. We have now a weighty sequel recounting facts which occurred not in the year King Uzziah died, nor even in the days of his successor, but in those of Ahaz. It could not otherwise have been clearly gathered how the glory of Christ was actually to appear. Our chapter solves this question, and connects His revelation with His rejection and His final and everlasting triumph. (Chap. 8., 9:1-7.) The first part alone comes before us now.

The occasion was the offensive alliance of Resin, King of Syria, with Pekah, Remaliah's son and King of Israel, against Judah and Ahaz. “And it was told the house of David, saying, Syria is confederate with Ephraim; and his heart was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind.” There were they in great fear, where no fear was, and this alas! in Jerusalem and David's house; and no wonder, for the heir of David's throne walked not like David, his father, but in the ways of the King of Israel or worse, and made Judah naked and transgressed sore against the Lord. Panic stricken, yet in no way driven by his distress to God, Ahaz is met by the prophet, with his son Shear-jashub, who says from the Lord, “Take heed and be quiet; fear not, neither be faint-hearted for the two tails of these smoking firebrands, for the fierce anger of Rezin with Syria, and of the son of Remaliah. Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah, have taken evil counsel against thee, saying, Let us go up against Judah, and vex it, and let us make a breach therein for us, and set a king in the midst of it, even the son of Tabeal,” &c. (Ver. 1 - 6.)

How foolish, as well as base, is unbelief! It is joyous and confident when a laboring volcano is about to burst; it is filled with anguish, when God is going to deal with the evils it dreads. In this case, how could He behold in peace a compact between apostate Israel and heathen Syria? It was not merely that their enterprise, if successful, must vex Judah, but set aside David's line. It was a blow at the Messiah, little as they might have thought of this; and the oath and honor of God were thus at stake. But “thus saith the Lord God, It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass. For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Resin; and within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken, that it be not a people. And the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is Remaliah's son. If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established.” (Ver. 7-9.)

How blessed are the ways of God! The effort to destroy, which seemed so awful to its objects, especially as their conscience was bad, led at once to the revelation of the doom of the destroyers. The Syrian chief would not avail to shield more guilty Ephraim; for it was sentenced—yea to be so broken as not to be a people within sixty-five years; and so it was to the letter. (2 Kings 17) The chief of Ephraim's capital is paraded before us like his ally in due form and title; but who were they to dispute the counsels of God as to David's Royal line, let Ahaz be personally unbelieving, as he might be and was? God at least is God, and His word shall stand forever, though surely the infidel shall not be established.

But this was only the prelude to the weightier announcement that follows: “Moreover, the Lord spake again unto Ahaz, saying, Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God: ask it either in the depth or in the height above. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord.” (Ver.10-12.) Alas! how often the hypocrisy of unbelief thus essays to hide its contempt of the Lord; and thorough presumption, which really despises the word of His grace, assumes the garb of superior reverence and humility. The prophet, however, sees through the cheat put forward by an evil heart of unbelief and calls now on the house of David to hear, not alone his reproof, but the sign which the Lord Himself was to give. “Behold a [or, the] virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Immanuel.” Marvelous grace so to promise to such a man! Yet in truth, grace condemns unbelief and all other sin as the law never did or could. Had Ahaz asked any sign within his range of earth or heaven, how immeasurably short of God's! If man refuses to ask through unbelief, God fails not to give a sign for His own glory: the virgin's son, the woman's seed, Emmanuel! What thoughts and feelings cluster here together! The security of David's royal line and rights, what was it more than the predicted ruin of plotting Ephraim, in the presence of the sign, the truth of truths—God with us? Yet was it the assurance, if its grandeur betokened other and higher glories, that no conspiracy could prosper which struck at this Root and Offspring of David.

It is scarcely necessary perhaps, and yet for some readers it may be a help, to observe that the “son,” Emmanuel, in verse 14, is not “the child” of verse 16, which last refers rather to Shear-jashub, who for this reason seems to have accompanied the prophet. “For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrent shall be forsaken of both her kings.” It will be noticed, accordingly that here we have Isaiah turning from “the house of David,” “ye” and “you,” to “thou,” &c. i.e., Ahaz. Compare verses 13, 14 with 10, 17. And it is certain that the prophet's child, Shear-jashub, had the character of a “sign,” (see chap. 8:18,) though and of course very distinct from the great sign, the virgin's son, From verse 16, the king was to learn, that before that child, then present, arrived at years of discretion, the allied kings must disappear from the scene. And so they did: for three years more scarce passed over its youthful head before the kings of Israel and Syria fell before the treachery or might of their enemies.

Should guilty Ahaz and Judah, then, go unpunished? In no wise, as the prophet proceeds to let him know. “The Lord shall bring upon thee, and upon thy people, and upon thy father's house, days that have not come, from the day that Ephraim departed from Judah, even the King of Assyria. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall hiss for the fly that is in the uttermost part of the rivers of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria. And they shall come, and shall rest all of them in the desolate valleys, and in the holes of the rocks, and upon all thorns, and upon all bushes.” (Ver. 17-19.) The faith of Hezekiah might stay the execution of Judah's judgment, and the King of Assyria was rebuked for a season. But even Josiah, faithful as he was, suffered for his rash opposition to “the fly that is in the uttermost parts of the rivers of Egypt;” and “the bee that is in the land of Assyria” stung yet more fiercely at the summons of Jehovah. “In the same day shall the Lord shave with a razor that is hired, namely, by them beyond the river, by the King of Assyria, the head, and the hair of the feet: and it shall also consume the beard. And it shall come to pass in that day, that a man shall nourish a young cow, and two sheep. And it shall come to pass, for the abundance of milk that they shall give he shall eat butter: for butter and honey shall every one eat that is left in the land. And it shall come to pass in that day,

that every place shall be, where there were a thousand vines at a thousand silverlings, it shall even be for briers and thorns. With arrows and with bows shall men come thither, because all the land shall become briers and thorns. And on all hills that shall be digged with the mattock, there shall not come thither the fear of briers and thorns: but it shall be for the sending forth of oxen, and for the treading of lesser cattle." (Ver. 20-25.) The character of Israel's land should thus be wholly changed; and so complete the desolation ensuing that the owner of a young cow and two sheep would find the amplest range for his scanty flock in the wildernesses that succeeded to the rich cornfields of Palestine, and himself be fed on the nourishment proper to wandering hordes, not on the food of cultivated lands. What a picture! Yes, and the best of vineyards (comp. Song of Sol. 8.) becomes a bed of briers and thorns; and men cannot pass unprotected by bows and arrows; and the carefully tended hills are turned into a place for oxen and lesser cattle. So dark as well as minute are the lines in which the sorrowful change in Judea is set before her king.

Chapter 105

# Notes on Isaiah 8 and 9:1-7

WE have already the two great parties of which the prophecy treats, Immanuel and the Assyrian. The virgin should conceive a Son—Messiah, Immanuel: Jehovah should bring upon the faithless son of David the ravaging King of Assyria, though with assured mercy to a remnant.

In the chapter before us now, we have fuller and other information vouchsafed of the Lord. A great roll has to be taken and written concerning another son of the prophet, then unborn, with the mystic name of Maher-shalal-hash-baz. This is explained to and by Isaiah: “For before the child shall have knowledge to cry, My father and my mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the King of Assyria.” (Ver. 4.) And this, the inspired history proves, was fulfilled to the letter.

But there is more. “The Lord spake also unto me again saying, Forasmuch as this people refuseth the waters of Shiloah that go softly, and rejoice in Rezin and Reinaliah's son. Now therefore, behold, the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, even the king of Assyria, and all his glory: and he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks: and he shall pass through Judah; and he shall overflow and, go over, he shall reach even to the neck; and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel.” We are here in the presence of the scenes of the latter day, whatever type may be supposed to have already been. The Assyrian proudly fills the land, Immanuel's land, reaching even “to the neck;” yet he is not merely checked and put to shame, but utterly and forever broken.

The people here had no faith, any more than the king in the preceding scene. Both of them despised the ways and the promises of God. Their confidence, as their fear, was man. If Ahaz cowered before the two tails of the smoking firebrands, as the Lord contemptuously designated time fierce anger of the combined kings of Israel and Syria, the people refused the softly-flowing streams of Siloah, Just would be their retribution. The impetuous river, the Assyrian, should rise to overflowing and well-nigh overwhelm the land.

But is it not “thy land, O Immanuel?” Assuredly it is, and whatever be the king, whatever the people, whatever the humbling of them both, will not God avenge the insult to Him who, when reviled, reviled not again? He is not deaf to the cry of His elect. How does He not feel for Immanuel! Did the people associate themselves? They might spare themselves the trouble: they shall be broken. Did all they of far countries gird themselves? Let them hear, if they fear not—let them hear their sentence of the Lord. “Gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces; gird yourselves and ye shall be broken in pieces. Take counsel together, and it shall come to naught; speak the word, and it shall not stand: for God is with us.” (Ver. 9, 10.)

This opens the door for pointing out the path of faith for the godly, the Lord Himself the sole and sure resource, the one object of reverence and fear in a day of manifold evil and thickening danger. “For the Lord spake thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying, Say ye not, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people

shall say, A confederacy; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid. Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken. Bind up the testimony. seal the law among my disciples. And I will wait upon the Lord, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him. Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion." (Ver. 11-18.)

In truth, to be thus in felt, confessed weakness and cast thereby on "the Lord of hosts Himself," is really, spite of all appearance to the eyes and reasonings of men, to be master of the situation. Even in a still more blessed way the apostle could take pleasure in infirmities, in reproach, in necessities, in persecution. in distresses for Christ's sake "Thus gladly (as he had said before) will I rather glory in mine infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

This brings about the final, triumphant deliverance of Israel, though connected with present facts and looking onward through the dreary circumstances of the desolate remnant, till the Lord rises up and settles all in the destruction of every foe. The united strength of their enemies should be vain. What those who feared Jehovah needed, was neither a confederacy, nor alarm at such as trusted in it, but to sanctify the Lord and make Him their sanctuary, though He should be a stone of stumbling, even to both the houses of Israel, yea a gin and snare to Jerusalem itself.

It is clear, then, that here we have not only the nations who would have swallowed up Israel, doomed to a total overthrow, but Israel, too, in all its extent stumbling at the stone of stumbling—their own Jehovah-Messiah. And withal in the midst is seen a feeble few, cleaving to His testimony, and owned as His disciples while the Lord hid His face from the people as a whole. They are a separate remnant, when the mass stumble, fall, and are broken, snared and taken. Hence, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Holy Spirit does not hesitate to cite verse 18, with other scriptures, (Psa. 16 and 22,) to prove sanctified ones with aim, not only the dependent man but the Sanctifier, however He may not be ashamed to call them brethren; and this, now in Christianity, as by and by in the latter day, while the nation are given over to blindness and unbelief.

The closing verses (19—22) show their exceeding iniquity and their impious recourse to the powers of darkness, in their own evident want of light, as they despised and departed from the law and the testimony of the Lord. The effect is intense misery, audacious rage and blasphemy of their King and their God, and the agony of despair.

"Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined." (Chap. ix. 1, 2.) The citation of this in Matt. 4 gives much light; there the fulfillment may extend to a future day, and in a form more complete in some respects, as far as the people are concerned. Let the hand of oppression be yet more grievous than had ever pressed upon them; yet would there be this difference (and how verified during our Lord's first appearing in their midst!) that among the darkest and most despised in the land should spring up a great light. It was in Galilee, not Jerusalem, that the grace of Jesus shone. And so in the last days: the Galilean

character attaches to the future remnant. Jerusalem will be the prey of the worst delusions and deadliest error. But the darkest, coldest night precedes a dawn of joy and glory. And so it will be for Israel, when He who was despised and their stumbling-block, but withal Jehovah the shield and sanctuary of the weak godly remnant, shall rise and shine in all His effulgence on His people.

“Thou hast multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy: they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian. For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire. For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.” It is plain that “not increased. the joy” is erroneous. Time margin is right, substantially, as the next clause might prove to any reader.

The hour of freedom and victory is come; and the Lord it is who has done it. But it is not as with ordinary war, with noise of human conflict and bloodshed; burning and fuel of fire distinguish this from other battles. And no wonder, when He stands out their Kinsman-Redeemer, the true, but once rejected, Son of David, who is their boast now, with every name of power, and praise and blessing, with an endless reign before Him, established with righteousness and judgment from henceforth and forever. Truly, “the zeal of Jehovah of hosts will perform this.”

Chapter 106

# Notes on Isaiah 9:8-21 and Isaiah 10

The prophet now resumes the dirge of judgment on the nation in general, begun in chapter 5, and interrupted by the two-fold episode of chapter 6 and of chapters 7, 8, 9:1-7. This last gave us the special development of Jehovah's ways with His people; the revelation of His glory in Christ, with its effects in judgment and mercy; the Incarnation, or Immanuel, the Virgin's Son, the stay of David's house and hope of Israel, spite of the land desolated by the Assyrian; then the re-appearance of the Assyrian, now that it is Immanuel's land, and the overthrow of all the Gentiles associated with him, whatever his temporary but great successes even in the pleasant land; next, an inner moral view of the people when (strange to say) Jehovah should be for a stone of stumbling to both the houses of Israel but a sure sanctuary for a godly remnant, “My disciples,” who would be for signs and wonders in Israel at the very time Jehovah hides His face, as He is clearly doing now, from the house of Jacob: all closing in darkness and trouble such as never was for the mass, and yet with light for the despised Galileans, as at the Lord's first advent, so just before the nation is multiplied, the oppression is broken, the victory won not by human sword, but by burning and fuel of fire; and He who is not more surely the virgin's Son, the woman's Seed, than the mighty God, the Prince of Peace, establishes His blessed kingdom from henceforth, even forever.

Chapter 9:8 takes up again (comp. chap. 5: 25) the general train, but with allusion to some of the instruction, as for instance to Rezin and the Assyrian, in the parenthetical part. Verses 8-12 contain the renewed announcement of divine displeasure. “The Lord sent a word into Jacob, and it hath lighted upon Israel. And all the people shall know, even Ephraim and the inhabitant of Samaria, that say in the pride and stoutness of heart, The bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn stones: the sycamores are cut down, but we will change them into cedars. Therefore the Lord shall set up the adversaries of Resin against him, and join his enemies together; the Syrians before and the Philistines behind; and they shall devour Israel with open mouth.” It is clear that as yet the ten rebellious tribes are the object of judgment, and emphatically their pride of heart in despising the Lord's rebuke and confiding in their own powers. For this is their fond hope and vain-glorious arrogance, turning their breach into an occasion of greater strength and display than ever. “The bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn stones; the sycamores are cut down, but we will change them into cedars.” But here came the retributive dealing of God. Had Syria's king, Rezin, joined them in unholy league against Judah? “Therefore the Lord shall set up the adversaries of Rezin against him and join his enemies together, the Syrians before and the Philistines behind; and they shall devour Israel with open mouth.” So it ever is. The unfaithful people seek the world's alliance against those with whom God's testimony is, but prove ere long that the friendship of the world is not only enmity against God, but destruction to themselves. “For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.”

The next view of their judgment (ver. 13-17) is not so much judicial retribution from without, but because His chastening was slighted, the Lord's giving up Israel to utter internal demoralization. “For the people turneth not unto him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the Lord of hosts.

Therefore the Lord will cut from Israel head and tail, branch and rush, in one day. The ancient and honorable, he is the head; and the prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail. For the leaders of this people cause them to err; and they that are led of them are destroyed." Universal ruin in one day on all classes, from the highest to the lowest of Israel, "branch and rush;" all plunged into common destruction, leaders and led. What a picture! and how much more dismal and hopeless, when the righteous Lord, indignant at the abounding falsehood and wrong under the highest pretensions to sanctity, "shall have no joy in their young men, neither shall have mercy on the fatherless and widows." Neither youth and vigor are pleasant to Him, nor can orphanage or widowhood touch His heart longer in a people so depraved: "For every one is an hypocrite and an evildoer, and every mouth speaketh folly. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still."

Then follows a most vivid picture (ver. 18, 19) of wickedness, burning like fire; of Jehovah's wrath darkening the land; and reckless, unsparing violence of brother against brother. "And he shall snatch on the right hand, and be hungry; and be shall eat on the left hand, and they shall not be satisfied: they shall eat every man the flesh of his own arm: Manasseh, Ephraim: and Ephraim, Manasseh: and they together shall be against Judah. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still." The nearest of the ten should devour each other, and both Judah.

The last of these disciplinary inflictions is given in chapter 10:1-4. Here it is the unrighteousness of the judges, who stood in the place of God Himself and were called Elohim, gods, (Psa. 82,) but most grievously misrepresented His character and wronged His people, specially the defenseless. "Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, and that write grievousness which they have prescribed; to turn aside the needy from judgment, and to take away the right from the poor of my people, that widows may be their prey, and that they may rob the fatherless! And what will ye do in the day of visitation, and in the desolation which shall come from far? to whom will ye flee for help? and where will ye leave your glory?" And this is His sentence on them: "Without me they shall bow down under the prisoners, and they shall fall under the slain." The most exalted shall be most abased; and those shall fare worst whom it least became to turn their high estate and large power to God-dishonoring greed and oppression. "For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still."

But now, in verse 9, we enter on a most weighty change. The Assyrian desolator comes up once more. It is his final working which is chiefly in the mind of the Holy Ghost; as indeed this is the grand catastrophe and last trouble of Jacob, and in contrast with the previous solemn formula of still continuing, unexhausted wrath. Now, on the contrary, we have in this proud enemy of Israel the rod of Jehovah's anger. "The day of visitation" is there, the "desolation from far" is come. The indignation ceases, and Jehovah's anger in their destruction. His anger now is turned away and His arm stretched out no more.

Again, it is of great moment to apprehend clearly that the Antichrist, or man of sin, is a totally distinct personage. The commentators, from Eusebius to Horsley, who confound the two, are inexcusably careless of the Scripture; for it is very clear that there will be a willful king in the city and land who will set himself up as Messiah and Jehovah in His temple, received as such by the apostate Jews; and that, altogether opposed to the Antichrist in Jerusalem who is in league with the western power, there is another chief, an external antagonist of the Jews, who is the Assyrian, or king of the north, so often occurring in the prophecies. Of him Sennacherib was a type.

The Assyrian, then, was first used as a rod to chastise Israel. “I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few.” But he owned not God, saying, “Are not my princes altogether kings? Is not Calmo as Carchemish? is not Hamath as Arpad? is not Samaria as Damascus? As my hand hath found the kingdoms of the idols, and whose graven images did excel them of Jerusalem and of Samaria; shall I not, as I have done unto Samaria and her idols, so do to Jerusalem and her idols?” His own doom is therefore sealed. “Wherefore it shall come to pass that when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks. For he saith, By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom; for I am prudent; and I have removed the bounds of the people, and have robbed their treasures, and I have put down their inhabitants like a valiant man: and my hand hath found as a nest the riches of the people: and as one gathereth eggs that are left, have I gathered all the earth; and there was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or peeped. Shall the ax boast itself against him that heweth therewith? or shall the saw magnify itself? as if the rod should shake itself against them that lift it up, or as if the staff should lift up itself, as if it were no wood. Therefore shall the Lord, the Lord of hosts, send among his fat ones leanness; and under his glory he shall kindle a burning like the burning of a fire. And the light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his holy one for a flame: and it shall burn and devour his thorns and his briers in one day; and shall consume the glory of his forest, and of his fruitful field, both soul and body: and they shall be as when a standard-bearer fainteth. And the rest of the trees of his forest shall be few, that a child may write them.” It is the closing scene. The Lord has not even yet performed His whole work on mount Zion and on Jerusalem. Nay, He will not have done as long as the Antichrist will be there. Having disposed of Him by His epiphany from heaven, the Assyrian still remains to be punished. “And it shall come to pass in that day, that the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more again stay upon him that smote them; but shall stay upon the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. The remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God. For though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant of them shall return: the consumption decreed shall overflow with righteousness. For the Lord God of hosts shall make a consumption even determined, in the midst of all the land.” Then indeed Israel's unbelief shall forever pass away: Israel shall truss no more in an arm of flesh, be it Egyptian, Assyrian, or what not. The slaughter of Midian and the manner of Egypt give the characteristic patterns of the future deliverance. (Ver. 26.)

The chapter closes with a most animated description of the Assyrian's march down from the north into the utmost nearness to Jerusalem. “He is come to Aiath, he is passed to Migron; at Michmash he hath laid up his carriages: they are gone over the passage: they have taken up their lodging at Geba; Ramah is afraid; Gibeah of Saul is fled. Lift up thy voice, O daughter of Galliun: cause it to be heard unto Laish, O poor Anathoth. Madmenah is removed; the inhabitants of Gebim gather themselves to flee. As yet shall he remain at Nob that day: he shall shake his hand against the mount of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem.” In vain, however: he shall come to his end, and none shall help him. “Behold the Lord, the LORD of hosts, shall lop the bough with terror; and the high ones of stature shall be hewn down, and the haughty shall be humbled. And he shall cut down the thickets of the forest with iron, and Lebanon shall fall by a mighty one.”

Chapter 107

# Notes on Isaiah 11-12

In contrast with the destruction of the high and haughty Assyrian under the stroke of Jehovah, we have in the eleventh chapter a remarkable and full description of the Messiah; first, in a moral point of view; and, next, in His kingdom, its character and accompaniments, closed with a suited song of praise (chap. 12.) in the lips of Israel, now indeed and forever blessed of the Lord, their Holy One in their midst.

To look and contend for a fulfillment of this prophecy in Hezekiah or Josiah would be idle, and only shows the straits to which the rationalistic enemies of revelation are reduced. No king, let him be ever so pious or glorious, that followed Ahaz, no, nor David nor Solomon in the past, even approached the terms of the prediction, either personally or in the circumstances of their reign. Did the “Spirit of the Lord” rest upon the better of the two when he said, “I shall now perish by the hand of Saul: there is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines?” Was it “the spirit of wisdom and understanding,” when he feigned himself mad, and scrabbled on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle fall down upon his beard? Was it “the spirit of counsel and might,” when David amused his credulous host of Gath with his fictitious razzias against the south of Judah, when in truth he was invading the Geshurites, Amalekites, &c., without leaving a human being to tell the tale? Was it the “spirit of knowledge” that dealt with Absalom? Was the numbering of Israel done in “the fear of the Lord?” Was the matter of Uriah a proof that “righteousness” was “the girdle of his loins,” or “faithfulness” “of his reins?” When was the earth smitten with the rod of any king's mouth, or whose lips had breathed to the destruction of the wicked? And who has seen that wondrous change, depicted in verses 6-9, passing over the fierce beasts and the most timid, and man's lordship owned at length by all, subject and harmonious, even in the person of a babe? Equally impossible, at the least, is it to say, that the latter part of the chapter was met by anything resembling its predictions in any era of Israel. The idea of Zerubbabel fulfilling it is preposterous.

Is it contended, on the other hand, that this glowing picture of the great King and His kingdom is realized spiritually in the Church and in the blessings of the gospel? Without descending so low as the gross pretensions of papal ambition. the spiritual or rather mystical interpretation which suits worldly. minded Christendom, finds its expression in Theodoret or earlier still. This writer sees the apostolic doctrine change earth into heaven, and the picture in verses 6-8 accomplished in kings, prefects, generals, soldiers, artisans, servants, and beggars partaking together of the same holy talk and bearing the same discourses! Paul with the philosophers at Athens illustrates, according to him, the weaned child putting his hand on the cockatrice' den; as the promise to Peter (Matt. 16:18) answers to the predicted absence of any destructive thing! The Lord's holy mountain he explains as the loftiness, strength, and immutability of His divine teaching. Theodoret justly explodes the folly of applying such a prophecy to Zerubbabel, who was only governor of a few Jews, and in no way whatever of Gentiles; but he offers an alternative, hardly preferable, in the Acts of the Apostles, specially of Paul.

This kind of interpretation is not only false in fact, but injurious and corrupting in principle. It confounds the Church with Israel; it lowers the character of our blessing in Christ from heaven to earth; it weakens the word of God by introducing a haziness needful to the existence of such applications; it undermines the mercy and the faithfulness of God because it supposes that the richest and most unconditional of His promises to Israel are, notwithstanding, taken from them and turned into a wholly different channel. If God could so speak and act towards Israel, where is the guarantee for the Christian or the Church? The apostle can and does quote from the prophets, and this very chapter of our prophet, to vindicate the blessing of the Gentiles and their glorifying God for His mercy; but the self-same apostle maintains that there is now the revelation of a mystery which was hid from ages and generations, the mystery of Christ and the Church, wherein there is neither Jew nor Gentile.

In this prophecy, however, as in the Old Testament generally, we see the distinctive blessing of Israel, though there is hope for the Gentiles, as well as judgment on the enemies. All this supposes a state of things essentially differing from God's ways with His Church, during which Israel ceases to be the depositary of His testimony and promise. For as the natural Jewish branches were broken off from the olive-tree and the Gentile wild olive was grafted in, so because of non-continuance in God's goodness, the Gentile will be broken off and the natural branches grafted in again; “And so all Israel shall be saved, as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.” Meanwhile, blindness in part is happened unto Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. Then they will hail their rejected Messiah, and the universal blessing of the earth will follow His destruction of their foes as the initiatory act of His kingdom. Of this (not of the gospel, as regards which the Jews are enemies on our account) our chapters speak; and thus viewed, all flows harmoniously onward, both as a whole and in the smallest detail.

I cannot but think with others that the allusion to the stem of Jesse is significant. Elsewhere Messiah is viewed as David's son, or styled David himself; here He is a scion from the trunk of Jesse and a branch or shoot from his roots, for the purpose, it would seem, of drawing attention to the lowly condition into which the royal race should have sunk at the birth of the Christ. It was from that family, when of no account in Israel, that David was anointed for the throne. The prophet designates the rise of a greater than David, not from the glory that had been conferred on the house, but in a way readily suggestive of obscurity. From this stock, lowly of old, lowly once more, sprang the hope of Israel on whom the Spirit rested without measure; or, as Peter preached, God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the. Holy Ghost and with power. Here, however, it is not in the activity of grace among the sorrows of men and the oppressions of the devil, but in view of His government. Thoroughly subject to Jehovah, He rules, not according to appearance but righteously, in His fear. Such is the effect of the power that rested on Him. It “shall make him of quick understanding, [or scent,] in the fear of the Lord; he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears; but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth.” The Holy Spirit portrays the Messiah's moral fitness for His earthly reign. I say, His earthly reign, for so it evidently is throughout, to every reader who is free from prejudice or prepossession. And this is confirmed by the latter part of verse 4: “and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.” We need no human comment here, because we have already divine light in 2

Thess. 2:8. The inspired apostle applies it to the Lord's future destruction of the lawless one, the man of sin, the issue of the apostasy of Christendom, the same personage, doubtless, that the beloved disciple describes in 1 John 2:22: “Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.” This latter testimony helps to link all together. 2 Thess. 2 views him specially as the result yet to be manifested of that mystery of lawlessness which was even then working unseen. Isaiah shows not only the great outside enemy, the Assyrian, judged in chapter 10., but, in chapter 11:4, the internal enemy, “that wicked,” whom the apostate will accept as their Messiah, destroyed by the true Messiah appearing in glory. 1 John describes him, first, as the denier of the Messianic glory of Jesus; and next, in his full character of antichrist (as well as liar) in denying the Father and the Son (that is, the glory of Christ as revealed in Christianity).

Being thus shown the setting aside of the Antichrist at the end of this age, we have next a display of the reign of the true Christ and its beneficent effects. “And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the bole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.” It is the world or habitable earth to come whereof we speak (Heb. 2)—not heaven but earth, and especially the land of Israel under Him whose right it is. What ground is there to doubt its plain, literal accomplishment? I have never heard of any serious objection, save for Sadducean minds, which know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God. Why should it be thought a thing incredible that God should, in honor of the reign of Jesus, change not the face only, but the habits and bent of all animated nature, delivering the creature from the bondage of corruption under which it now groans? The Psalms celebrate this great day with songs of joy; the prophets are not silent about it; the Apostle Paul repeatedly treats it as a settled Christian expectation, only awaiting the revelation of Christ and the sons of God along with Him. There is a grievous gap in every scheme and every heart which does not look for the world's jubilee: without it, the earth would only seem made to be spoiled of Satan; whereas, to one taught as to this of God, if there were a single creature not put manifestly under the feet of the exalted Son of man, the enemy would be allowed so far to defraud Him of His just reward and supreme rights. In that day we shall see (for now we see not yet) all things put under Him: divine judgment on the quick, executed by Christ, brings it in, as we have gathered from verse 4 compared with 2 Thess. 2.

But this is not all: Israel must be received back in order that the world may thus know life from the dead. “In that day there shall be a root of Jesse which shall stand for an ensign of the people(s); to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea.” Those do the enemy's work who contend that these scriptures are fulfilled, or even in course of fulfillment. Save the general principle (which is, no doubt, conspicuous in the gospel)—that Gentiles seek, and hope for, and find eternal blessedness in Christ—it is a scene wholly future. The person of the Messiah has

been revealed and we know how truly He was the vessel of the Spirit on earth, and how His humiliation displayed every grace that became man towards God, or God towards man, in Christ Jesus, who was, withal, God over all, blessed for evermore. But He is not yet seated on His own throne nor exercising His kingdom here below; and the remnant of His people are not yet recovered from north, south, east, and west. Are we, therefore, to suppose that His arm is shortened? or that He has abandoned His cherished purpose, and that His gifts and calling are subject to repentance?

Such is not our God. Is He ours only and not also of the Jews? Yes, theirs also; “And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. The envy also of Ephraim, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim.” The moral history of Israel shall be reversed, as decidedly as natural history must be taught anew for the lower creation. Their old jealousies and mutual enmities, too well known after Solomon, fade away for restored Israel. And as for their plotting neighbors, they may re-appear, but it is to be put down forever. “They shall fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines towards 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.” From the Assyrian, the towering king of the north, Edom and Moab and the chief of the children of Ammon contrived to escape; (Dan. 11;) but not so from the hands of Israel, “out of weakness made strong.” The Lord shall be seen over the sons of Zion, and His arrow shall go forth as the lightning; and the Lord God shall blow the trumpet and shall go with whirlwinds of the south.

Then, in verses 15, 16, we have the Lord's supernatural dealing with external nature on behalf of His people, when He utterly destroys the tongue of the Egyptian sea and smites the river into seven streams, so that men may pass dry shod, and there is an highway for the remnant from Assyria, as of old from Egypt. In all this latter portion the mystical reading is at utter fault; and greater wonders than in the destruction of Pharaoh's hosts await the final deliverance of Israel from Egypt and from Assyria in the face of a gainsaying and incredulous age.

The song, chapter 12., concludes this section of our prophet, and is divided into two parts: the first of which (ver. 1-3) is Israel's praise for what God has been and is to itself; the second (ver. 4-6) is the spread of His praise in all the earth, though Zion is still the center where God dwells.

Chapter 108

# Notes on Isaiah 13-14

We begin now a very distinct section of our prophet, that is not occupied so much as before with Israel, though, of course, we find Israel therein; but still they are not the immediate object of the prophecy, but rather the nations and their judgment, running down from circumstances that were then immediately imminent to the very “end of the age.”

As to the expression just used, which occurs so often in the Gospel of Matthew, its application is to that condition of things during which Israel are found under the law and without their Messiah. The new age, on the contrary, will be characterized by their being under the new covenant. Their Messiah will then reign over them in glory. The Old Testament gives us, not only these ages, but the times before them, as the New Testament unveils the eternity that is to follow them. Practically, the New like the Old speaks of these two ages as connected with Israel: the age that was going on when Christ came and was rejected, and that which is to come when He returns in glory. “In this age” there is a mixture of good and evil, to be closed by an awful conflict in which the beast and the false prophet will fall. The age to come is when Satan is bound, and the Lord Jesus governs the earth in displayed power and glory.

Thus the difference of the ages is of incalculable importance. If you do not distinguish the present from the age to come, all must, be confusion, not for thought only, but for practice also. For now it is a question of grace and faith, evil being allowed outwardly to triumph, as we see in the cross. In the world to come the evil will be externally judged and kept down, and the good will be exalted over all the earth, and fill the whole world with the knowledge of Jehovah and His glory. The end of the age, therefore, is evidently future; and so Scripture speaks. Thus, for us it is “this present evil age,” from which Christ's death has delivered us; the new age will be good, not evil, as surely as it is a future thing. Again, if we think not of the Church, but of Israel, I suppose that the age began with their being under the law in the absence of the Messiah. The new age will be when Israel have their Messiah not only come, but come again and reigning; for the presence of the Messiah in humiliation did not interrupt the age; and still less did their rejection of Him bring in the new age. Only there is now another mighty work of God in process, based on the heavenly glory of Christ and the personal presence of the Holy Ghost, and marked here below by the Church of God. During this, mercy is flowing out to the Gentiles; so that we may call it the Gentile parenthesis of mercy. Before, and quite distinct from this, were the times of the Gentiles, when God in His providence gave Gentiles to take the government of the world, beginning with Nebuchadnezzar, the golden head of the great image; this one may call the Gentile parenthesis of judgment. They are both of them within the limits of “this age,” and are going on still. The new age will be brought in by the Lord's coming in the clouds of heaven.

Now this at once introduces a very important change, namely, that repentant Israel will be delivered, and the nations come up for the judgment of the quick when the Son of man shall have entered on His kingdom. (Comp. Matt. 25; Rev. 11; 20) The first part of Isaiah we saw to be the judgment of Israel and then their final blessing. This is always a principle of the dealings of God:

when He judges, He begins at His own house. Hence Peter says, “The time is come that judgment must begin with the house of God,” and then he shows that if “the righteous scarcely (or with difficulty) are saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” But God has undertaken to save the righteous, although it be with difficulty and in face of an amazing mass of contradiction and trial, and their own utter weakness. All these things make it hard, indeed; but what is insuperable to us is an opening for the glory of God; and He has got over the great difficulty, and that was our sins. Is sin—any, all sin—any longer a difficulty for Christ? Has He not for the believer put sins away by the cross? But if there is no difficulty to God, there are many to us; and the word, “the righteous scarcely are saved,” is in relation to our dangers by the way. Now if that be so, what will be the end of the ungodly? The Apostle Peter applies it to the Christian and looks at the world as coming under judgment when the Lord shall appear. In the Old Testament, it is not the Church but Israel that are in question; but God invariably begins with that which is nearest to Him. Accordingly all the first twelve chapters have been occupied with Israel as the foreground of the picture, whatever incidental notice there may be of others.

But from this portion onward, through a dozen chapters more, we have the Gentiles prominent, though Jerusalem too is judged in their midst, ending with the dissolution of the earth and with the higher ones punished on high. He had shown us the judgment of His own house; now He deals with the nations in relationship with His people, one after another.

First of all, Babylon comes up, because it was the great Gentile power that was allowed to take possession of Jerusalem; and God shows that, while He may use the stranger to chastise His people, He will turn round ere long and deal with their oppressive cruelty, because their mind was to destroy, while God employed them only to chasten. And inasmuch as there was pride of power, without conscience toward God, yea also, the main source of idolatry, so Babylon cannot escape, but is the first among the Gentiles summoned to judgment. Thus, what we are now entering upon is not the divine scrutiny of His house in Israel, but the judgment of the world and of the nations, and hence right early of Babylon. Observe, however, that if the Spirit of God takes notice of what was then befalling the Jews, (expressly noticing the ruin of this land and people that was imminent, when they should be taken captive to Babylon,) for all that, He never confines Himself to any blows, however grave, that were then struck. This, indeed, is just the difference between what is of God and what is of man. If man speaks, there are necessary limits to the application of his words. In what God says, there is invariably a germinant sense, deepening farther on, evidencing what God has in view, to show what He is and glorify Christ. This, I think, is the meaning of the scriptural canon in 2 Peter 1:20: “No prophecy is of any private interpretation.” Apply it but to some particular event, and you destroy the purpose of God; while it may, doubtless, include such an event, all prophecy looks onward to the counsels of God in reference to the glory of His Son.

And such is the aim of the Spirit's testimony. Indeed, this is true of all Scripture; for Christ is the object of God in giving Scripture at all; He is not merely thinking of man, or of his salvation, blessed as it is; nor of Israel, nor of the Church.

God thinks of Christ, who is more precious to Himself than all besides. It is in virtue of Christ that there can be a purpose brought to issue in or out of such a world as this. For it is not possible that the creature itself could have any intrinsic value in the sight of God. That which merely flows out of the sovereign will, and almighty hand of God, can cease to be. He that made can destroy; but

when you come to Christ, you have that which nothing can, we may reverently say, destroy; and all the efforts of man or Satan to destroy and dishonor Him have been only turned, in the mighty and gracious wisdom of God, into a display of all-surpassing glory. Thus we arrive at the great truth for our every-day walk. We have to do with One now, whose love nothing can exhaust, whose ways too are perfect; we have to do with Him day by day, to wait on Him, to expect from Him, to trust Him, to make sure of His admirable care for us. Christ is worthy that our hearts should confide in Him, and He cannot be confided in without blessing flowing out. Thus God proves Himself greater than all that can be against us. Apart from Christ, there is nothing even that He Himself made but what, connected with man on earth, soon has a cloud over it. Nay, it is wider still. Angels left their first estate. Look at any creature-height, or beauty apart from Christ, and what is the security? Is not the earth, once so fair, a wilderness? Is not man a moral wreck? Israel were brought out into the wilderness to keep a feast to the Lord; but they made and worshipped a golden calf, to His deep dishonor. In the Church of God, called to the unity of the Spirit and the reflection of Christ's heavenly glory here below, what breaches, divisions, sects, heresies, confusions, and every evil work! What guilty ignorance of the Father, what bold denial of the Son, what flagrant sin against the Holy Ghost; and all this going on at an aggravated, accelerating ratio, as the apostasy draws near and the manifestation of the man of sin in its final form.

We look as it were on the closing history of Christendom, upon the eve of that judgment that slumbers not; but, thank God, we await first of all our Savior from heaven—a blessed hope which may be forgotten by worldliness and unbelief, but will never fade because it is not founded on anything short of the Lord Jesus. He is coming; and as surely as He does, we have the turning-point of all blessing reached for our bodies and all things, even as now by faith for our souls. What a discovery it has been to some of us, that prophecy has the selfsame center that the rest of Scripture has, and that its center in Christ is so much the more conspicuous as it cannot content itself with past accomplishment, but ever looks onward to the grand fulfillment in the future! No matter what it may be, all acquires importance because God is thinking of His beloved Son. And His Son is to strike the last strokes of judgment; He will deal with man, first, by providential means, then in person.

From the chapter now before us we may gather these two things plainly enough—a preparatory application to the times of the prophet or near them, but the only adequate fulfillment reserved for the great day, which is still future. For instance, in verses 6-10, one can see there are greater signs than have ever been verified. These things cannot fairly be said to have literally taken place; yet the Spirit of God does not hesitate to connect them with Babylon's fall. To talk of hyperbole or exaggeration is to prove utter ignorance of Scripture and of the power of God. I could understand an infidel talking such language as this; but the moment you begin to suppose that the Spirit of God could willingly set Himself to exaggerate, the authority of the whole word is shaken. If He magnifies a temporal judgment, beyond the facts, how do I know that He does not exaggerate grace and eternal redemption? And where is the ground in this case for solid peace with God? Is it, or is it not, a fixed principle, that the Holy Ghost always speaks the truth? Then, along with this, we must take care that we understand its application. Thus, to restrain this scene to the past judgment of Babylon is to limit the word of God and make the Spirit seem to exaggerate. But this is merely our misunderstanding and error. How momentous, then, it is that we should be in malice children, in understanding men! We may well shrink with horror from a pathway that leads to an

end so dishonoring to the word of God. On the other hand, that the Holy Ghost did really speak inclusively of a past accomplishment I hold to be just as certain as that He was looking onward to far more than that.

In verses 15-17 it is a temporal judgment that is spoken of; a description not of what will be when the Lord judges, but of the lawless way in which man wreaks his wrath upon his fellow.

Verses 18, 19 present a total destruction. Babylon has been judged. An almost unprecedented disaster and destruction fell on that proud city; and this, we know, was under God effected by the junction of the Medes and Persians, with Cyrus for their leader.

But plainly the Lord here uses the strongest language to show that it is His day. In reading the New Testament as well as the Old, it is of the utmost moment to understand “the day of the Lord” in its real character and import. It is not the same thing as the Lord's “coming” to receive us. When He comes, the dead saints are raised and the living ones are changed, which is not “the day of the Lord,” nor ever so called in Scripture. There is one chapter (2 Peter 3) where there might seem to be some difficulty; bat the difficulty is really from this very confusion; for when you distinguish the two phrases and thoughts here as elsewhere, all is plain. What the scoffers of the last days say, is, “where is the promise of His coming,” &c. What the Spirit of God replies is, that the day of the Lord shall come, and come like a thief in the night to judge wickedness upon the earth. They make light of the Christians who are looking for this bright hope, their Master's coming; but the Holy Ghost threatens them with the terrible day of the Lord. The Lord is never represented as coming like a thief in the night except when judgment is distinctly spoken of, as in Sardis. (Rev. 3) In 1 Thess. 5 the Spirit brings in the comparison of the thief when He speaks of the day of the Lord coming upon the world, not in relation to the saints who wait for Christ.

The real truth is that the expression “coming of the Lord” may apply to His presence before He is manifested to every eye, but “day of the Lord” pertains to that part and aspect of His action which inflicts just vengeance upon the world, and then presents Him judging in righteousness. Here it is the day of the Lord; and, therefore, of darkness and destruction to sinners; there is not a word about the righteous dead being raised, or the living changed; all that which is proper to the New Testament, you find there and there only. In the Old Testament you have the dealing of the Lord with Israel, judging what was wrong, but finally blessing, and patient long-suffering with the Gentiles where He took notice of them at all till the day of visitation come. This accounts for the language of Isa. 13. The Spirit of God has in His view the Lord's judgment of the whole world; and, therefore, it is called “the day of Jehovah.” It will be the termination of all the space allowed to man's will and self-exaltation. It will be the manifestation of God's moral ways when all that is high shall be abased, and the Lord and the lowly that He loves shall be exalted forever. But while the Spirit of God goes onward to that day, there was enough to mark Babylon devoted to destruction by a direct intervention of God near at hand. The truth of the prophecy was thus witnessed by a special accomplishment in those days. Babylon then became first like Sodom and Gomorrha. If it was physically not so manifestly a divine judgment, it was morally a stupendous event which changed the whole course of the world's history. The downfall of Persia was in no way a type of the final judgment of the world, neither was the fall of Greece of any striking significance in this respect. The judgment of Rome will be so, of course; but this is yet future. It has been, as it were, shaken repeatedly and brought low; but then it has revived. The day is coming when Rome will

rise again into splendor and amazing power, when it will be the center of a revived empire. But it will then rise to meet its final doom from the hands of God. The past ruin of Babylon is a type of this destruction of Rome. When Babylon fell, the children of Israel were delivered; there was nothing of the sort when Persia yielded to Greece, or Greece to Rome.

Thus the fall of the first great power of the Gentiles is a type of the doom of the last, when Israel will have been finally set free, a converted people, and delivered spiritually as much as nationally, thenceforward made to express the glory of Jehovah upon the earth.

So in the next chapter (14.) the Spirit of God goes forward to Israel's deliverance. The connection is plain. The overthrow of Babylon involves the emancipation of Israel. It has thus much greater importance than the history of any ordinary power; and the past Babylon is simply a type of the fall of that vast power, its final heir, which is to the last the enslaver of the Jews and the master of the holy city. Israel are yet to have as their servants the very persons who formerly enslaved them themselves. Expecting this glory for Israel, and this mighty deliverance for the people of the Jews, one can understand how they shall “take up this proverb against the king of Babylon.” For he sets forth no other than the last head of the beast, just as Nebuchadnezzar was the first. Although the king of Babylon typifies the person who will finally have the Jews as his captives, it would be a great mistake to suppose that it is to be a king of the Babylon of Shinar. I refer to this now, merely to show that it rests upon a false principle. Many have the thought that there will be a re-establishment of oriental Babylon in the last days. They suppose there will be a literal city in the plain of Shinar. This I believe to be fundamentally false. The New Testament shows us by evident remarks what the future one will be, and contrasts the Apocalyptic Babylon with that of the Chaldees. The Babylon of the old world was built upon a plain, the future Babylon is characterized by the seven mountains it sits on. Thus every one of common information would understand the locality of the future Babylon. There is but one city that has had proverbially this title attached to it among Gentiles, Jews, and Christians. Everywhere it has acquired a designation from the circumstance; so that if you speak of the seven-hilled city, there is hardly an educated child but would answer, “It must be the famous city of Rome.” This is the city which is to occupy in the last days the same kind of importance that Babylon had in the beginning of the age. It began with Babylon and ends with the person that is called, in the Book of Revelation, “the Beast.” There were four beasts in Daniel, but one is called “the Beast,” as indeed but the last existed; and if it became extinct, it was to rise again and be present once more before its judgment. Now God makes the old enemy to be a type of the new one that menaces them. The final holder of the power of Babylon thus becomes a type of him who will wield the same power against the people of God in the last days. In Rev. 17 the general principle is exceeding clear, without the violent supposition of a literal metropolis in Chaldea; where man would have not merely to build the city, but, first of all, to create seven hills. Another thing the Spirit of God speaks of is, the reigning of the city over the kings of the earth, and not of the control exercised over the empire, under the symbol of the woman riding the beast.

Finally, the Apocalyptic Babylon will shift from a heathenish character to an anti-Christian one. What we have in Isaiah furnishes the groundwork for that which meets us in the Revelation. Thus the strong language that is used in verses 12-14, could scarcely be said to have been exhausted in Nebuchadnezzar or Belshazzar. There was pride and self-exaltation in the one, and most degrading and profane luxury in the other; but what we have here will be fully verified in the last

days and not before. After taking this place of power, the lofty one is to be abased as no Babylonish monarch ever was. (See ver. 15)

I do not enter into the rest of the chapter further than to point out another declaration in Verses 24, 25. Some suppose that the king of Babylon and the Assyrian are one and the same person; it is a common mistake, and particularly among men of learning. But it is clear that the later statement is something added to the fall of him of Babylon who has been already judged. Then the Assyrian follows, who is dealt with summarily in the Lord's land. This agrees perfectly with what may be gathered from other parts of God's word.

Now, if you look at the past history of Israel, the Assyrian came up first, his army destroyed, and himself sent back into his own land, there to be slain by his rebellious sons in the house of his god. The astonishing destruction of his hosts was typical of the fall of “the Assyrian” in the last days, but only a type of it. This was considerably before Babylon was allowed of God to become supreme. It was after the disappearance of Nineveh that Babylon sprang up into the first place. The Assyrian never gained the supremacy of the world, but Babylon did, as a sovereign grant from God, after the royal house of David had become the helper on of idolatry, following the people of God in their love—the abomination of the heathen. God told, as it were, the king of Babylon to take the whole world to himself. Babylon was always most conspicuous for its many idols; but as the chosen witness had become idolatrous, the worst might as well have supremacy as the best. Babylon was thus exalted to the empire of the world. Its active enmity and idolatry could hardly be thought a claim on the true God: on the other hand, it was not allowed to hinder its rise in God's sovereignty into the place of the government of the world. This was, in fact, subsequent to the destruction of the Assyrian which we have seen before in other chapters 8-10. Here, on the contrary, Babylon is judged first; then the Assyrian comes up and is smitten in the land of God's people. Why is this? Because the Spirit of God is here taking the circumstances of the Assyrian as well as the king of Babylon, not as a history of the past, but as looking onward to the last days; and in the last days the king represented by Babylon will be destroyed first, and then the power of the Assyrian will be broken last of all. This perfectly agrees with the scene as a typical or prophetic picture of the last days. Whereas, if you confine it to the past, it would not tally, and there could be no right understanding of it. While the Spirit of God speaks of the Assyrian subsequently to Babylon, it is certain that in past history the Assyrian fell first in order and Babylon afterward. By and by Babylon will be smitten in the last holder of the Beast's power, and this in connection with the Jews; while the power that answers to the king of Assyria will come up after that, when God is occupying Himself with the ten tribes of Israel.

The Lord grant that we may be enabled to profit by all Scripture, using it for instruction and warning, as well as refreshment and joy. All plans for worldly ease and honor will end only in destruction and bitter disappointment. Our business is to be working out what God gives us to do. He is saving souls to be the companions of Christ in heaven. Our responsibility is to be carrying out His thoughts of mercy towards sinners, and His love towards those that cleave to the name of His Son.

Chapter 109

# Notes on Isaiah 14:28-32, and Isaiah 15-16

THE division of chapters is singularly unhappy here; for the last five verses of chapter 14. form a section to themselves, and the two following chapters are but one subject. What adds to the confusion is the insertion of the sign of the new paragraph at verse 29 of chapter 14.; whereas verse 28 really pertains to the new burden—not to Babylon or the Assyrian, but to God's judgment on the Philistines.

“In the year that king Ahaz died was this burden. Rejoice not thou, whole Palestine, because the rod of him that smote thee is broken: for out of the serpent's root shall come forth a cockatrice, and his fruit shall be a fiery flying serpent.”

The death of Ahaz might naturally excite the hopes of his neighbors, the Philistines, who had been put down by the strong hand of his grandfather Uzziah. Of him it is written in 2 Chron. 26:4, that “he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father Amaziah did. And he sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God: and as long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper. And he went forth and warred against the Philistines, and brake down the wall of Gath, and the wall of Jabneb, and the wall of Ashdod, and built cities about Ashdod, and among the Philistines. And God helped him against the Philistines, and against the Arabians that dwelt in Gur-baal, and the Mehunims. And the Ammonites gave gifts to Uzziah; and his name spread abroad even to the entering in of Egypt; for he strengthened himself exceedingly.”

And now, not only Uzziah, but Ahaz, were gone; “the rod of him that smote” the land of the Philistines was “broken.” The enemy had learned to despise Judah in the days of faithless Ahaz. “For the Lord brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel: for he made Judah naked and transgressed sore against the Lord.” Who was his son that they should fear him? Let them not rejoice, however; “for out of the serpent's root shall come forth a cockatrice, and his fruit shall be a fiery flying serpent.” The primary accomplishment of this was in the reign of Hezekiah of whom it is recorded (2 Kings 18:8,) that “he smote the Philistines, even unto Gaza, and the borders thereof, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city.”

But I see no reason whatever to suppose that this burden is an exception to the rest; especially as the strength of the language points to a mightier destruction than that inflicted by that pious king of Judah. Its proper fulfillment, therefore, awaits the latter day. And then to the full will be seen the two-fold application of divine power, when, on the one hand, the first-born of the poor shall feed and the needy shall lie down in safety; and on the other, Jehovah will not merely break the rod but kill the root of Philistia with famine and slay its remnant. In the next verse (31) the prophet bursts forth with the utmost animation, calling on the gate to howl, and the city to cry out. “Thou, whole Palestina, art dissolved: for there shall come from the north a smoke, and none shall be alone in his appointed times (or hosts).” Thus, an overwhelming and vigorously sustained force is threatened, which will sweep all before itself as far as the Philistines are concerned. Here, too, the end is deliverance for the godly Jews. “What shall one then answer the messengers of the nation?

That the Lord hath founded Zion, and the poor of his people shall trust or find refuge in it."

In chapters 15-16, we have the burden of Moab. What a picture of desolation and woe, and so much the more felt because so unexpected and sudden! The Philistines were not more offensive to God because of the pleasure they took in the calamities of Israel, than the Moabites in their excessive self-security and pride. "Because in the night Ar of Moab is laid waste, be [Moab] is undone; because in the night Kir of Moab is laid waste, he is undone." (Chap. 15:1.) Such seems to me the force a little more exactly. Broken thus in their strongholds, one after another surprised to their dismay, the people are supposed to go to their places to weep, with deep and universal signs of mourning in public and in private; and this to the extremities of their land, the very soldiers crying out like the weaker sex. (Ver. 2-4.) The prophet or whosoever is personated by him, cannot but feel for the disasters of Moab; and the graphic sketch of desolation and want and carnage is continued to the end of the chapter.

Chapter 16. opens with a call to Moab to send the lamb to the ruler of the land from Sela in the wilderness, unto the mount of the daughter of Zion. This appears to be a reference to their ancient tribute. They were subdued by David of old, and sent him gifts. "And he smote Moab and measured them with a line, casting them down to the ground; even with two lines measured he to put to death, and with one full line to keep alive; and so the Moabites became David's servants, and brought gifts." (2 Sam. 8:12.) Later on in the history, we find that the king of Moab was a sheep-master, and used to render to the king of Israel the tribute of 100,000 lambs, and as many rams with the wool. The prophet seems here to remind Moab of its obligation: otherwise their daughters must prepare for still greater calamities. (Ver. 1, 2.) "Take counsel, execute judgment; make thy shadow as the night in the midst of the noonday; hide the outcasts; bewray not him that wandereth. Let mine outcasts dwell with thee, Moab: be thou a covert to them from the face of the spoiler: for the extortioner is at an end, the spoiler ceaseth, the oppressors are consumed out of the land. And in mercy shall the throne be established; and he shall sit upon it in truth in the tabernacle of David, judging and seeking judgment, and basting righteousness." (Ver. 3-5.) The prophet, in his second counsel, touches on the dire offense, in the Lord's eyes, of Moab. Had he sheltered the outcasts of Israel? or had he taken advantage of their distressful flight to smite and betray them? The prophetic Spirit looks through Hezekiah to the true Son of David, who shall reign in righteousness when the last oppressive spoiler has come to his end.

The verses that follow (6-12) detail once more the pride of Moab and his most humiliating downfall, when, spite of his arrogance, "Moab shall howl for Moab; every one shall howl," and the country shall vie with the towns in extent of devastation; and the prophet weeps afresh at the sight of the wretchedness of the once lofty foe, who prays in his sanctuary; "but he shall not prevail."

The last verse shows that, whatever may be the full bearing of this burden on Moab, "within three years, as the years of an hireling, [i.e., I suppose, exactly measured out, as would be the fact in such a case,] and the glory of Moab shall be contemned, with all that great multitude; and the remnant shall be very small and feeble." That this was accomplished to the letter, there can be no doubt to the believing mind, though we know not the instrumentality, whether the king of Judah or the Assyrian.

But as little need one question that the fulfillment of all the terms of the prophecy will be in the grand future crisis; for it is certain that the final king of the north will fail to reach Moab, and that the

children of Israel under the Messiah are to lay their hands upon him. Compare Isa. 11:14 with Dan. 11:41. Nothing more clearly proves that, if unknown or little known now, there will remain representatives of that nation in the end of the age to take their part in that catastrophe, humiliating to man but to the glory of God, when the chosen people, in their totality, shall be saved and restored by divine mercy to the land of their inheritance and their promised supremacy.

Chapter 110

# Notes on Isaiah 17

ASSUMING that these prophecies, whatever past accomplishment they may have received, have for their center the day of the Lord, how are we to meet the difficulty about these various peoples and cities which once troubled Israel? How are we to account for these prophecies looking onward to a future day, seeing that they no longer, or very feebly exist? The answer is that the very same difficulty applies to Israel. No one knows clearly or certainly where the ten tribes are; neither does it seem any one's business to search beforehand. We may leave them in the obscurity that God has put them in. We know, if we believe His word, that as surely as He has preserved the dispersed remnant of the two tribes, so will He bring out of their hiding-place the descendants of the ten. We know that not only the Jews proper are to be restored, but also the old nationality of Israel. To this the δωδεκ■φυλον hope to come; the full twelve tribes making one nation in the land, and one King shall be King to them all. “And they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all.” Every letter of the promises will be accomplished. Scripture cannot be broken.

Even if we saw no signs, why doubt? Do we need such tokens? It is a proof of feebleness of faith, if we ask a sign. God's word is the best assurance; on this let us take our stand. If God has said that so it shall be, we have a right to expect that He will bring from their recesses the ten tribes and will save them out of all their dwelling-places wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them. We are far from being fully acquainted even with the little world on which we live. Long ago, there were parts of the world better known than they have been till of late. Thus, the early accounts of Africa and central Asia for instance have been largely confirmed by recent researches. God may have the ten tribes in some of those little-explored regions, or they may emerge unexpectedly out of a nation with which they have long been confounded; but we are not bound to show where they are. God has declared that He will bring them into their own land, and this in a peculiar manner; for they are to pass through the wilderness again, and there be purged of the transgressors in their midst, who thus never reach the land, instead of being destroyed in it, like the apostate Jews. Thus, there is a totally different destiny for the ten tribes as compared with the two. If God will accomplish both, nothing will be easier than for the same God to define the descendants of their old Gentile enemies, whether near or farther off. The truth is, it is the very same principle of faith that accepts and accounts for both; as it is mere incredulity which finds a difficulty in either. These remarks apply to almost all these chapters.

Again, some strangely misunderstand the bold figures of the prophets, as if employed to cast their subjects into an enigmatic, if not ambiguous, mold. This is a great error. For they are not to throw a cloud over things, but to give emphasis and energy. Many, whose object is to deter Christians from reading the prophecies, talk much of these tropes, as if their presence was evidence enough to show that the meaning is doubtful. Nothing can be more contrary to the fact; for in the inspired writings, as in others, figures are used, by a kind of poetical license, to illustrate, adorn, and enforce the sense, and in no case to mystify. Figures are quite as definite and are only more forcible than plain, literal terms. The very speech of ordinary life abounds in metaphor and simile;

but, of course, the poetical character of the prophecies gives occasion to their more frequent use.

Again, the difficulty of Scripture does not lie so much in its figurative style as in the depth of its thoughts. In the word of God there is perhaps nothing more profound than the first chapter of John. Yet what first strikes one there is the exceeding simplicity of this Scripture as a matter of language. It used to be the common habit of those who taught the Greek language in some parts of the country to make this gospel a sort of initiatory exercise. Notwithstanding, in all the Bible you can find no revelation or handling of truth more full of depths, none that will cause the really spiritual to stand more amazed, however attractive the grace it displays in Christ. This will show how entirely unfounded is the notion of such as fancy it is a simple question of words. The divine truth of Scripture is the difficulty, not its obscure language. It is difficult because of our darkness morally, because of our want of acquaintance with the mind of God, judging appearance by the natural senses or the mind, instead of receiving things from God, reading His words in the light of Christ. So far from the prophetic scriptures being the most difficult part, they are much easier than is commonly imagined. It is a great thing to begin with believing them; intelligence follows and grows apace. If we may compare the various parts of Scripture, the New Testament is without doubt the deepest of God's communications; and of the New Testament none exceed the writings of the Apostle John for penetration into the knowledge of what God is; and of the writings of the Apostle John, who would treat the epistles and the gospel as less profound than the Apocalypse? None, I am persuaded, but such as are too superficially acquainted with any of them, to warrant their pronouncing a judgment.

This may encourage some to take up the prophecies with a more child-like spirit, always bearing in mind that God looks onward to the future crisis that ushers in “the day of the Lord.” He thinks of His beloved Son; and that which gives importance to the prophecies is that they unfold the scene of His interests. The Jews are the people of whom the Lord Jesus deigned to be born as to the flesh. They have proved what they were to Him; He has now to prove what He will be to them. He means to have an earthly people (Israel), as well as a heavenly (the Church), for His glory. The word of God stops not short of this. If it is not fulfilled, yet it is sure in the keeping of God, who has already given a partial accomplishment. Hence we get the principle for interpreting all prophecy; it is to be for the glory of the Lord Jesus in connection with Israel, and the nations upon the earth. I am speaking now of Old Testament prophecy. The New Testament takes another character—the Lord Jesus in connection with Christendom, also, besides confirming the oracles about Israel. This may show why the Lord attaches importance to a little place or people on the prophetic field. Israel was much in His eyes because of the Messiah; and His own counsels are not dead if they sleep. Hence, too, when God removes the vail from His ancient people Israel, their old antagonists will begin to appear. This is to my mind full of interest. There is a resurrection of every individual. The body will be raised for the manifestation of everything that was done in the body, for it is by the body that the soul acts. Even so will it be with these nations. There is a destiny analogous; they are to re-appear when Israel does, and God will distinguish them according to their original names, and not those they may bear in the process of human history. The Lord will go up to the sources: hence we have their judgment connected with the last days, and not merely that which fell upon them long ago. They go down to the close. Some may have been more completely accomplished in the past than others; but with this difference, they all look onward to the future.

The last generation will do as their fathers; then judgment will fall. Thus it is that God will deal with the nations. They will manifest the same hostility to Israel, the same pride against God, as formerly. This may seem a hard principle to some, but it is most righteous. If a child has grown up, knowing his father's dishonor, hearing of his disgrace and punishment, would not that sin be most peculiarly odious in his eyes, if any right feeling existed? The public example of his father's evil ways would be ever before him. But if the son trifled with it, and used it as an encouragement to walk in the same path, is it not just that there should be a still more severe punishment exacted of that son? Besides having the universal conscience of men, he had special witness in his own family, which the heart of a child ought to have felt and pondered deeply.

This is just the principle of God's ways in government. Man ought to take the more earnest heed from the past; and God, who deals righteously, will judge according to that which man ought to have remembered. He ought to have used the witness of the past as a warning for the future. These nations will then reappear, and, instead of recalling their fathers' ways for their own warning and profit, they take exactly the same road, and once more will endeavor to root out and destroy the people of God.

So it is in Isa. 17. Damascus, which was to the north of the Holy Land, was the very ancient and celebrated city of Syria. (See Gen. 15) It is now made a heap of ruins—the cities a place for flocks. (Ver. 1, 2.) And, as of old, Syria and Ephraim conspired against the realm of David's son to their own discomfiture, so once more the remarkable feature of this judgment is, that God will deal with His people as well as with their old ally. “The fortress also shall cease from Ephraim, and the kingdom from Damascus, and the remnant of Syria: they shall be as the glory of the children of Israel, saith the Lord of hosts. And in that day it shall come to pass, that the glory of Jacob shall be made thin, and the fatness of his flesh shall wax lean. And it shall be as when the harvestman gathereth the corn, and reapeth the ears with his arm; and it shall be as he that gathereth ears in the valley of Rephaim.” He will gather out all scandals from them and punish the transgressors; He will employ their enmity to purge that threshing floor of the land of Israel; He will deal in a judicial manner with His people. The nations may lure themselves and each other on with the hope that it is going hard with Israel; but their conspiracy will be offensive to God, however He may use it for Israel's good. This is here described. “Yet gleaning grapes shall be left in it, as the shaking of an olive tree, two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough, four or five in the outmost fruitful branches thereof, saith the Lord God of Israel. At that day shall a man look to his Maker, and his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel. And he shall not look to the altars, the work of his hands, neither shall respect that which his fingers have made, either the groves or the images.” (Ver. 6-8.)

Thus it is plain there is, at this time, a discriminating judgment proceeding in the land of Israel. Compare chapter 28, where the course of the overflowing scourge is described. “In that day shall his strong cities be as a forsaken bough, and an uppermost branch, which they left because of the children of Israel: and there shall be desolation. Because thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation, and hast not been mindful of the rock of thy strength, therefore shalt thou plant pleasant plants, and shall set it with strange slips: in the day shalt thou make thy plant to grow, and in the morning shalt thou make thy seed to flourish: but the harvest shall be a heap in the day of grief and of desperate sorrow.” (Ver. 9-11.) But now comes the retribution. “Woe to the multitude of many people, which make a noise like the noise of the seas; and to the rushing of nations, that

make a rushing like the rushing of mighty waters! The nations shall rush like the rushing of many waters: but God shall rebuke them, and they shall flee far off, and shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and like a rolling thing before the whirlwind. And behold at evening tide trouble; and before the morning he is not. This is the portion of them that spoil us, and the lot of them that rob us." (Ver. 12-14.) Let the nations gather their multitudes; let them rush on like mighty waters. But the rebuke comes; and they flee and are chased, yea, like thistle-down before the whirlwind. "And behold at evening time trouble; and before the morning he is not. This is the portion of them that spoil us, and the lot of them that rob us." When was all this accomplished in the past, from the day that Isaiah wrote? When was there the gathering of all these nations and their complete dispersion? On the contrary, Israel was broken and scattered, as were the Jews afterward. Here it is not one nation triumphing over God's people, but a gathering of all nations, who seem but waiting for the morning to swallow up Israel; but before the morning they are not. Surely it shall be; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it.

Chapter 111

# Notes on Isaiah 18

Our chapter is connected with the overthrow of the nations, predicted at the close of the preceding section, and yet forms a scene sufficiently distinct to be treated separately. It is a deeply interesting appendix to it, as is plain from its being no new burden, which opens chapter six. and distinguishes the judgment of Egypt from the subject before us. This it is well to notice, because some Christians, and among them Vitringa, have fallen into the error of supposing that Egypt is the “land shadowing with wings,” addressed in verse 1, and that the Egyptians are the people to whom the message is sent in verse 2, and some of whom are brought to the grateful worship of God in verse 7. The reader need not be surprised at this confusion in a commentator so learned and otherwise eminent; for there is hardly a portion of Isaiah which has given rise to greater discord and more evident bewilderment among men of note, from Eusebius of Caesarea, (who saw in it the land of Judea in apostolic times, sending Christian doctrine to all the world, an interpretation founded on the ■ποστ■λλων.... ■πιστολ■ς βιβλ■ναις of the LXX.) down to Aria Montanus, who applied it to America, converted to Christ by the preaching and arms of the Spaniards.

The right understanding of the chapter depends on seeing that the Jewish nation are those intended in verses 2, 7, and this, not in the days of Sennacherib, but in the future crisis. A few expressions, especially in verse 1, may be obscure, but the general scope is remarkably plain and of exceeding interest.

“The land shadowing (or, whirring) with wings, which is beyond the rivers of Cush,” (i.e., beyond the Nile and the Euphrates,) means a country outside the limits of those nations which up to the prophet's day had menaced or meddled with Israel. Egypt and Assyria were the chief of those powers; for there was an Asiatic as well as an African Cush. The land in question lay (not necessarily contiguous to, but it might be far) beyond either of these countries. This comparatively distant land espouses the cause of Israel; but the protection would be ineffectual in result, however loud the proffer and the preparation. The use of “wings” to convey the idea of' a cover for the oppressed or defenseless is too common to need proofs.

The second verse shows, in addition to the previous characteristics of this future ally of the Jews, that it is a maritime power; for it sends its ambassadors in light vessels (literally of “bulrush” or “papyrus") on the face of the waters. Israel is the object of their anxiety. “Go, ye swift messengers, to a nation scattered and peeled, to a people terrible from their beginning hitherto, a nation meted out and trodden down, whose land the rivers have spoiled.” The attempt to apply this description to the Egyptians, or the Ethiopians, has largely affected the view taken of the epithets here applied; but I see no sufficient reason to question the general accuracy of our authorized version, which, as predicating them of Israel, yields a clear and good sense. The difference between the land in the first verse, which sends out its messengers and ships in quest of the dispersed people, hitherto so formidable, but of late ravaged by their impetuous enemies, stands on no minute points of verbal criticism, but on the general bearing of the context, which the English reading Christian is quite able to judge.

Thus far we have seen the intervention of this unnamed land, described as the would-be protector of Israel, actively engaged with their swift ships in their friendly mission in quest of that scattered people.

But another enters the scene who puts an arrest on the zeal of man. (Ver. 3, 4) Universal attention is demanded. Great events tremble in the balances. Signs are given visibly and audibly. “All ye inhabitants of the world, and dwellers on the earth, see ye when he lifteth up an ensign on the mountains; and when he bloweth a trumpet, hear ye. For as the Lord said unto me, I will take my rest, I will consider in my dwelling-place.” God is not favoring this busy enterprise. Man is active; Jehovah, as it were, retires and watches. It is like the parching heat just before the lightning, as the dewy cloud in the heat of harvest: a moment of deep stillness and suspense, after immense efforts to gather in the Jews by the patronage of the maritime nation of verses 1 and 2. All has seemed to flourish: but what is man without God? “For afore the harvest, when the bud is perfect, and the sour grape is ripening in the flower, he shall both cut off the springs with pruning books, and take away and cut down the branches.” Thus total failure of the whole plan ensues. Everything had seemed to betoken a speedy ingathering of good to Israel and their national hopes seemed to be on the eve of being realized, when God brought all to naught, and lets loose the old passions of the Gentiles against His people. The issue is that “they shall be left together unto the fowls of the mountains and to the beasts of the earth: and the fowls shall summer upon them, and all the beasts of the earth shall winter upon them.” (Ver. 5, 6.)

It was not the Lord's time; and yet it was. For “in that time shall the present be brought unto the Lord of hosts of a people scattered and peeled, and from a people terrible from their beginning hitherto; a nation meted out and trodden under foot, whose land the rivers have spoiled, to the place of the name of the Lord of hosts, the mount Zion.” Thus will the presumptuous help of man be rebuked, as well as the renewed wrath of the nations once more preying on the poor but loved people of Jehovah. For as surely as they turn again to rend Israel, He will appear in the midst of the desolation, and with His own mighty hand accomplish that which man as vainly seeks to effect as to frustrate. The Jewish nation, at that very season, shall be brought a present to Jehovah; and they shall come not empty-handed, but emptied of self, with lowly, grateful hearts to the Lord in Mount Zion, after their final escape from Gentile fury, in His mercy which endures forever.

Chapter 112

# Notes on Isaiah 19-20

The first of our chapters gives “the burden of Egypt,” and is followed, in the second, by a personal sign enjoined on the prophet, as a token of the degradation soon to befall Egypt and Ethiopia. The general drift is so clear as to render prolonged remarks altogether needless.

“Behold, the Lord rideth upon a swift cloud and shall come into Egypt.” The prophet thus boldly and with the fullest moral truth sets forth that sure overthrow of the great realm of the old world's prudence, and debasing idolatry, and abundant natural riches. What availed their boasted bulwarks and their watery barriers, if Jehovah, who “rideth upon a swift cloud,” dooms Egypt to humiliation and decay? Worse than idle their appeal to their false gods: for their idols should be moved at His presence, and the heart of Egypt melt in its midst. Intestine division and civil war (ver. 2) should be added to the overwhelming assaults from without; and the downfall be consummated by infatuated counsels as well as the wasting away of all national spirit; for on their recourse in their distress to their old haunts of superstition and sorcery, God would shut them up to the hard bondage of cruel lords and a fierce king. (Ver. 1-4.)

But the hand of the Lord should be not only upon the defenses of the country, but upon its internal supports, and this in all that was their glory and their confidence. For is not this Ezekiel's “great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers, which hath said, My river is my own, and I have made it for myself?” Surely it is the same, of whom Isaiah here predicts, “the waters shall fail from the sea, and the river shall be wasted and dried up. And they shall turn the rivers far away, and the brooks of defense shall be emptied and dried up: the reeds and flags shall wither. The paper reeds by the brooks, by the mouth of the brooks, and everything sown by the brooks, shall wither, be driven away, and be no more. The fishers also shall mourn, and all they that cast angle into the brooks shall lament, and they that spread nets upon the waters shall languish. Moreover they that work in fine flax, and they that weave networks, shall be confounded. And they shall be broken in the purposes thereof, all that make sluices and ponds for fish.” (Ver. 5-10.)

The prophet next (ver. 11) proceeds to taunt this haughty power in that for which, most of all, it stood high in its own conceit and the reputation of men. For who has not heard of “the wisdom of the Egyptians?” Who does not know of their science and civilization while the most renowned lands of the west which earliest aspired to the sovereignty of the world, had not yet emerged from their condition of wild, untutored barbarism? “Surely the princes of Zoan are fools, the counsel of the wise counselors of Pharaoh is become brutish: how say ye unto Pharaoh, I am the son of the wise, the son of ancient kings?” “Where are they? where are thy wise men?” is the piercing challenge of the prophet; “and let them tell thee now, and let them know what the Lord of hosts hath purposed upon Egypt.”

Alas! how many now are wrapped up in the same carnal security. How many in our day, like the wise counselors of Egypt, are caught in their own craftiness, too wise to heed the sure and solemn words of divine prophecy; not wise enough to guard themselves from foolish superstition, or still more foolish incredulity! Is it not a maxim among the sages of Christendom, that prophecy cannot

be known till the event accomplishes it and fixes its interpretation Than which notion, I dare to say, none can be produced less reasonable in itself or more flatly contrary to the word of God. Not a believer in the Old Testament but protests against the sinful error; for not a soul then was justified who did not look onward, trusting his soul and spiritual all on that which was as yet necessarily in the womb of the future, the coming of the woman's seed, the Messiah. And are believers of the New Testament called of God to be less trustful, less realizing what is coming, with incomparably more light of revelation? What! we, to whom God has revealed by the Spirit, that which, the brightest of old was compelled to say, “eye had not seen, nor ear heard, neither had entered into man's heart to consider?” And even on grounds of reason, of which some are so vainglorious, what can be more opposed to it seeing that God has beyond controversy given His people prophetic revelation? Is this alone, of all Scripture, to be put under human ban? Even on grounds of personal danger, the suicidal folly of such skepticism as this is most apparent; for as the great central point of prophecy is the nearness of the Day of the Lord, which is to judge all the pride, and irreligion, and idolatry, and rebellion against God found then on earth, and specially in Christendom, it will be too late for men, before they believe, to await that event which will prove the truth of the prophecies in their own destruction. In short, in every point of view, the maxim is as false as it is perilous. It really amounts to blotting out all direct use of prophecy whatsoever; for it refuses to hear its warning till its voice is wholly changed. Prophecy accomplished becomes in effect history, rather than prophecy; no small value of which is the silencing of God's enemies, rather than, like prophecy, the admonition and comfort of His people.

But to return. “The princes of Zoan [the ancient royal city of Egypt, named Tanis in profane authors] are become fools, the princes of Noph [Moph, or Memphis, Hos. 9:6] are deceived; they have also seduced Egypt, even they that are the stay of the tribes thereof. The Lord hath mingled a perverse spirit in the midst thereof: and they have caused Egypt to err in every work thereof, as a drunken man staggereth in his vomit. Neither shall there be any work for Egypt, which the head or tail, branch or rush, may do.” They are judicially confounded of God in their policy.

Now, I am not disposed to deny a measure of accomplishment in the time of the prophet. Only let not this be allowed to exclude the complete fulfillment which yet remains to be made good. This germinant, inclusive style we have seen, is the habit of Isaiah, as indeed of the prophets. Enough was then accomplished for a stay to the faithful; but it was no more than a testimony to that full and punctual payment which God will yet render, in honor both of His own words, and of the Lord Jesus, when His manifested glory dawns and His world-kingdom comes. (Rev. 11) “In that day shall Egypt be like unto women: and it shall be afraid and fear because of the shaking of the hand of the Lord of hosts, which He shaketh over it. And the land of Judah shall be a terror unto Egypt, every one that maketh mention thereof shall be afraid in himself, because of the counsel of the Lord of hosts, which he hath determined against them.” Egypt has its part to play in the tremendous convulsions which precede the Lord's appearing; and to this our chapter looks onward, with which compare Dan. 11:40-43. Out of that land shall He gather some of His outcast people, (Isa. 11,) and in the process, as we know, destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea, and with His mighty wind shake His hand over the river, smiting it in its seven streams.

But mercy shall rejoice over judgment; and at the very time when Egypt shall be as women trembling at the shaking of Jehovah's hand, and the very mention of the land of Judah shall strike terror, “In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan, and swear to

the Lord of hosts; one shall be called, The city of destruction. In that day shall there be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof to the Lord. And it shall be for a sign and for a witness unto the Lord of hosts in the land of Egypt: for they shall cry unto the Lord because of the oppressors, and he shall send them a savior, and a great one, and he shall deliver them. And the Lord shall be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the Lord in that day, and shall do sacrifice and oblation; yea, they shall vow a vow unto the Lord, and perform it. And the Lord shall smite Egypt: he shall smite and heal it: and they shall return even to the Lord, and he shall be entreated of them, and shall heal them." Thus evidently shall the Lord then deliver and revive Egypt.

The efforts of interpreters to explain these verses are as manifold as they are vain: and justly are they doomed to darkness who see not the link with Christ, and with Christ the glory of His people Israel then, if they despise Him now. Origen, Eusebius, Sze., interpreted it of the flight into Egypt (Matt. 2) and of the overthrow of idolatry and spread of Christianity there also; Jerome embraces along with this an application to the wasting of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar. Moderns generally apply it in substance as Jerome did (partly historically, of the disasters under Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, Psaminetichus, or the Romans; and partly mystically, of the triumphant spread of the gospel past, present, or future). These speculations do not seem to call for refutation: to state them is to condemn them sufficiently. The true reference to the future crisis on the earth is yet more confirmed by the blessed intimations of the closing verses. "In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians. In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land; whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance." It is not a heavenly scene, but earthly. It is not the present Church condition, where there is neither Jew nor Gentile, and Christ is all and in all, but a future state of large yet graduated blessing of nations. It is not this dispensation, where tares are mingled with the wheat, but the coming age when all scandals are removed from the scene where the Great King reigns in righteousness. That nation, so proud of its natural wisdom, the old oppressor and frequent snare of Israel, shall be humbled to the dust and out of the dust cry to the Lord God of Israel, who shall send them a mighty deliverer, and they shall know Him and worship Him acceptably, who smote them but will heal them with a great salvation. For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, Jehovah's name will be great among the gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto it and a pure offering; for His name shall be great among the heathen. No wonder therefore that there shall be an altar to the Lord in the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof to the Lord—a sign and a witness unto Jehovah of hosts in that land.

And what of that later oppressor of Israel? Has the Lord but one blessing for the stranger foe? Has He not reserved a blessing for the Assyrian? Yes, for the Assyrian also. The haughty rival of the north and east shall be brought into the rich blessing of the Lord. "In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria." Old jealousy and long-lasting animosity shall flee apace and forever; intimacy and generous trust and mutual love shall cement the alliance that is founded on the Lord truly known. "And the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria; and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians." Happy, though none then be despised and poor! "In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria." That is, Israel shall form one of the

trio here specified and stamped with singular favor in the millennial day. For indeed the Lord shall bless them, “Saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance.” Thus again is Abraham's blessing verified and manifested. “I will make of thee a great nation; and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee; and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” But even here, it appears to me, the due place of Israel is maintained, and the rank of the others nicely distinguished in God's wisdom, however large His goodness to the rest; for Israel has the glorious title of Jehovah's inheritance, if Egypt be called and Assyria created for His praise.

From chapter 20 we learn that the Assyrian ravaged Egypt (with the Ethiopians), leading his captives in shame. History, I believe, is silent; but not so prophecy, which declares that the land of Egypt shall not escape the king of the north, or last Assyrian, at the time of the end.

Chapter 113

# Notes on Isaiah 21-22

In the first of these chapters, and not a long one, are three sentences of judgment—on Babylon (ver. 1-10), on Dumah (ver. 11, 12), and on Arabia (ver. 13-17).

“The burden of the desert of the sea. As whirlwinds in the south pass through; so it cometh from the desert, from a terrible land. A grievous vision is declared unto me; the treacherous dealer dealeth treacherously, and the spoiler spoileth. Go up, O Elam: besiege, O Media; all the sighing thereof have I made to cease.” There can be no doubt, it appears to me, that the great Chaldean capital is referred to; the command to the Medes and Persians to go up and besiege is one indication; and so is yet more the graphic description of the sudden destruction, in verses 3-5, which turned the night of revelry into the pangs of terror and death for the dissolute king and his court. “Therefore are my loins filled with pain: pangs have taken hold upon me, as the pangs of a woman that travaileth; I was bowed down at the hearing of it; I was dismayed at the seeing of it. My heart panted, fearfulness affrighted me: the night of my pleasure hath he turned into fear unto me. Prepare the table, watch in the watch-tower, eat, drink: arise, ye princes, and anoint the shield.” The ninth verse crowns the proof and expressly names Babylon's fall as the object intended. The prophet personifies the city or its people.

Nevertheless there is somewhat to be noted in the phrase used of the doomed mistress of the world; especially as there seems to be an evident link between this enigmatic title, “the burden of the desert of the sea,” and that applied to Jerusalem, “the burden of the valley of vision,” in the beginning of chapter 22. As the rise and glory of the first Gentile empire were only permitted sovereignly of God in consequence of hopeless idolatry in Judah and Jerusalem, so the judgment of Babylon was the epoch of deliverance for the Jewish remnant, the type of the final dealings of God with the last holder of the power which began with the golden head of the great image. There is thus a correlation between these two cities—Jerusalem and Babylon, whether historical or symbolic; and the latter is designated “the desert of the sea,” the former “the valley of vision.” Jeremiah in his vision (chap. 51:42) beholds the sea come up upon Babylon, so as to cover her with the multitude of the waves. In fact, too, we know to what a waste this seat of human pride sunk, and so notoriously it remains until this day.

There is, in verses 6-10, set forth the twofold leadership of the coming invasion, and the twofold nationality of the armies that followed. The watchman in the vision attests his vigilance, and reports what he saw; which is followed by the solemn tidings of Babylon's fall, and the prophet's seal of the truth of the announcement.

Next comes “the burden of Dumah” (ver. 11, 12), which, from the connection, bordered on, if it did not belong to, Idumea. “He calleth to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh and also the night: if ye will inquire, inquire ye: return, come.” The Edomite cry is one of proud scorn and self-security. The brief answer is pregnant with serious expostulation. Let them not trust to hopes of the bright morn; for the dark and dangerous night would be there also. Nevertheless, a door was still open for

repentance. Let them “come again.”

As for “the burden upon Arabia,” little remark is needed. The forests of Arabia would be no more an effectual hiding place from the storm than the rocks and mountain fastnesses of Edam. It is not only the traveling companies or caravans of Dedan which are cast on the pity and care of the men of Tema; but utter wasting within a year is pronounced on the mighty men of the children of Kedar.

Chapter 22 consists of a prophecy wholly directed against Jerusalem. There may have been some anticipation in the prophet's day, but it was partial. So much so was this the case that Vitringa can only eke out an appearance of an historical answer by piecing together the invasion of the city by the Assyrians under Sennacherib, and that by the Chaldeans under Nebuchadnezzar; and even this by the strong inversion which places the Chaldean movement in verses 1-5 (comp. 2 Kings 25:4, 5) and the Assyrian in the part that follows (with which 2 Chron. 32:2-5 corresponds). Granting this as a primary application, it affords a strong presumption that this chapter, like the last and all we have seen, points to the great day when the reckoning of nations will come in the morning, and of every individual throughout its course, even to the judgment of the secrets of the heart. It seems strange that believers should rest satisfied with so small an installment from One who pays to the uttermost farthing. The spirit that treats as an illusion the expectation of a punctual fulfillment of these prophecies as a whole, in every feature save those expressly limited to a definite time in certain particulars, is either ignorance or skepticism, or, what is common enough, a mixture of both.

The city is shown us in the early verses, changed from its stir and tumultuous joy to the deepest uneasiness and deadly fear, the slain not fallen in battle but ignominious slaughter, all the rulers fled but taken and bound, so that the prophet can but turn and weep alone in bitterness; for the trouble and perplexity sprang not from the dust but were by the Lord God of hosts.

The central verses expose the utter vanity and unpardonable sin of recourse to human measures by the people of God when He is dealing with them in judgment. Their only right place at such a time is to bow to His hand and accept the chastening He is pleased to inflict, always confident that mercy rejoices against judgment and that the end of the Lord is that He is exceeding pitiful and of tender mercy. Here there was no humiliation in them, no recognition of Him or His ways. “And he discovered the covering of Judah, and thou didst look in that day to the armor of the house of the forest. Ye have seen also the breaches of the city of David, that they are many: and ye gathered together the waters of the lower pool. And ye have numbered the houses of Jerusalem, and the houses have ye broken down to fortify the wall. Ye made also a ditch between the two walls for the water of the old pool: but ye have not looked unto the maker thereof, neither had respect unto him that fashioned it long ago. And in that day did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth and behold joy and gladness, slaving oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we shall die. And it was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of hosts, Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die, saith the Lord God of hosts.” The one effort was to escape by policy—a fatal path for the people of God, which speedily falls into open licentious Sadduceeism.

The close of the chapter sets before us the setting aside of the unworthy Shebna who had crept into the place of chief minister, next to the throne, who lived only for self, and even after death still sought nothing but his own name and glory (ver. 15-19); whereon Jehovah's servant Eliakim is

called to take the reins of government in his stead, a father to Jerusalem and Judah, with the key of David's house laid by the Lord on his shoulder, with full authority and adequate power. We cannot here fail to recognize the type of Christ displacing the Antichrist; and the very fact of the past historical circumstances being put together without regard to mere date, as we have seen, and with personages introduced who officially were not the highest, yet described in terms which open out to a dominion and power beyond the highest, prepares one for the magnificent events of the latter day in the Holy Land, as the only complete fulfillment of the scripture before us.

Chapter 114

# Notes on Isaiah 23

The last of these local judgments here comes before us— “the burden of Tire.” This city is the type of the world's commercial glory; wealthy, corrupt, and self-confident, but taken and destroyed, after a long siege, by Nebuchadnezzar. Such historically is the destruction announced, not here only, but in Ezek. 26-28 Tire and the Tyrians were the center of the merchandize of the ancient world, the emporium of all the commodities and the luxuries of that day, the link, through “the ships of Tarshish,” between the west and the east. Its fall, therefore, could not but affect painfully and universally the dwellers on the earth; and the rather, as trading rivals were fewer than now. Yet how would not, in our day, the overthrow of the proudest seat of modern commerce make itself felt to the ends of the earth? We know from elsewhere that the siege was prolonged for a term quite unusual, thirteen years: indeed we need not travel beyond the prophetic record (Ezek. 29) to learn how severe a task it was for the Chaldean conqueror; but so much the greater was the moral effect of its fall. So that Tire and Sidon remained the proverbial and most striking warning of divine judgment, as may be gathered from our Lord's reference.

“Howl, ye ships of Tarshish; for it is laid waste, so that there is no house, no entering in: from the land of Chittim it is revealed to them.” (Ver. 1.)

There seems to be no need for departing from the ordinary sense of Chittim, either here or in verse 12, in which the learned Bochart understands the Cutheans or Babylonians and the meaning here to be “from the land of the Cutheans cloth their captivity come.” Neither is there in Chittim any necessity to refer this burden to the sack of new or insular Tire to Alexander the Great, as do Luther and others. The prophet calls the far-famed ships of Tarshish, first and repeatedly, to take up the dirge of the ruined mart for their merchandise, and intimates that though there was no house to receive them, nor haven for their ships to enter, the ill news would be revealed in the far west. “Be still, ye inhabitants of the isle; thou whom the merchants of Zidon that pass over the sea have replenished. And by great waters the seed of Sihor, the harvest of the river, is her revenue; and she is a mart of notions.” (Ver. 2, 3.) What a change, when silence reigned where once had thronged their neighbors, the merchants of Zidon, where the treasures of the enriching Nile were gathered, “a mart of nations,” now a waste! “Be thou ashamed, O Zidon; for the sea hath spoken, even the strength of the sea, saying, I travail not, nor bring forth children, neither do I nourish up young men, nor bring up virgins.” (Ver. 4.) Zion was too nearly allied, too intimately bound up with Tire, not to feel and suffer keenly; and as Tire had been its boast heretofore, so now its degradation could not but darken their neighbors; since the very sea is by bold but happy figure, made to bewail her desolation: whom had she pertaining to her lineage, now that Tire was no more? “As the report concerning Egypt, so shall they be sorely pained at the report of Tire.” (Ver. 5,) The Zidonians, though directly profited by Egypt more than all other foreign nations, would nevertheless grieve over the ruin of Tire as much as over their great southern source of wealth. Verses 6, 7, finish these addresses with a direct appeal to the Tyrians themselves, taunting their haughty merchants with the reverse that awaited them, the just recompence of their deeds. “Pass ye over to Tarshish: howl ye inhabitants of the isle. is this your joyous city, whose antiquity is of

ancient days? her own feet shall carry her afar off to sojourn." Far from being an attraction to the ships of Tarshish, they must go and howl there themselves, they the men of that sea-girt land, whose city rang with gaiety, and whose years of proud security were only less ancient than Zidon and yet more prosperous and eminent! Yes, they must go, and trudge, sadly, painfully, in quest of some asylum in a strange land.

And why was this? Who would smite and prostrate the proud city of Pocenicia? "Who hath taken this counsel against Tire, the crowning city, whose merchants are princes, whose traffickers are the honorable of the earth?" (Ver. 8.) The answer follows in verse 9. "The Lord of hosts hath purposed it, to stain the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the honorable of the earth. Pass through thy land as a river, O daughter of Tarshish: there is no more strength. He stretched out his hand over the sea, he shook the kingdoms: the Lord hath given a commandment against the merchant city, to destroy the strong holds thereof. And he said, Thou shalt no more rejoice, O thou oppressed virgin, daughter of Zidon: arise, pass over to Chittim; there also shalt thou have no rest." (Ver. 9-12.) Here the moral reasons are not given in full: we must search other prophets for all. But the Lord's opposition to the proud is stated, His scorn for the glory of man, His slight of all trust in earthly strongholds. Even in exile the Tyrians should find no rest. In the next verse we have the instrumental means He meant to employ: "Behold the land of the Chaldeans; this people was not, till the Assyrian founded it for them that dwell in the wilderness: they set up the towers thereof, they raised up the palaces thereof; and he brought it to ruin." (Ver. 13.) The Chaldeans, who, in contrast with old Tire, were nationally a people but of yesterday, are seen by the prophet bringing Tire to ruin. Such appears to be the meaning, which is confirmed by the fresh call to grief of the ships of Tarshish in verse 14.

But the conqueror himself yields to an avenger. Babylon falls; and the full term of seventy years, which beheld the returning remnant of Judah, had a revival in store for Tire, but a revival of her meretricious ways, pandering for gainful trade to all the luxurious habits and corruptions of the nations. "And it shall come to pass in that day, that Tire shall be forgotten seventy years, according to the days of one king: after the end of seventy years shall Tire sing as an harlot. Take an harp, go about the city, thou harlot that hast been forgotten; make sweet melody, sing many songs, that thou wayest be remembered. And it shall come to pass after the end of seventy years, that the Lord will visit Tire, and she shall turn to her hire, and shall commit fornication with all the kingdoms of the world upon the face of the earth." (Ver. 15-17.) Nevertheless, the last verse intimates that even this prophetic scene, though so largely accomplished in the past, is not without its bright side in the day of joy to the whole earth. "And her merchandise and her hire shall be holiness to the Lord: it shall not be treasured nor laid up [as in former days, when conscienceless tricks of avarice dictated the manner and objects of her trade]; for her merchandise shall be for them that dwell before the Lord. to eat sufficiently, and for durable clothing." The daughter of Tire shall be there with a gift, when the King shall greatly desire the beauty of His earthly Bride. (Psa. 45)

Chapter 115

# Notes on Isaiah 24

The prophet now launches into a larger theme. Hitherto we have had ten “burdens,” the burdens of the nations from Babylon to Tire, not without involving Jerusalem in those judgments which, starting from local circumstances, sweep on to the “end of the age,” when God shall put down the rebellious pride of the earth. In the present chapter Isaiah enlarges the scene, with the land and people of Israel as the center, so as to disclose not the great white throne before which the wicked dead stand and are judged, but the hour of the earth's universal retribution from God, “the day of the Lord” in its unrestricted, final sense, of which previous crises, as in the cases of Babylon and Egypt, were but the shadow and the earnest.

“Behold, the Lord maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof. And it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the taker of usury, so with the giver of usury to him.” There are evidently no limits here. As verse 1 shows us the earth wasted, confounded and prostrate under the divine dealing, so verse 2 indicates an unsparing overthrow of all grades among its inhabitants. “The land shall be utterly emptied and utterly spoiled: for the Lord hath spoken this word.” If it is hard work to apply such strong and comprehensive terms to the days of Antiochus Epiphanes, as some conceive, still less can verse 4 be evaded. “The earth mourneth and fadeth away; the world languisheth and fadeth away: the haughty people of the earth do languish.” How carefully too the Spirit guards against the too common resource of unbelief—the alleged hyperbole of an impassioned seer. “The Lord hath spoken this word.” (Ver. 3.)

Next, we have the moral ground on which God judged and executed thus sternly. “The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof, because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinances, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate; therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left.” It is no mere providential judgment, but a most comprehensive and divine infliction, of which God has spoken, almost since the beginning. Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these. The oft-threatened, long-suspended blow will at length fall, as Isaiah here intimates, and Jude later still.

“The new wine mourneth, the vine languisheth, all the merry hearted do sigh. The mirth of tabrets ceaseth, the noise of them that rejoice endeth, the joy of the harp ceaseth. They shall not drink wine with a song; strong drink shall be bitter to them that drink it. The city of confusion is broken down: every house is shut up, that no man may come in. There is a crying for wine in the streets; all joy is darkened, the mirth of the land is gone. In the city is left desolation, and the gate is smitten with destruction.” (Ver. 7-12.) Such and so complete is the picture of woe. Desolation overspreads the country and the city alike. Nevertheless, as always, God reserves a remnant. “When thus it shall be in the midst of the land among the people, there shall be as the shaking of

an olive tree, and as the gleaning grapes when the vintage is done. They shall lift up their voice, they shall sing for the majesty of the Lord, they shall cry aloud from the sea. Wherefore glorify ye the Lord in the fires, even the name of the Lord God of Israel in the isles of the sea." (Ver. 13-16.) It is manifestly a description of the righteous in Israel, who shall come into prominence as divine judgments mow down their proud oppressors.

Nevertheless, verse 16 appears to show how deeply the prophet, foreshowing the exercised godly souls of that day, deplores the low condition of the remnant, and the fearful defection and ruin of the mass of Israel. "From the uttermost part of the earth have we heard songs, even glory to the righteous. But I said, My leanness, my leanness, woe unto me! the treacherous dealers have dealt treacherously; yea, the treacherous dealers have dealt very treacherously. Fear, and the pit, and the snare, are upon thee, O inhabitant of the earth. And it shall come to pass that be who fleeth from the noise of the fear shall fall into the pit; and he that cometh up out of the midst of the pit shall be taken in the snare: for the windows from on high are open, and the foundations of the earth do shake. The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth. And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited. Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously." (Ver. 16-23.)

The entire chapter, especially the closing section (ver. 21-23), brings into the strongest evidence the hopeless difficulties of those who confound earthly things with heavenly and refuse to see the portion in store for Israel in the latter day, when judgment has fallen on the habitable earth. Writers as early as Theodoret confess the ulterior scope of the prophecy, whatever measure of accomplishment they might consider it to have had in the past. "The discourse contains a double prophecy; for it points out both what was going on at different times among the enemies, and what shall be in the consummation of the present age." But then, immediately after, he makes the singularly unintelligent observation that the second verse describes a state of things properly and truly after the resurrection. The judgment of the quick is ignored. There is, in truth, not a word here about the dead raised, or souls giving an account of their deeds, but emphatically and repeatedly of the earth's crisis and of the world smitten and languishing under God's mighty hand. The language, no doubt, is excessively strong, and here and there appears to look on to the dissolution of all things, as is sufficiently common in prophetic style, where the prediction of the signal change which ushers in the millennium contains a more or less covert allusion to the utter passing away of the heavens and earth that now are, and the coming in of the eternal state. But the conclusion of the chapter makes it plain that the grand aim of the Spirit here is to portray that mighty and universal catastrophe which is succeeded by the times of refreshing for Israel and the earth, of which God has spoken by His holy prophets since the world began.

So profound and all-embracing, however, is the dealing of God, that even the angelic hosts escape no more than the proudest potentates here below. "It shall come to pass in that day that Jehovah shall punish the host of the high ones on high [not, that are on high], and the kings of the earth upon the earth." These spirits of evil had up to this misled man, dishonored God, sought to

corrupt every mercy almost from the source. But the time is come that angels should be judged as well as living men, far beyond even the judgment of the flood. The power of the heavens shall be shaken—not earth only, but also heaven. But far from its being as yet the melting away of time into eternity, “then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when Jehovah shall reign in mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously.” It is the day of which Zechariah spoke (chap. xiv.), long after the return from the captivity, when Jehovah shall be king over all the earth. “In that day shall there be one Jehovah, and his name one. All the land shall be turned as a plain from Geba to Rimmon, south of Jerusalem; and it shall be lifted up, and inhabited in her place, from Benjamin's gate unto the place of the first gate, unto the corner gate and from the tower of Hananeel unto the king's winepresses.” Could expressions be used more precisely to exclude the mystical interpretation, or more calculated to maintain the hopes of Israel, then to be built on the Living Stone over which they have till yet stumbled?

Chapter 116

# Notes on Isaiah 25

The bearing of chapter 24 on the end of the age is entirely confirmed by that which follows and is now before us, where we have the prophet personifying the people raising their hearts to the Lord in praise. They are celebrating God for His wonderful doings, and own that His counsels of old are faithfulness and truth. “O Lord, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name; for thou hast done wonderful things; thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth. For thou hast made of a city an heap; of a defensed city a ruin: a palace of strangers to be no city; it shall never be built. Therefore shall the strong people glorify thee, the city of the terrible nations shall fear thee. For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall. Thou shalt bring down the noise of strangers, as the heat in a dry place; even the heat with the shadow of a cloud: the branch of the terrible ones shall be brought low.” (Ver. 1-5.) The execution of His judgment takes effect on the strong and their city. It is the habitable earth which comes under the Lord's hand, as certainly as the end of the chapter before was His dealing with the heavens and the earth. The eternal state does not enter into account. On the other hand, there is no ground for making it bear on present circumstances. It is a new state of things, that does not exist now; for if there is one place in the earth where, less than another, the Lord has the appearance of reigning, it is in that very Jerusalem and Mount Zion. The chosen land of Israel is in the possession of the Turk; it has been in his hands for hundreds of years, and before that it was the object of contention for the kings of the earth and equally so for the followers of Mahomet; it has been the great battle-ground between the east and the west; and up to the present time God has permitted that the devotees of Mecca should appear to have gained the victory there. Ever since the cross of the Lord, God is no longer maintaining the glory of His Son in connection with Mount Zion. The Son of God has been rejected and has died upon the cross. Since then all connection with the world is broken, every link with the Jew is gone, and no man has ever seen the Lord of glory, except the believer.

He was witnessed by the world before, seen of men—not merely of angels. He was displayed before human eyes, God manifest in the flesh. But, when man cast Him out, all acknowledgment of the world as such was terminated. He was no more seen after His resurrection by any unbeliever; none but chosen witnesses were permitted to behold Him. Taken soon after up to heaven, He sits at the right hand of God; and thence He will come to judge the quick and the dead. A great mistake it is to confound the judgment of the quick with the judgment of the dead. Scripture shows that there is a long interval of most remarkable character, which separates the one from the other. Indeed, there may be, in a certain sense, a judgment of the quick going on all through the interval of 1000 years. There will be an execution of judgment before the Lord begins to reign, and, when His reign terminates, the judgment of the dead follows.

While the judgment of the dead remains perfectly certain, while it is a truth of God that there is a resurrection both of the just and of time unjust, the other truth has not been so generally seen, namely, that the Lord of glory is about to revisit this world and stop the whole course of human

affairs and interpose with judgments upon the guilt of man (not yet upon the dead, which will come afterward). Before the judgment of the dead, divine judgment will fall upon living men from the highest to the lowest. To this our Lord referred, when He warned His disciples of the days that were coming. Thus Matt. 24; 25 and Luke 17; 21 refer, save a part of the last chapter, exclusively to this time and to these circumstances. Some scriptures speak only of the judgment of the dead, others both unfold the portion of the risen saints to enjoy heavenly glory with Christ and tell how the dead are to be judged according to their works. The believer is saved according to the worth of Christ's work; he who is judged according to his own works is lost forever. No child of God, if judged as he deserved, could be saved. For, if judged at all, God must judge after His own justice with no less standard than Christ. We must be as spotless as His Son in order to be fit companions for Him. But on that ground there is an end of all hope: all now turns on this, that Jesus was delivered for our offenses and was raised again for our justification, not our judgment. What is the value in God's sight of the work He has done? Is it only a partial salvation? or for some believers? If it be not a full salvation for sinners, yea, for the worst of those who believe, it is not what God commends to us, nor a due and righteous answer to the cross of Christ. And there is the very comfort of the salvation that Christ has effected. It is a perfect salvation, it delivers from all sins, it places the chief of sinners upon a new ground as Christians, kings, priests, and children of God. Thenceforward our business is to trust and obey Him, laboring for and suffering with Christ and for Christ, as we await His return from heaven, even our Deliverer, Jesus, who will judge His adversaries, It is plain that there are two classes of men who will appear risen from the dead: I do not say risen at the same time. No scripture says this. It is said that “the hour is coming when all that are in the graves shall come forth, they that have done good to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of judgment." All this is quite true, but not a word about their coming forth at the same time. Other scriptures show that the two resurrections, here shown to be distinct in principle and issue, will not take place at the same time. Hence, while both might be said to be the rising of the dead, that of the righteous alone is or could be called a rising from the dead, the rest being left as yet in their graves. From Rev. 20, again, it is plain that a thousand years at least will transpire between the resurrection of the just and that of the unjust. Any one reading the Revelation without prejudice could not fail to gather that the righteous dead are raised first to reign with Christ; and then, after the earthly reign, that the rest of the dead are raised, who are judged according to their works, and of them it is said that whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. There is not a hint of any who were found written. When God judges according to works, nothing can follow but destruction. Their evil works abound in the books; and the book of life has none of their names in it.

This strongly links itself with what is before us. Here you have the Lord, not hidden in heaven, but appearing from heaven to reign. He is not reigning on the earth now. It is only among idle, speculative men (of learning perhaps), where you find any dream so foolish. You are aware that if there was a period, in the history of Christendom, which was particularly dreary as to outward light, it is from Constantine to the Reformation, the dark ages as they are called. Yet learned men are not wanting who maintain that this is the very time when Christ was reigning; that it began at the year 320 and ended 1320! that is, the most unrelieved reign of darkness that Christendom has yet seen! Augustine made this reign begin with Christ and extend all through Christianity. This was bad; the other is worse, though maintained by H. Grotius. Both exercised an enormous influence in the world. The great Dutchman, if consulted in a matter of erudition, would have probably given no

inconsiderable help to most men; but when he came to the word of God, he was as much at sea there as Peter or John would have been in that which was his favorite province. In divine things learning is of no value, except as a drudge, to men of spiritual judgment, and lowly withal, for it is the meek that God has promised to guide in judgment. The assumption that, because a man is a profound scholar, even if a Christian also, he is a safe expositor of Scripture, is a gross mistake.

Let my reader, if he know it not already, search and see whether there be not a time coming when that Lord who is now in heaven at the right hand of God, will leave it to introduce His reign over the earth with the chosen city as His earthly metropolis. Do you ask why there should be such an attraction to that spot? Certainly it has been the sin, and sorrow, and shame, and rivalry between the east and west, and the deepest humiliation of God's ancient people. But let me ask you, even on your own ground, where there is a spot on earth so full of grand associations, so connected with all that is dear to the believer? There the Lord of glory came. There He died. It is His city, the city of the Great King. Why should He not then come and take it for Himself? Is it not worthy of Him to pardon, and bless, and sanctify, and magnify Jerusalem before the world, overcoming her evil with His good? Most plain is the Scripture that the Lord is to come there, and to establish it as the capital of His earthly kingdom. I do not say that the Lord will dwell literally on the earth, but be King over it. Yet Scripture says He will plant His foot upon the Mount of Olives. It is only necessary for the truth of His future kingdom to maintain that fie will visibly come and smite the earth and establish His kingdom there, and fill the world with the blessed effects of His glory. Scripture shows, that He will be present and display Himself; but for how long, to what extent, and how often during that reign, it is not for me, at least, to pretend to say; for I am not aware that Scripture answers those questions. And as there is a special place, so there is a people He will favor most—Jerusalem and the Jewish people.

But what is to become of Christians? Are they and the Jews to be huddled in Jerusalem together, as the old Chiliasts affirmed? Is this the Christian hope? Such an idea is ignorance and monstrous. The Christian is even now in title blessed in the heavenly places. Thence he will reign over the earth. The Jews then gathered and converted will be in their own promised land and city, on which the eyes of the Lord rest continually, for it is the truth of God, that He never withdraws a gift, and never repents of a promise. He might repent of creating man, that was not a promise; it was simply an exertion of His will. But if God chose Israel or the Church, He repented of neither, though both have been unfaithful; for He means to bless, He does bless, and, no matter what the difficulty, He will bless forever. This we have to bold fast; the purpose of God shall stand. Changes in man and the earth may be, but the counsel of God must yet be accomplished. Gifts and calling of God are without repentance. He gave the land of Israel to their fathers. He gave the promise to make their seed a blessing. He connected His own Son with Israel after the flesh, that, spite of their sin in the cross, in virtue of His grace in the cross, an immovable basis of blessing might be laid, when they shall be raised to such a pinnacle of greatness on the earth as is reserved for no other people here below. When the Lord will come to reign, He will have removed to the Father's house the heavenly people. He will have raised the dead from their grave and changed the living into the likeness of His own glory. For this all Christians should be looking, as their expectation. When they are caught up thus, then the earth is clear for the Holy Ghost to work among the Jews. The Spirit of God does not operate to two different ends—a heavenly and an earthly—at the same time. But here we find Him at work among the Jews who are not caught up to heaven, as we expect, but to be blessed

under the Messiah on the earth.

Our Lord, then, having first come and removed the Christians, dead and living, to be with Himself above, will then begin to act upon the Jews and prepare them as His people when He reigns. This is what is in question here. The earthly center of His reign is Mount Zion and Jerusalem. This it is which gives to the reign of David such emphasis in the word of God. He was the chosen type of the Lord, not merely in his humiliation, but also in his glory. He had also to war and put down his enemies, and therefore was called a “man of blood.” Our Lord will be first an executor of judgment, though not, as David, allowing anything of his own spirit and will to interfere, and spoil the work, but, in the holy authority of God Himself, in the pouring out of divine wrath and indignation, all will be perfect and dealt with righteousness. In that day the Lord will convulse the whole universe, punishing “the host of the high ones on high” i.e., in the scene that they have defiled, “and the kings of the earth on the earth.” The believing Jews of that day will utter this song in evident reference to their experience of the faithfulness of God.

They do not address God as Father in the Spirit of adoption, for they are not Christians; they will be believers, but believing Jews. It is gross ignorance to talk of Abel, Enoch, Abraham, David, or Daniel as Christians. They were all saints, but not Christians. Not merely was it after Christ came that the disciples were first called Christians, but the place into which believers were then brought by the work of Christ and the gift of the Spirit differs essentially. There is hardly a worse error for a believer now; for it alike tells upon the present and the future, and the past merging all the various displays of God's mind in confusion, which blunts the edge of the word, hinders the full blessing and testimony of the Church, and mars the glory of God as much as man can.

Now, no doubt, in presence of the cross, and the Holy Ghost being personally on earth, the old distinctions of Jew and Gentile fade before their common ruin in sin and death morally. But when the Lord comes, He will prepare the Jewish people to receive Him according to the prophets; and they will be made the witnesses of His mercies no less than of His glory here below; as now they are the most obstinate enemies of the gospel and of His grace to the Gentiles.

In this song they speak the proper language of Jews. If a Christian were to address God as Jehovah, it is of course in itself true, but it is a very unintelligent mode for a Christian. To us there is one God, the Father, and one Lord Jesus Christ.

Jehovah is the name of God looked at as a governor that maintains His kingdom; whereas Father is that name which first came out in connection with His beloved Son, and now, by virtue of redemption, is true of us who believe in Him. Hence, as often noticed, the moment that Christ was raised from the dead, He says, “Go to my brethren and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.” (John 20:17.) Christ by His death and resurrection has brought us into the same place with Himself. This the Lord always had in view when He was here, so that He never addressed God as Jehovah, because the New Testament presents Him in view of Christianity. But the Old Testament shows that the Lord will have a people, and that they will know Him and the Father as Jehovah. This suffices to indicate the difference; and I have made these remarks to show that another class of people are here spoken of, not Christians but Jews, who recognize God in that title which God gave Himself in relation to Israel of old. When God chose Moses, He bade him go and make Himself known to them as Jehovah, telling them that He was not so known before. Thus was it chosen at the commencement of the public dealings of God

with His people, and throughout their national history it was as Jehovah He appeared. It was not that the name did not previously exist, but He never took it before for His recognized title as the God of Israel. It is the prophet who speaks in behalf of Israel; he breaks into the language of praise and individualizes it in behalf of the people in verse 1. What are the wonderful things? The death and resurrection of Christ? Not a word about it. These are the themes we should speak about. Thus, on the Lord's-day morning, when we come together, what occupies our hearts is the burden of His praise. We have the still more wonderful works of God in Christ and the new creation, and the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.

Here Israel are supposed to be occupied with the wonderful things God has wrought for the deliverance of their nation. (Ver. 2, 3.) For God will have interposed and put forth His power to deliver His ancient people in the judgment of their mightiest enemies. They speak of the ruin God has inflicted on all around them. As long as the Jews are unbroken for their sins and indifferent to the truth of God, only bent on making money and serving as the world's bankers, people will be content to use them and let them alone. But from the moment that God calls the Jew out of his present spiritual, moral degradation, when the dry bones are gathered together, when their hearts turn to the rejected Messiah, all nations will turn against them, and once more rend them, as truly as ever. How do we know this? The Bible delivers the believer from guess-work. People who do not study the prophetic word can only speculate about the future. There can be no certainty for them; to pretend to it would be presumptuous. But when you bow to and believe the Bible, you are entitled through the teaching of God's Spirit to have the certain light of God. It is entirely our own unbelief if we do not enjoy it.

“And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it.” (Ver. 6-8.) The Spirit of God refers to resurrection. So the apostle, in 1 Cor. 15:54, applies the beginning of verse 8: “When this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.” The resurrection synchronizes with the deliverance of Israel, which itself will be “life to the dead” for the world. (Rom. 11:15) Thus the first great stroke at death will be at this very time. Then man's career will cease, and the Lord Jesus will receive His ancient people, coming with His risen saints, and will swallow up the vail that is spread over all nations. For there is no deliverance wrought in the earth up to that time.

“The Lord hath spoken it.” Why does He say so here? Is it not because He foresaw man would be incredulous? The special mark of the Lord's voice is here, the proud heart of man being well known to Him, and all the delusions of wise and unwise, deceiving and being deceived. He knew how people would say, when they came to predicted judgments, these are for the Jews; and if to blessings, those are for themselves. They have all the good things for the Church; they have left the dark things for Israel; but even there they destroy conscience by the lie which views them as past and obsolete. “And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation. For in this mountain shall the hand of the Lord rest, and Moab shall be trodden down

under him, even as straw is trodden down for the dunghill. And he shall spread forth his hands in the midst of them, as he that swimmeth spreadeth forth his hands to swim: and he shall bring down their pride together with the spoils of their hands. And the fortress of the high fort of thy walls shall he bring down, lay low, and bring to the ground, even to the dust." (Ver. 9-12.)

We must examine of whom God speaks; there are judgments upon Israel and upon Christendom, and blessings for Israel and for the Church. That this is for Israel has been already shown; the language used is only suited to them. They speak of themselves, not as we do, as the children of God, but as His people, and of judgments, as introducing their blessing. Were all the earth to be dissolved, it would neither lessen nor increase our blessing. When Christ comes, He will simply remove us to Himself, changed into His likeness, out of the scene of weakness, and sin, and sorrow, into His own heavenly home. Whereas here, "It shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation." (Ver. 9.) They are not saved yet. Such is not our case now, save as to the body. Search the New Testament and you will see that as regards the soul, we must be saved now, and if we believe, we are. It is plain that here is another class, Jews who have waited in shame for Jehovah, and who when He comes in glory, say, "This is our God, we have waited for him, and he will save us." (Ver. 10.) Not for us but for them "shall the hand of Jehovah" rest in "this mountain." Our portion is in heaven. "This mountain" is the lofty center of the earthly glory. And accordingly the name of a proud national foe of Israel follows, as doomed to humiliation. Is the Christian looking for Moab to be trodden down? The wholesale christening of the Jewish prophets tends to make Scripture ridiculous, and many a man has become hardened in his infidelity by such wild applications to the Christian church. There are general truths and principles that apply to us; for all prophets are intended for the use of the Christian, as the law also. All Scripture is inspired and profitable; but it is absurd thence to infer that all is about ourselves. "The law is lawful," says Paul, "if a man use it lawfully;" and so are the prophets; but we must hear them, not as if we were Jews, but Christians.

Here then, is a plain proof that not Christians, not the Church of God, are before us, but Israel. What have we to do with Moab as an enemy? and an enemy which is to be trodden down? Do we look to tread down our enemies, if it were even the Roman papacy? It is Scripture, but it is not a scripture prophecy about us; it is what we ought to profit by and to bless God for; but it concerns not ourselves, but Israel. They on the earth will see their former enemies trodden under them, and Moab is one of them.

Chapter 117

# Notes on Isaiah 26

Here we have another song which is to be sung in the land of Judah. That in the last chapter is not so called, yet was it an outburst of praise after the shaking of heaven and earth; in this we have the people still further celebrating what God has done for Judah.

If we look at Israel now, the contrast with what they are to be made by and by is very striking. For in Rom. 1:18, they are thus alluded to: “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness [i.e., Gentile wickedness in general] and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness [that of Israel].” Here, on the contrary, it is said, “Open ye the gates that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may pass in.” (Ver. 2.)

The truth will have been abandoned by the Jewish people, or the larger part of them, in the last days. At the first advent of Christ it could be said that “salvation is of the Jews;” they had the truth, but held it in unrighteousness. They had the form of sound doctrine maintained for the most part, save among the Sadducees. But before the Lord comes the second time, the great mass of the nation will not hold the truth, but a lie, the great deceit of the last days, the lie of Antichrist, instead of the truth of Christ. The unrighteousness will be similar.

Here we have the blessed contrast of all this: there is a remnant whom God will make to be a strong nation, and they are called, “The righteous nation which keepeth the truth.” (Ver. 2.) In verse 3, it is not merely that there is a general profession of the nation, but there will be individual reality among them. In the past they were called “The holy nation,” that was the name that belonged to them, but in the future there is this comfort for our souls that it will be real, and individually real. No common privileges are ever to make us less mindful of our individual need.

For many years the common joy of the Church was very little entered into, because of the worldliness, legalism, many divisions and innumerable wrong ways that had crept in. But there is the danger, now that God has been pleased to show the importance of corporate blessing, of our forgetting that the individual place must be still more carefully watched. It is of primary moment to know the standing of the Christian and the position of the Church, but state must next be looked to. Strength depends upon what passes between our own souls and God, who in His gracious, vigilant care watches over the saints individually. These, then, do not forget the public blessings of the nation, but there is also the individual saint's walk, staying upon God, caring for His glory, who, on His part, keeps the soul in perfect peace; the mind is stayed upon God Himself. For no matter what the blessings are, if we have not God Himself as the object of our hearts, they are sure to be misused; therefore it is said, “because he trusteth in thee.” It is not merely the perception of the goodness of God and of the wonders He had wrought for them. Now they know Himself, and trust Himself; and this is a very great thing for our souls—this personal knowledge of God and trust in God. I need not say it is what God looks for now in a still more intimate way than even then, though all that ever has been done on the face of the earth will have been completely eclipsed with but one exception (and that exception is Christ, and we may add His body the Church). Nothing can surpass the last Adam; nothing compare with Christ's cross, and that will be our portion, of

which we will joy and boast even in glory.

Remark this also, that in all these statements of what they are to share, you never find such language addressed to them as supposes them to enter into the depths of God's ways in the cross as is expected of us now. What can be sweeter than the way in which they count on their deliverance, and confide their souls to God! But you never find such words as, “God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Yet nothing would have been more easy, had it been in due keeping, than for God to have said so here. We are called into such fellowship with God about His Son and about His cross, as well as heaven, as nobody can really find in the Old Testament.

When a person starts with the thought that it is all one and the same thing, the distinctive value of Scripture is lost. For the soul, too, the least possible measure of blessing is the result. Ver. 4. Here we have the Lord Jehovah brought in; and the reason why they speak of His everlasting strength is, because “He bringeth down them that are on high,” &c. (Ver. 5.) It will be one nation upon whom God in the last days will clothe with such honor, after they have been put down in every way by the Gentiles. Hence they are singing; for God has not a single difficulty then in the way of fully blessing them. It is touching to see how God insists that He has done everything that was needed for their deliverance and good. But it is always in the abasement of what is high and lofty, referring to Israel themselves. Ver. 7. They will have been brought through tremendous trials, and have borne the added and painful reproach of being a most abandoned people.

For a godly few of the Jews will entirely gainsay the lie of Satan when all the power of their nation, and the great mass of the west, will have given way to Antichrist. A little, despised remnant will still hold out for the Lord, still refuse him who puts himself forward as the true Messiah. They will have been faithful in the face of death, and now they are made to praise God because “He has weighed the path of the just.” (Ver. 7.) It is sweet in thinking of this, that their triumph will not be by their power or their knowledge, but by their simple trust in Jehovah and faith in His word. But a scanty glimpse will be theirs; for they are the very souls referred to, in Isa. 1, as walking in darkness and having no light. This ought never to be said of a Christian, though he may slip into such a feeling; for he has seen Christ, the light of life, the true light. He may have but a dim perception of Christ, but still Christ is before his soul and always shines; for it is not true, that where the light of grace has once shone, God takes it back again. The difference is on the part of the Christian. It is never the light that is gone; but that he may have been unfaithful and turned his back upon it. The Holy Ghost has come down to abide with the Christian forever. He may not always walk according to the light, but in it he is, as a believer, and cannot but be; yea, he is now light in the Lord. The Christian walks in the light as long as he professes the name of Christ. He never walks in darkness; he may not enjoy the light, but that is another thing.

The contrary language is very common in Christendom, because they confound the position of the Christian with that of the Jewish people, who must go through darkness by and by, before their light is come, and the glory of Jehovah is risen upon them. Possibly a very few may not be thus walking in darkness; some certainly will have godliness in contrast with the many; then are “the wise.” But the beautiful feature of the godly is, that although they thus walk in darkness, yet as they have been touched by the Spirit of God, and know that what is of God can never have alliance with sin, so they will refuse to own that idols and Antichrist can be of God. Thus they pass

through the fires, with an uncommonly feeble measure of knowledge of God no doubt, but still they will be true to what they have got, and will be brought out to praise God. (Ver. 7.) They are entitled to be spoken of as “the just.” So now, it is a great snare as well as mistake of believers not to take the place of being saints of God; for if they decline it, they feel not responsibility in their walk. So in earthly relations, if persons in the position of masters or servants do not act from their true position, they will never carry themselves in practice as becomes them. To own our proper relationship is not pride, but a duty and wisdom. If you are occupied therein with self, no doubt pride comes in, but it is all right and important to acknowledge God in the relationships to which He has called us.

The Spirit of God leads them to say, “Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee,” &c. (Ver. 8.) That is what they had been wading through. They had waited for Him in the way of His judgments, we follow Him in grace and look to appear with Him in glory. “With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.” (Ver. 9.) Now we have the individual again. As far as the world is concerned, the patience of God will have ended in the most fearful departure from the truth. God is now suffering the ways of man. He has not left them to their own conjectures or darkness; but He has caused His light to shine in the person of Christ, leaving man to himself, save working by His word and Spirit. Outwardly God seems as though He did not notice what is passing here below, and all this after the full light of God has shone through Christ upon this world. Saving grace has appeared to men. Favor has been shown to the wicked: this is what is going on now. “Let favor be shown unto the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness.” “In the land of uprightness,” it is added, “will he deal unjustly and will not behold the majesty of the Lord.” The gospel is but for a witness; it will not, cannot govern the world. When God's judgments are here below, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. Hence there is another thing: in verse 11 Jehovah, with uplifted hand, is coming in the way of judgment. Does the first answer declare “they will not see?” But, says He, “They shall see, and be ashamed for their envy at the people; yea, the fire of thine enemies shall devour them.” “Lord, thou wilt ordain peace for us: for thou also hast wrought all our works in us. O Lord our God, other lords beside thee have had dominion over us: but by thee only will we make mention of thy name.” (Ver. 11-13.)

And what then about Israel? “They are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased, they shall not rise.” (Ver. 14.) This is of course highly figurative language. If we look at the resurrection, we know that the wicked are to rise as well as the righteous; that is, there is a resurrection of all men, just and unjust. These Gentile oppressors of Israel must rise in the resurrection of judgment. They will rise like other bad men. Hence when it is said here, “They shall not rise,” the Spirit does not describe the literal resurrection of the body, but the complete reversal of the lot of the Gentiles and Israel in this world. These old lords are no longer to live or rise again in this world. This will suffice to show that the language here is figurative.

In chapter 25:8, it is said, “He will swallow up death in victory.” This, we know from God self, will be realized in the literal resurrection of the body, when the saints are raised. But in chapter 26 that allusion to resurrection is employed as a figure, because the context proves that it cannot refer to that literal fact; for if it did, it would be to deny that the unrighteous are to rise. This is the true criterion for the understanding of any passage of the word. If a person bring you a text against

what you know to be true, always examine what surrounds it, what God is treating of. Here it is plain that it is a question of the way in which God will deal in that day with the Gentiles who lorded it over Israel. But is it not the fact, some may ask, that these Gentiles were literally dead? Certainly, I answer; but it is not true that they shall not rise. Perhaps this would not be worth dwelling on, were it not that many apply chapter 26 to the same literal resurrection as 25:8. We must never force but bow to Scripture. The passages that do refer to a raising of bodies we must hold fast, but it is dangerous to misapply others which it only uses as a figure, because one might infer, as from our chapter, that some shall never rise. In truth, as we know, all men must rise. “The hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth.” (John 5:28, 29.) There we have the most decisive proof that all the dead, just and unjust, are to rise and reappear. Here, contrariwise, the wicked enemies of Israel “shall not rise.” John clearly teaches the resurrection of all, good and bad. Isa. 26:14 refers only to the figure of rising or not to comfort Israel from all fears of their old troublers. “They are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased, they shall not rise: therefore hast thou visited and destroyed them, and made all their memory to perish.” (Ver. 14.) But what had been done for the nation? “Thou hast increased the nation, O Lord, thou hast increased the nation: thou art glorified: thou hadst removed it far unto all the ends of the earth.” (Ver. 15.) He does not speak of the resurrection of the body. Clearly when that takes place as described, it could not be said that He had removed the risen saints far unto all the ends of the earth. Take it of Israel, and how true it is!

So, again, verses 16-18. “Lord, in trouble have they visited thee, they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them. Like as a woman with child, that draweth near the time of her delivery, is in pain, and crieth out in her pangs; so have we been in thy sight, O Lord. We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have as it were brought forth wind; we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth; neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen.” They will review their past conduct, and see that they have not accomplished the purpose of God. They had brought in no divine flow of blessing; they had learned the bad ways of the Gentiles, and brought a curse on themselves; the name of the Lord was blasphemed because of them. But now it is said, “Thy dead shall live; my dead body shall they arise.” What mighty words! and how tender! The Lord awakens Israel, and even calls them His dead body. It is no question of bodily death, but of national revival. The daughter awakes from her long sleep, and the Lord speaks of the Jews (so long defunct as His people) as His dead. They, for their part, own themselves to be just as bad as the rest of the nations, but the difference is that the Lord claims them as His own. “Let them be dead,” He says as it were, “still they are mine.” It is the Jewish nation that had been like a corpse whom the Lord is graciously pleased to identify as His dead body, bringing them out again. So Abraham would bury his dead out of his sight. Here God claims them to fill them with a new life. “My dead body shall they arise.” Some may think this a questionable interpretation of the passage; but a scripture or two will prove its soundness.

In Ezek. 37 the terms of the figure are quite as strong as here; the Spirit of God shows the prophet a valley of dry bones. “They were very dry.” “Can these bones live?” was the question. (Ver. 3 - 5.) “Behold I will cause breath to enter into you.” (Ver. 6.) Then the vision is realized, the bones come together; then there was flesh on them. (Ver. 11.) Then the bones, coming forth and clothed with flesh, answer to the dead men here raised out of their graves; and beyond controversy they are the whole house of Israel: “Thy dead shall live,” says Isaiah. To put this chapter of Ezekiel along

with Isa. 26 makes, to say the least, a strong presumption that if the figure of resurrection is used to show the fresh start of Israel in the one, so it may be in the other. But it is certainly so intended in Ezek. 37; for, if we have the vision, we have also the inspired interpretation. We are not therefore at liberty to explain the vision according to our own thoughts; the explanation of the Holy Ghost is express and conclusive. Thus we can carry divine light back to Isa. 26, where the very same allusion is found.

In Hosea again, there is a similar figure, as also in Dan. 12:2, “Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.” If we divert this to a resurrection of the body, in the first place it is not a resurrection of all, but only of many. In the second place, it is of some to everlasting life and of some to shame and contempt at the same time. We must give up the doctrine of the first resurrection, separated by a thousand years and more from the second death (Rev. 20), in order to found on this a literal rising from the graves. All is plain and just if it apply in the same way as Ezekiel and Isaiah to the national revival of Israel (or the Jews), whom God will bring out of all their present condition of shame, though some of them be allowed to display fatal wickedness and pride. But the last will be quickened with divine life. This is another confirmation of the truth of the interpretation.

But further, the next verse (20) is explicit, where God says, “Enter thou into thy chamber till the indignation be overpast.” Those who interpret the context of a literal resurrection are led into the error, that the risen saints (for such this scheme would suppose to be here meant) would be here on earth whilst the divine indignation is going on! One could understand their holding that some are to pass through the tribulation, though it is not the same thing as the indignation. But it is clearly a question of men alive here below, not of men changed. God tells them (the Jews) to enter into their chambers until He has spent all His wrath upon the nations. Is this what we look for? Are we not to be taken out of this earthly scene and to enter into the Father's house above? We are not an earthly but a heavenly people. We know the Lord is coming who will take us to be with Himself where He is, and when He has translated the Christians above, the Jews will be called for the earth. The little remnant will be grievously tried, and the vast body of the nation will receive the false Christ. Then when the judgment of the quick comes, it is said, “enter into thy chambers.” He will not provide a heavenly abode for them, but they are to enter into their chambers, always some place of refuge and earthly security. All this renders plain the right interpretation of the passage, and shows that He is not speaking about the heavenly saints, but refers to the remnant of the Jews in the last days, who are to have a haven of refuge provided for them. It is not like Abraham: this is our place; Israel's will be much more like Lot, for they will be in the midst of the place where the judgment is to be executed. Lot entered into his chambers (i.e., Zoar) when the judgments came; but, as for Abraham, be was entirely out of the scene; and yet before it came to pass, he knew it far better than Lot. His position, communion, and experience were entirely different from those of his nephew. So we shall be taken to Christ and brought into the Father's house; and afterward, when the Lord comes to execute judgment, we shall come along with him.

# Notes on Isaiah 27

This is the closing portion of the series that has been occupying us. It is “in that day.” Chapter 28 manifestly introduces a new part of the prophecy.

The great crisis is arrived. Not only does Jehovah come out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity, and the earth is compelled to disclose her deeds of blood, and her slain shall be covered no more; but there are yet greater things. For “in that day the Lord with sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan, the piercing serpent, even leviathan, that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea.” It is the execution of divine judgment on the power of Satan, figuratively set forth under forms suited to describe his hostility as at work against Israel among the Gentiles. (Ver. 1) “The day of the Lord” takes in not only the thousand years, but a little more.

Thence the Spirit turns to the Lord's ways with His own. “In that day sing ye unto her, A vineyard of red wine. I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.” (Ver. 2, 3) His care never failed, whatever the times that passed over His land and people. When earth comes once more into His view, and consequently Israel, His watchful goodness will prove itself unremitting on their behalf. “Fury is not in me: who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together. Or let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me.” There seems not a little obscurity in the language, if one may judge from the discrepancies of expositors, and the difficulty of suggesting such a sense as carries the unbiased along with it. But assuming that the substantial force is given in the English Bible, the Lord, on the one hand, challenges the adversaries and warns of their sure destruction; on the other He proffers His own protection as the only door of peace and safety. The next verse (6) is transparent: “He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root: Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit.” Such is the purpose of the Lord; and it shall stand.

It was not mere purpose, however: there was patient, persevering discipline in His ways with Israel. “Hath he smitten him, as he smote those that smote him? or is be slain according to the slaughter of them that are slain by him? In measure, when it shooteth forth, thou wilt debate with it: he stayeth his rough wind in the day of the east wind. By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; and this is all the fruit to take away his sin; when he maketh all the stones of the altar as chalkstones that are beaten in sunder, the groves and images shall not stand up. Yet the defensed city shall be desolate, and the habitation forsaken, and left like a wilderness: there shall the calf feed, and there shall he lie down, and consume the branches thereof. When the boughs thereof are withered, they shall be broken off: the women come, and set them on fire: for it is a people of no understanding: therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will show them no favor.” (Ver. 7-11) Thus, there was indeed a mighty difference in God's ways with Israel and their enemies. Faithfully did He chastise them in their pride, and rebelliousness, and unbelief; but it was not with the unsparing judgment which uprooted and

destroyed His and their foes. There was slaughter too; but what was it in comparison of those that Israel are destined to slay before this day of retribution arrives? In their case, judgment was tempered with mercy; His dealing was measured. In His debate or controversy with Israel, He deigned to plead; and even when the sorest trial came, there was a gracious mitigation and arrest in favor of Israel; and not this only, but also moral profit, when every trace of idolatry should be ground like chalkstone to powder. They must not be surprised, then, if in such mighty changes the works of the men of the earth passed away, the defensed city was desolated, the habitation forsaken and left like the wilderness, only relieved by pasturage for the calf, and by withered, broken firewood for women to come and set on fire; for oh! the folly of the people and the ruin they bring justly, necessarily on themselves!

Yet here, as elsewhere, great tribulation is the immediate precursor of a greater deliverance. “And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall beat off from the channel of the river unto the stream of Egypt, and ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel.” (Ver. 12) The Judge of all the earth shall do right; but He shall interpose in saving, sovereign mercy. He shall sift out and gather the Israelites one by one. Nay more, “It shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem.” (Ver. 13) Those who have accompanied me thus far will have no trouble or doubt in determining the true application. It is the trumpet of Matt. 24, not of 1 Thess. 4 and 1 Cor. 15 The latter pair refers to the divine summons to the heavenly saints; our chapter, as well as the passage in the gospel, describes the call to Israel to re-assemble, from north and south, to worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem.

# Notes on Isaiah 28

This portion, which is intimately connected with chapter 29, gives us a clear, detailed view of the ways of God with His people and His land, more especially with Jerusalem, in the last days. Israel is to fade as a flower, Jerusalem to be in sore displeasure, but delivered gloriously and forever. I trust it may be seen plainly how impossible it is to apply what the Holy Ghost announces here as a whole, to anything that has yet been accomplished. We must leave room for a further and closer bearing of these woes of the prophet. Now simple as this may be, it is immensely important. For even many Christians are looking onward for the gradual progress (not testimony alone) of the gospel. They expect that, by the blessing of the Holy Ghost upon the preached word, the nations are to be by degrees brought in; moral evil, infidelity, every form of superstition, all the pride and worldliness of man, to be slowly broken down, when the power of the Holy Ghost shall fill men's hearts with righteousness, and peace, and joy, and thus the world in general be the reflection of the will and ways of God. To such persons the assertion seems strange that there is to be a total change of dispensation; that God, having first taken us away to be with Christ above, is going to restore Israel into pre-eminence in their own land, not to convert them simply and bring them into the Christian Church, but to lead them to repent and receive their own Messiah, when they shall have their own distinctive promises and the new covenant made good to them, Jehovah's glory shining upon Zion, themselves exalted above all nations, who then take a place of conscious, willing inferiority to Israel, and vie with one another which shall pay most honor to the chosen of the Lord. All this, in many weighty consequences, involves such a mighty revolution in people's thoughts, that those more accustomed to the word of God can hardly conceive what an immense draft it makes upon the faith of those who are unversed in the prophetic word; how repugnant it is to all that is most cherished in their minds, what a death-blow it gives to what they had considered the legitimate hope of the Church. If we come to God's word as the only source of truth and sure test of all previous thoughts, nothing can be plainer; for here we have clearly a vision of the terrible blow that is to fall upon Ephraim, which is not only the name of a particular tribe, but the general designation of the ten tribes who mustered under that leading tribe. Judah and Ephraim are the two chief titles by which the prophets continually contrast the two houses of Israel. What the prophet communicates here is the woe that is to fall specially on Ephraim, that is, on what we call the ten tribes. This furnishes us with means for judging the time and circumstances of its fulfillment, because no such judgment as is here described ever historically fell upon the Jews. The others (i.e., Israel) were carried away into captivity in Assyria, and were never as a people restored to the land. Isaiah wrote when this dreadful blow was fallen upon Israel, and goes onward to their last days, even to the days when Christ Himself, first in faith, then in delivering power and glory, shall be connected with the remnant of Judah. Looking at the past history of Judah, we fail to see any such connection of Christ with Judah, anything that answered to this recourse to the tried Stone, save in those disciples who left the synagogue for the Church at a later epoch. The ten tribes were carried away at an early day, and later on the two tribes were carried to Babylon, whence emerged only an inconsiderable remnant of Judah. The prophecy, therefore, has not yet been accomplished; and that which has not been, must be fulfilled. Surely no canon of

interpretation can be surer or plainer than this. Scripture cannot be broken: the word of God must be verified sooner or later. The end of this age is the ripe season for making good the hulk of prophecy. Therefore the one question here is whether anything has occurred really and fully corresponding to these judgments that fell on the ten tribes and Judah, and Jerusalem also. That there never has been an adequate accomplishment, will be manifest enough as we pass on.

“Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower, which are on the head of the fat valleys of them that are overcome with wine. Behold, the Lord hath a mighty and strong one, which as a tempest of hail and a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing, shall cast down to the earth with the hand.” I do not think drunkenness is to be taken in its merely literal acceptation. It represents their dreadfully excited, stupefied, careless state, given up to their own pleasure, to self-indulgence and the shame of the true God. What drunkenness is among men with its frightful natural effects, such in a large moral sense will be the condition of these proud insensate men of Ephraim. Fulfilled at whatever time it may be, plainly it will be in Israel as such.

“In that day shall the Lord of hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty unto the residue of his people, and for a spirit of judgment to him that sitteth in judgment, and for strength to them that turn the battle to the gate.” But was the condition of Judah better? “They also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment. For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean.” In vain had God met their weakness, and fed them with infants' food. (Ver. 9, 10.) Another dealing is needed and will surely follow. “With stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people.” Not with that child-like instruction which they had slighted, but with the foreign tones of enemies who would scourge them.

They would not have His words of rest for the weary, they must need have a nation they understood not. It was a judgment on their unbelief.

Thus the Assyrian is first represented as a hailstorm coming down from the north on Ephraim, “mighty and strong one,” “as a tempest of hail and a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing.” It is the “king of the north,” as he is described in Dan. 11. I have already drawn attention to the mistaken supposition that the lawless one, who is to be manifested as “the king” in Palestine, is the only danger of the Jews. No doubt, he, though their king, is at bottom an enemy of the worst character. For what can be more afflicting or disastrous than to have one in your very midst whom you have embraced as a friend, and who turns out the bitterest foe? Such will be the case when the Antichrist appears in the midst of the Jews and reigns, accepted by them as the Messiah. The Antichrist will be in evil and in false pretensions what Christ is in deed and in truth. Though Jesus was God, yet, when He came as man among men, He never asserted His rights as God in His ordinary path here below, however true the glory of His person was to faith. He never used the Godhead to avert trials and sufferings, or man's contempt of Him. He waited on God and trusted in Him. His obedience as man contributed only the more, because of His divine dignity, to show, that He was willing to encounter all shame and reproach, yea, the death of the cross, that God the Father might be glorified. Antichrist will, on the contrary, use all that Satan gives him (and Satan will endue him with such energy as never has been possessed before by man upon the

earth), will use all power and signs and lying wonders. The consequence will be that the Jews, who have always been looking out for external tokens and prodigies, will accept and worship him as the Messiah and Jehovah their God in Jerusalem. This is the person the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians warns us is to come. Upon him specially is the day of the Lord to fall; though that day will take in the whole course of judgments, from its first act in destroying the Antichrist till the end of the thousand years. All this period will be not only for the display of divine glory, but there will be also the execution of judgment from time to time on those that oppose themselves. Thus, of the other enemies of the Lord, the chief is this very king of the north, the Assyrian scourge that comes down upon Ephraim. Clearly he is an enemy that is outside the Holy Land, whereas Antichrist will reign in the land, being there received by the Jews, and probably a Jew himself, for otherwise he could hardly hope to pass himself as Messiah. But the other external enemy, though he may set up to understand dark sentences (Dan. 8), will rather appear antagonistically, as a fierce king and mighty man of craft.

From chapters 28, 29, we hear of two attacks on Jerusalem. First of all the enemy comes on Ephraim, entering the Holy Land from the north, on which occasion he has it his own way. He humbles the pride of Ephraim (ver. 3), and is allowed of God to gain a partial success over Jerusalem also. “Wherefore hear the word of the Lord, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem. Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves: therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste. Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place. And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it.” Was this the case in past history? Supposing you look at Sennacherib and his army (2 Kings 18), what is there like it, save as a preparatory type? Was not his power completely bumbled before the Jews? (Chap. 19) Was it not a godly son of David who then reigned at Jerusalem? Had not Ephraim been swept off years before? It is manifest and certain that Sennacherib never gained an advantage over Jerusalem, whereas this power is to be victorious in the first instance, and even in the second to reduce them to the utmost. Mark the language of the prophet here, “Wherefore hear the word of the Lord, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem.” (Ver. 14) The fact is, when Sennacherib came against Jerusalem then, the pious king Hezekiah ruled there, who, instead of making a covenant with death, implored the help of the Lord against the scornful king of Assyria. The result was that the angel of the Lord smote the host of Assyria, so that there fell no less than 185,000. Save that the Assyrian will once more oppose the Jews, there is scarce a feature in the past which is not the reverse of what we have here.

Let rationalists, if they will, conclude that the book (for the Spirit of God they deny) has made a mistake; believers may be assured that it mainly looks onward to the judgments of the last days. Indolent readers, unintelligent or prejudiced commentators may slur over the distinctive points of the prophecy, turning what they can to moral profit. But if a man follows out the matter closely, he must accept the truth of the future, or become a rationalist, i.e., an infidel. It is perfectly certain that

nothing that approaches the prediction has yet occurred. Therefore, the only legitimate inference to be drawn from it is either that the prophecy is yet to be fulfilled, or that the pseudo-prophet was guilty of a lie or a flourish. The Christian believes on the contrary, that God has written nothing in vain, and that every word, not yet accomplished, must be fulfilled to the letter, among the rest this wonderful dealing in which God is to make the land of Israel the grave of man's pride and power. Then God will appear for the everlasting deliverance of poor Israel. And that very people, now so proverbial for their obstinate rejection of Christ, will go forth zealously spreading the tidings of divine mercy to the ends of the earth. What an evident contrast with that which exists now! Israel will be brought into their own land and blessed there, when Jehovah of hosts shall reign in mount Zion. Now God has no land that is more particularly holy. The Land, holy in His purpose, is the possession of the Turk. It is still largely a barren land, though proofs of fertility are not wanting in the midst of barrenness. How is so vast a change to be brought about? When consummated, God will lead Israel to build a magnificent temple. The priests, the sons of Zadok, shall minister in due order. The land shall be divided among the twelve tribes after a new fashion. This and more we know from the last chapter of the Prophet Ezekiel. Indeed, abundant proofs are manifest elsewhere to any person moderately acquainted with the prophecies. At the present time, the characteristic facts are—Israel rejected, the Gentiles called, the Church formed in union with Christ on high and by the Holy Ghost here below, in which Church is neither Jew nor Gentile. Thus the character of blessing for man is entirely altered. Instead of outward honor resting upon the Jews, they are cast out and dispersed, and have yet to pass a fiery tribulation at the close. We are God's people, God's children now, not they. Peace in Christ is ours, but in the world we have tribulation. In the days that are coming all will be changed; God, instead of rejecting the Jews, will again choose them to stand forth in their own land, converting them to Himself, quenching all tendency to rest on ordinances and idols forever taken away; whereas they formerly mixed up idols with the worship of Jehovah, and rejected their Messiah. It is plain that a new state of things must have come in. The prophecies may take us down to the change; but how is the change itself to be brought about? By more tremendous judgments on Israel, and especially on their enemies, than the world has ever witnessed; not only a great nation, but the east and west, their old enemies, represented in their descendants. All nations of the earth, in short, will have their representatives there and then. The result will be, that God will judge all the nations, at length blessing His ancient people, according to the promises He had ensured to the fathers, then accomplished to the children. In order to bring about this change, not only must there be an execution of judgment, but also the removal of the heavenly saints to be with the Lord above; for as long as the Church goes on here below, it is impossible, morally speaking, that God could accomplish these events of a wholly contrasted character. For it is contrary to all analogy that God would act upon two opposite principles at the same time. For instance, how could God both give and withhold outward honor for the Jew? How form the Church at the same time that He restores and owns Israel? If a Jew were to believe now, he, baptized by the Holy Ghost, becomes a member of Christ's body; whereas, what we find in the prophets is, that a godly Jew, in the last days, remains a Jew. The Spirit will regenerate him, no doubt; but he will be found in his own land and, instead of suffering, he will be blessed in earthly things. Thus it is an altogether different state of things. To this the New Testament supplies the key. Before the Lord begins thus to work in Israel, He removes the Church to heaven. Hence, in the Book of Revelation, the great first lesson is this, that when “the things that are” or the seven churches terminate, and those that are true

believers now are seen glorified with the Lord in heaven, then (Rev. 7) God takes up a new work among the Jews and the Gentiles, who will be, both of them, blessed, but even so distinct from each other. No doubt, the Jews will return to their land in unbelief, and Satan will get them to install a man as their Messiah, who will draw them by degrees to worship himself and an idol. Some might think it strange to assert, that these civilized, Christianized nations who count it impossible that the educated could worship idols or the Antichrist, should fall into that very snare. But Scripture is explicit, that it is those who now boast of progress, knowledge, and religion, that will at that time fall into the anti-Christian pit and idolatry. All Western Europe will be drawn into the snare with the mass of the Jews. God will have previously removed all properly called Christians. Then the apostasy will take place, though in the midst of this fearful evil, the Spirit of God will work specially among certain of the Jews, who will go through this scene faithful to God, some being killed for the truth, and others surviving in the flesh—a remnant God will reserve to Himself to make of it as it were a new Israel. He will come in the midst of this wickedness; He will execute judgment upon the ungodly, preserving the spared remnant, who will become the chosen means of spreading the truth throughout the millennial age.

When the Holy Ghost says, “because ye have said, we have made a covenant with death” (ver. 15), we are not to suppose that this is to be taken as if they confessed it. God is rather exposing their true evil and danger. They may boast of their covenant, but they do not know it is with hell. They are deceived to accept a false Messiah, whose power will turn out to be of Satan, but they are ignorant of the cheat. Men would not openly say that they had entered into a contract with the devil; one must be in an extraordinary state in order to own such a thing; nor does the word. of God at all limit us to such an interpretation. I suppose the reference is to those that enter into a covenant to save themselves from the king of the north. It appears to be a contract entered into between the false prophet and the beast. The power that Scripture designates as the Beast, is the emperor of the west, the last Roman ruler when that empire re-appears. There is a living man even now, who has his mind set upon some such scheme. It is a notable fact that within the last few years the project has entered into the brain of one who has proved that an idea governs him. Nor is it absolutely new, this yearning after the reorganization of the empire, with Rome for its capital. The plan is, not to overthrow other European nations, but to make them subject kingdoms, each having its king, under one supreme head. That this is the theory of a living monarch, there can be no more question than that it was the idea of another before him. I may add, that he, too, like his predecessor, meddled with the affairs of the Holy Land, and that both have sought a hold of Rome. Some of us have held these interpretations of the prophecies long before the war of the holy places or the possession of Rome. They were thoughts derived not from political events but from Scripture. Plainly, then, a great power shall arise, in Scripture called “the Beast,” or the revived Roman empire, with this peculiar form, that instead, of putting aside the various kings of Europe, it will allow of separate kingdoms under him, nominally independent, but really dictated to by the emperor, who accordingly is the contracting party with the apostate Jews, in concert with their king the Antichrist; the emperor of the west being the political head, as the prophet king will be the spiritual head of Christendom (then properly anti-Christendom). Thus Jerusalem, which has been the cradle of professing Christendom, will be its grave. As to the particular person who will effect all this, one says nothing. He shall be revealed in his own time. The great point is the manifestation of the chiefs at Jerusalem and Rome. Rome will be the center of an earthly empire, with separate but dependent kings in western Europe, each having their kingdom subject to the

one head. This is one feature. The other is, that the Jews will be in their own land, and that this will bring them into the bands not of Christ but Antichrist.

When the Jews are there, the rest of the great drama will follow; they will soon have its predicted leader. Then comes the scene spoken of here. (Ver. 14, 15) In order to strengthen themselves against the great northern oppressor, or the overflowing scourge, they enter into a covenant with “the Beast.” In vain do they think to escape. At this very time God will raise to Himself the hearts of a little band of faithful Jews, who will feel assured that the wicked prince cannot be their Messiah; that the true God is a holy God; that His servant, their promised King, must be, not a man of sin, but a man of righteousness. The false messiah they refuse, their hearts in penitence cry, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of Jehovah. These are the very persons here spoken of as “he that believeth.” (Ver. 10.) The rest plot, make preparations, and hope to be saved from the overflowing scourge. But no; God will permit the mass to be trodden down. (Ver. 17-20.) God will not let them escape. The first attack upon Jerusalem is to be successful. In the next chapter we see a very different result, when the people in the city have been purged and Jehovah interferes. (Comp. Zech. 13; 14)

Thus Jerusalem is the great battle-field of the nations, and the main platform of the judgments of God. I am not speaking now about the last eternal judgment—the great white throne—for this has nothing to do with the earth. Heaven and earth will have fled away before that. Remember there is to be a judgment of the habitable earth, not only a judgment of the dead, but also and previously of the quick. Every baptized man professes that Christ is coming to judge the quick and the dead. How many understand and believe it? All will not take place at the same time. The judgment of the quick we speak of here. The reason why Jerusalem becomes the scene of God's judgments on the nations is that Jerusalem, Judah, and the people of Israel are the chosen center of God among the nations. In the latter day He will resume His former relations with Israel, though on a better and everlasting ground.

What solemn words in verse 14-29, for the scornful men ruling in Jerusalem) In vain to plead past favor or present privileges. Jehovah should rise up to do His work, His strange work, and accomplish His act, His strange act. He loves not vengeance, but mercy. But mockers are odious: most of all in Zion. A consumption therefore is determined upon the whole earth. He is the same unchanging God: let them not presume because of His long-suffering. Even with man it is not always plowing, nor always sowing-time. Threshing comes at last, and in divers modes and measures. So will it be in God's judgment of the earth. “This also cometh from the Lord of hosts which is wonderful in counsels and excellent in working.”

Chapter 120

# Notes on Isaiah 29

As the present chapter was to some extent anticipated in the remarks on the preceding one, one may speak the more briefly now. It opens with the final siege of Jerusalem by “the Assyrian,” so familiar in the prophecies. “Woe to Ariel, to Ariel, the city where David dwelt! add ye year to year; let them kill sacrifices. Yet I will distress Ariel, and there shall be heaviness and sorrow; and it shall be unto me as Ariel.” By Ariel, the lion of God, is meant Jerusalem, which the proud stranger menaces with destruction. Spite of great names and associations of the past, it is actually brought down into deep distress. Delay should not hinder its humiliation. Feasts or sacrifices should not avert the storm. God's indignation is in question, and not yet ended: still it abides to Him as Ariel, His lion. “And I will camp against thee round about, and will lay siege against thee with a mount, and I will raise forts against thee. And thou shalt be brought down, and shalt speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust, and thy voice shall be as of one that hath a familiar spirit, and thy speech shall whisper out of the dust.” That is, agony of terror would produce effects similar to the tone or language affected by those who dealt with spirits. “But the multitude of thy strangers shall be like small dust, and the multitude of the terrible ones shall be as chaff that passeth away: yea, it shall be at an instant suddenly. Thou shalt be visited of the Lord of hosts with thunder and with earthquake, and great noise, with storm and tempest, and the flame of devouring fire.” (Ver. 1-6.)

It must be plain, I think, how entirely all this falls in with and confirms the reference to the great king of the north in the time of the end. Sennacherib was but a type. Hence the commentators, not seeing this, stumble in hopeless perplexity. Some, applying it to the typical enemy, cannot get over the fact that Isaiah himself expressly predicts (as was the fact, of course,) that Sennacherib should not come into the city of Jerusalem, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with a shield, nor cast a bank against it. (Chap. 37: 33.) Others, again, suppose the Roman siege to be intended; but this, it is evident, is still more flatly contradicted by Jehovah's intervention at the last gasp, to the deliverance of Jerusalem and the utter overthrow of their enemies. In fact, it is the future siege at the close of this age, when the great confederacy of the north-eastern nations shall be broken after a previous success against the Jews. The reader can compare Zech. 12-14., which bear on the same events; also Psa. 83; 110:2, 6; Mic. 4:11; 5:4-15. The next verses, 7, 8, strengthen this conclusion: “And the multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel, even all that fight against her and her munition, and that distress her, shall be as a dream of a night vision. It shall even be as when an hungry man dreameth, and, behold, he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty: or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and, behold, he drinketh; but he awaketh, and, behold, he is faint, and his soul hath appetite: so shall the multitude of all the nations, that fight against mount Zion.” Calvin's notion that they were the various garrisons which the Jews brought in from elsewhere to defend their capital, and that they are threatened with being useless refuse, is quite unworthy of his reputation. It is a clear prediction of the destruction of their foes at the last, led on by him who was prefigured by the, Assyrian. They shall be as disappointed of their prey, as a hungry or thirsty man who wakes up from his imaginary feast.

The prophet then turns (ver. 9-12) to describe the moral condition of the Jews themselves: for such a trial as God thus brought on them will have its ground in their evil state, whatever may be His mercy and its rejoicing against judgment in the end. “Stay yourselves, and wonder: cry ye out, and cry: they are drunken, but not with wine: they stagger, but not with strong drink. For the Lord hath poured out on you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered. And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed. And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned.” Israel were spiritually blind to God's lessons. Judicial sleep oppressed all: learned or simple made no difference.

Alas! they were formalists, hypocrites, taught by the precept of men as certainly as they avowed their ignorance of God's word. Therefore by God's sentence their wisdom should perish. (Ver. 13, 14.) In vain their efforts to hide from the Lord or be independent of Him. God, after all, remains God, and man is but as clay in the hand of the potter. (Ver. 15, 16.) If this is solemnly true, it is full of blessed comfort. For “Is it not yet a very little while, and Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be esteemed as a forest? And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness. The meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. For the terrible one is brought to naught, and the scorner is consumed, and all that watch for iniquity are cut off, that make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate, and turn aside the just for a thing of naught.” (Ver. 17-21.) Soon all will be reversed: not only the lofty Assyrian abased and humbled, Israel exalted, but the culpable insensibility of the people gives place to spiritual understanding and earnestness. Sweet traits of the Spirit should find increase of blessing and joy: violence, scorn, and iniquity be judged and vanish. “Therefore thus saith the Lord, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob, Jacob shall not now be ashamed, neither shall his face now wax pale. But when he seeth his children, the work of mine hands, in the midst of him, they shall sanctify my name, and sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and shall fear the God of Israel. They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine.” (Ver. 22-24.)

Chapter 121

# Notes on Isaiah 30-31

There is a topic on which the Spirit of God enlarges much here, which has been scantily noticed hitherto. Inasmuch as it comes before us in the chapter now read, I will say a few words on it—the moral condition of Israel, as proved and brought home to them by the revelation of God. For what we have all throughout these chapters is not merely deliverance, nor this in His grace only, during a time of ruin, but also the righteous Lord proving that he loves righteousness. There was a cause for the proof that the condition of Israel was morally unbearable to God. Blindness was there, religious and, finally, judicial blindness. This is traced by the Spirit in a variety of ways. We will look briefly at what we have before us here.

The first feature of their evil which draws out the indignation of God, is that His people should go down into Egypt; that a people blessed of God, with promises of still better blessings than ever they tasted, with which they are yet to be blessed by God's own grace in the last days—the best possible blessings for a people upon earth—that such a people should go down into Egypt for help, was not only debasing to themselves, but also peculiarly dishonoring to God. Hence the Holy Ghost now, having shown us their deliverance, goes back and indicates from what they were delivered. God brings out one character of evil after another, and shows that the necessary issue of it was destruction. Yet He brings them out of all their distresses, and at length blesses them fully as His own people. It is peculiarly comforting to read of the ways of God, how He is not only a deliverer from dangers, from outward enemies, from Satan, but also from every form of sin. He does not in any wise gloss over moral evil, but chapter after chapter brings it out, though, as the effect of its judgment, Israel seemed ready to be swallowed up. But as the dark side thus appears, so on the other God is seen interfering in grace, plucking their feet out of the net, setting the dispersed in their own land, and securing the triumph of His own grace as well as righteousness. For this cause, He says (ver. 1), “Woe to the rebellious children, that take counsel but not of me.” It is a solemn thing to read such words as these, and still more so to think how applicable they may be to ourselves. Even as children of God, the proneness of our hearts is to act according to our own judgments, for the flesh in the Christian is not a whit better than in any other man. Whenever there is a listening to ourselves, we may be sure there is the same character of evil at work that the Spirit of the Lord was rebuking in Israel.

What to Israel was going down into Egypt, is to us the taking counsel of natural wisdom in any difficulty; that is to say, it was fleshly wisdom which Israel sought, and of which Egypt is the symbol in the ancient world. There was no country in the early history of men so distinguished for the wisdom of nature as Egypt. In latter days Greece and Rome sprang up, but that was long after the time to which this vision applied as an historical fact. They were at first little more than a number of barbarous hordes. There was no wisdom found anywhere to the same extent as in Egypt. The great Assyrian who invaded Israel was characterized, not so much by wisdom as by vast resources, and appliances in the way of strength. Egypt depended mainly on good counsel, as if there were no wise God, on the counsel of man sharpened by long experience, for it was one of the oldest powers that attained eminence. Accordingly, as they had been versed in the statecraft

of the ancient world, they had an immense reputation for their knowledge of means of dealing with national difficulties, peace, plenty, &c.

Israel, when threatened by the Assyrian, sought the help of Egypt: I am speaking now of the literal fact when this prophecy first applied. Though it did bear on the days of Isaiah, yet the character of the prophecy shows that it cannot be limited to that time: only a very small part was accomplished then. But between the two terms of Israel's past and future unfaithfulness, seeking to the wisdom of the world in their troubles, there is a serious lesson for us in the pressure of any trial that concerns the testimony of God; there is an immense tendency to meet a worldly trial in a worldly way. That you cannot meet the world's efforts against you by spiritual means is what one is apt to think; so there is the danger of recourse to earthly means for the purpose of escape. What is this but the same thing that we find here? And yet who that feels for the children of God and for the truth, but knows the danger of this? I am sure if we do not feel the danger, it is because we are ourselves under the world's influence. The feeling of the danger the dread of our own spirits, the fear lest we should meet flesh by flesh, is what God uses to make us look to Himself. God will never put His seal on self-dependence; on the contrary, the great lesson, the whole life of Christ teaches is the very reverse. He lived by the Father; so “he that eateth Him shall live by Him.” That is to say, it is in dependence upon another even Christ, that the joy and strength and wisdom of the Christian are found. This we gather before the difficulty comes. Then “I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me.”

Where we often fail is through acting from impulse. If we think to plan, instead of praying in real subjection to God, we need to fear for ourselves. Is it not an outrage upon the God that has opened His ear to us? And yet who does not know that this is the very thing to which perhaps, more than any other, we are prone?

In this way I take it, that the moral lesson of this chapter is to be seen; it is taking counsel but not of the Lord. Hence (ver. 1-7) God caused the land of Egypt to become the means of deeply aggravating their evil. If we examine the New Testament for our guidance in these difficulties we shall find just the same truth. If the apostle is speaking merely about the ordinary tribulations, we have the very same lesson in other words. Thus he tells us we are to let our moderation be known unto all men, the Lord being at hand: that instead of caring or being anxious about anything (not that we are to be careless, but not to be careful in the sense of anxiety), our requests should be made known unto God with thanksgiving.

Our strength, it is said here, is to sit still; we have a right to expect our God to appear for us, He has entitled us to expect it. We may be perfectly sure, it matters not what the circumstances are, even supposing there has been something to judge in ourselves, if I tell it out to God, will not He listen? He cannot deny Himself. He must deny him that bears the name of Christ. Where He now puts to shame, it is an erring child of God; but so far from His putting such to shame being a proof that he does not love them, it is precisely the proof that He does. But at the same time, let men venture to go beyond what God sees good for the discipline of His child, He soon takes up the rod; and there can be nothing more terrible than when the adversary exceeds the chastening that is just, gratifying his own hatred to them. For God will rise up in His indignation, and deal with them according to His own majesty; even the grace of the Gospel does not set aside that. For instance, see the Second Epistle to Timothy. If persons bearing the name of Christ are carried away by their

fleshly zeal, and fight against the truth of God or those charged with the proclamation of that truth, God may use them for dealing with faults in His people. God knows how to bring down His people where their looks are high because of anything in themselves, or that grace has conferred upon them. But when the limit of right rebuke is exceeded, woe be to those that fight against them, covering their own vindictiveness or envy under God's name. It is evident that the very grace of the gospel makes it to be so much the more conspicuous; for it sounds so much the more tremendous that God should thus deal in the midst of all that speaks so loudly of His love.

The Gospels also bring out, in the words of our Lord Himself, the wickedness of fighting against what God is doing even by poor weak disciples. This is the great lesson for us; we are not to consult our own heart or have recourse to the strength of man. When we flee to the various resources of the flesh, we slip out of our proper Christian path. Whereas the strength of God has indeed shone in that foundation pattern in which all the blessing of grace to sinners is contained; and it always takes this form for a Christian, and that is, death and resurrection. There will, apparently, be a great pressure of trial; there will be an apparent sinking down under it; but as surely as there is the semblance of death, there will be the reality of resurrection by and by. Let no one be disheartened. The cross is the right channel of the blessing for the children of God. When we were brought to God, it was just after the same sort. We knew what it was to have the horrors of the conviction of sin, for God was going to bring us for the first time into a place of special blessing. It has always been so. You find it in the case of Abraham, and in proportion to the greatness of blessing is the force of sorrow that precedes it. Isaac was given when Abraham was a hundred years old, and Sarah as good as dead. There was death, as it were, and he had to wait for a son. Even after the birth and growth of the child of promise, he had to surrender him, to offer up his only son to God. Directly that the singleness and truth of his heart was proved, and that the sacrifice was in principle offered up, the angel of the Lord arrests his hand. How much sweeter now, when Isaac was, as it were, the child of resurrection. And so it is with all our blessings, it matters not what they may be. There must be the breaking down of our feelings, the crucifixion of self in a practical way, if we are to know what God is in blessing: our blessings must be cast in the mold of death and resurrection.

The way by which come all our blessings, is in Him who is dead and risen. To be blessed practically, we must morally go through the same process. There must be the frustration of all natural hopes, the blasting of all the objects we desire. When God visits us in His faithfulness with trial, the first thing man seeks is to escape. Israel goes down into Egypt, instead of sitting still in the confidence that God is the highest wisdom and only power. They go down to the land of human wisdom and ability. Were there no God, were they not His people, it would have been intelligible; but as it is, what folly! Yet is it the folly of our own hearts. Are we not conscious of it? Beware lest it be, because we are so accustomed to act thus, that we do not realize the humbling truth. We need to consider it more deeply to profit by this lesson. Their strength is to sit still instead of hurrying down into Egypt. “Forever and ever” (ver. 8) it was to be noted in a book that they were “children that will not hear the law of the Lord.” (Ver. 9.) That was even the worst of all; rebellion could be forgiven, lying children could be made ashamed of their lies. “Prophesy not unto us right things” (ver. 10), that is, things according to God. We are not to suppose that they actually said these words. We often read in the Gospels, that Jesus answered in many cases where not a single question was put to Him. Why does the Spirit of God say Jesus answered, when He was not

asked? Because He knew the thoughts of their hearts. He answered not what they said, for they said nothing; but what He knew they would say if they dared; what He knew was at work within. So here, they do not say it in so many words, but it is what God saw and knew to be the truth of what they were feeling and doing. They did not like the truth which brought before them their rebellion and lies; they endeavored to get out of the way and reach of the truth. This is precisely what showed it. “Why not use the best resources of men, now that God did not work miracles for them?” This was, in truth, what God had called out Israel for—to be the manifestation of a people whose strength was in the Lord; to be the witness of how blessed it is thus nationally to trust the living God, in all their public dealings, in their domestic life. All was to be regulated by the law of the Lord (which is the technical term for the Old Testament). They were to be the practical exemplification of the blessedness of such a people and land. To go down into Egypt was to give up God for man; if they had asked counsel, they well knew God would never send them down to Egypt, out of which He had brought them. But they do not seek counsel, they act before they ask; they may have then prayed about it. But what is it to pray for God to bless what we are doing in self-will? Let us ask Him what He would have us to do before we act. It may be that God would have us do nothing, or possibly give us counsel through one of His children. For God does not intend us to be so many independent lines. He works by one another; He purposes to make us feel that we are members one of another; but whatever may be the value of any one's counsel, each must be responsible to God. The danger is of putting another in the place of God. Men do not value a man more for this, because when we are self-willed and our counselor firm for good, the speedy consequence will be that he who stood in the place of God one day, may be almost in the place of the devil the next. This is the flesh—apt to deify the creature one day, and to demonize it the next.

What we have to seek, then, is to look up to God; and this is just what is here the first word, “the sitting still.” But, then, there was more. In the chapter before the point was the word of God, which the flesh treated as a sealed book; but God must be waited on as well as His word. God never intended Scripture to be taken apart from Himself; over and above the Bible is God Himself. Not that God can ever be against His word, but He is the only power of entering into the application of it. For the Bible is not only for me to look down into: I must look up to God. I am not intended to read it merely as a book of true stories or good sermons, but as the voice of the living God to my soul. When one reads it thus, in subjection to Him, the relation and attitude of the soul is totally changed; you are delivered from the danger of bending the word of God to your own mind and will. Whereas, when the word leads you out in prayer to God, then it is neither the word without prayer, nor prayer without the word, both of which are exceedingly dangerous, one always leading to fanaticism, as the other to rationalism. Hence, says the apostle, “I commend you to God and to the word of his grace.” We need to look up to God that we may gather profit from His word, and to look back to Him from His word that we may with simplicity and faithfulness carry it out. Here Israel had failed as we see in chapter 29. So now in chapter 30, they flee down to the nearest neighbor that could help by human prudence, slighting God's wisdom and the grace which entitled them to cast themselves on Him for it. “Wherefore thus saith the Holy One of Israel, Because ye despise this word, and trust in oppression and perverseness, and stay thereon: therefore this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant. And he shall break it as the breaking of the potter's vessel that is broken in pieces; he shall not spare: so that there shall not be found in the bursting of it a shard to take fire from the hearth, or to take water withal out of the pit.” (Ver. 12-14.) Such was Egypt. The flesh is habitually

fraudulent and perverse. But God judges it in His own. It is ever restless and pretends to something. It may look imposing, but it is ready to crumble from top to bottom, and is doomed of God. “In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength: and ye would not. But ye said, No; for we will flee upon horses: therefore shall ye flee: and, We will ride upon the swift [Egypt's resources of common sense]; therefore shall they that pursue you be swift.” (Ver. 15, 16.) God would make them a signal example, and show that the resources they trusted were only so many nets in which they were to be snared. Had they sought to flue? They should flee in terror. Had they sought help in swift escape? Swift should be the vengeance of their foes. God constantly makes the earthly object to be the rod for the fool's back.

What is the answer of the Lord when He comes to this? Nothing can be stronger than His condemnation. But if He deals sternly with His faulty people here, is it not always for blessing in the end? If He exposes His children, pulls thorn down from the seat of pride, brings them into trouble from those they prefer to Himself in some extremity, it is the Lord acting in His great grace. To return to Him even with broken bones is blessed. How magnificent is the burst of the prophet! “And therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, [not to cut off Israel, but] that he may have mercy upon you: for the Lord is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him. For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem: thou shalt weep no more: he will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when he shall hear it, he will answer thee. And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers: and thine ears shall ear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.” (Ver. 18-21.) He had let all this trouble fall upon His people; He had Himself waited and been exalted; and why? That He might be gracious. The enemy might prove his malice, and they their weak and guilty preference of flesh to Himself, and He allowed it all to take place that He might have nothing to do but to take them out of the pit into which they had fallen, and bless them as they had never been blessed before, at length without hindrance to the outflow of all His love. He waits for them, and though He seem to tarry, it is to bless them with a still better blessing. Ver. 19-22. They should be morally restored, too, and take vengeance on what had seduced their hearts in previous times. “Ye shall defile also the covering of thy graven images of silver, and the ornament of thy molten images of gold; thou shalt cast them away as a menstruous cloth; thou shalt say unto it, Get thee hence.” (Ver. 22.)

Outward happiness follows, and inward blessing and glory from above.

“Then shall he give the rain of thy seed, that thou shalt sow the ground withal; and bread of the increase of the earth, and it shall be fat and plenteous; in that day shall thy cattle feed in large pastures. The oxen likewise and the young asses that ear the ground shall eat clean provender, which hath been winnowed with the shovel and the fan. And there shall be upon every high mountain, and upon every high hill, rivers and streams of water in the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall. Moreover the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound.” (Ver. 23-26.)

Such is the deliverance which God will work for Israel; but what about the Assyrian? Israel are blessed, but not the Assyrian judged; Israel had been wrong, but the Assyrian had been merciless.

God had dealt with Israel; now He must deal with their foes; as we are told in Isa. 10 “When the Lord has accomplished His whole work in mount Zion,” then will He bring down the Assyrian. (Ver. 27, 28.) They will not know that it is God who is guiding them to the Holy Land, but think they are going to have the land and the people an easy prey; God, on the contrary, is going to meet them there, and avenge His people. Ver. 29. This is even more than there had been when Egypt was judged; Israel were then eating but with bitter herbs. Not so in the day that is coming; it is not that part of the passover that this is compared to, but the song of their holy festival. Ver. 30. It is not a mere providential judgment—God from a distance acting and merely raising up one people to destroy another. It is the intervention of God in a manifest manner. There is to be a display of divine judgment. Ver. 30-82. It is the staff of God's correction, which shall deal to the bitter end with the Assyrian. For Israel, such joy and gladness shall follow as never had been tasted heretofore. So manifestly is God espousing their cause, that it will be with the loftiest music of praise and every sign of confidence in God. Has this ever, since Isaiah, been accomplished in Palestine? Was it heard there even at the time of Sennacherib? Israel was already in captivity, and Judah was soon swept away by the king of Babylon. Here we have triumph, peace, glory, and blessing. The mighty power of God had destroyed their enemies forever. There must, then, be a fuller accomplishment than the prophecy has yet received.

Ver. 33. It is not to be merely a devastation. Tophet is ordained; this shows clearly when and how it will be. Tophet is the figure of the judgment on God's part that is coming. It should be “for the king also,” not “yea, for the king.” That little word has done much mischief in confounding two important personages. I do not deny that the word translated yea, may apparently be rightly so in certain cases; but the natural meaning of it is either and or also, and that is just what is meant here. The point here is, that Tophet is ordained not for “the Assyrian” only, but also for “the king.” The king and the Assyrian are so totally different and opposed that it was needful to reveal the same doom for both. The mistranslation was because our translators did not know this difference but fancied the king and the Assyrian one and the same. “The king” is that false Messiah who will be found with the Jews in the last days. Received in his own name, he will be accepted as the true anointed, but he is the devil's messiah. And the consequence is that hell-fire or Tophet is prepared for him. The point is that God will prepare the same fire for both of them; not only for the Assyrian, but for the leader of Israel's wickedness, “the king.” For him the fire of Tophet is prepared, as well as for his enemy, the Assyrian. God in this marvelous manner will cast him direct into hell, not waiting for the day of judgment, even before the devil himself. Lest we might think that he is the only one, it is said, “for the king also;” that other person who will reign over the Jews, will also be singled out of God to be dealt with in the same way. Figurative expressions are used, but the figures of a terrible reality.

The chapter that follows (31), is a brief moral comment, and compressed rehearsal of chapter 30. How touchingly the prophet warns of the danger of Egypt as defection from Jehovah. “Yet he also is wise, and will bring evil, and will not call back his words, [which Israel vainly would escape], but will arise against the house of the evildoers, [Israelitish or not] and against the help of them that work iniquity.” The Lord's protection over the righteous would be proved in the day when He judged the helpers and the holpen. From Zion, not heaven only, He will deal. “For thus hath the Lord spoken unto me, like as the lion and the young lion roaring on his prey, when a multitude of shepherds is called forth against him, he will not be afraid of their voice, nor abase himself for the

noise of them: so shall the Lord of hosts come down to fight for mount Zion, and for the bill thereof. As birds flying, so will the Lord of hosts defend Jerusalem; defending also he will deliver it; and passing over he will preserve it. Turn ye unto him from whom the children of Israel have deeply revolted. For in that day every man shall cast away his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which your own hands have made unto you for a sin. Then shall the Assyrian fall with the sword, not of a mighty man; and the sword, not of a mean man, shall devour him: but he shall flee from the sword, and his young men shall be discomfited. And he shall pass over to his strong hold for fear, and his princes shall be afraid of the ensign, saith the Lord, whose fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem."

Chapter 122

# Notes on Isaiah 32

The whole work being now finished at Jerusalem, the Lord is now shown us reigning, for He and no other is the personage spoken of here. “Behold a king shall reign in righteousness,” &c. This is a totally different state of things from what prevails at present; for it is grace that now reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, not (so to speak) righteousness through glory in the government of the world. In the day that this chapter contemplates, the Lord Jesus will righteously take in hand the scepter of the earth, and especially of the land of Israel. All the nations will come indirectly under His reign, because there will be one king over all the earth, not to the setting aside of others, as we know, but one supreme central government maintained. Other kings will be obliged to submit to the sway of the Lord, which will continue throughout the whole unbroken period of the millennium. It is called, therefore, “the everlasting kingdom,” not being transferred to another, and lasting as long as the earth endures. At the end of the thousand years there will be an awful proof of man's radically unchanged condition, for the nations will then gather together against “the beloved city,” the earthly Jerusalem, compassing about the camp of saints. This will be allowed for the express purpose of proving the solemn truth that glory no more ameliorates the heart than the present longsuffering patience of God. If judgment against evil works is not executed, men's hearts are hardened in wickedness; when they are in the earth, the world will learn righteousness, but alas! the lesson is soon forgotten.

The Lord will reign in righteousness, and there will be the exercise then of beneficent government all through His day; but it will be proved once more that the heart is no more changed thereby than under the gospel now, unless received in conscience by the power of the Spirit. There must be the possession of a new nature. Man must be born again to see or enter the kingdom of God. It will then be evident that the new birth is requisite not merely for the heavenly part, but even for the earthly things of that kingdom. (John 3) It is in reference to the earthly part that we hear of a king reigning in righteousness. Rev. 20 shows the total failure of this display of glory to make the heart of man one whit better. In a higher point of view, far from failure, there will be during this time an amazing exhibition of that which will bring praise to God Himself, and to this we have a reference here. And what a proof of the selfishness of our hearts, that we do not think much about this blessed time that is coming! Not that it is not believed in; but God give us to think yet more not only of a world set free, but what it is to see Christ where He is in heavenly blessedness. It is blind, too. For, to love, what is so much our own portion as His? Besides, we are too apt to slight the deliverance of creation, now travailing in pain, during the thousand years, and this because we are so little identified with the interests of Christ. Whatever glorifies Him ought to be very dear to us. Again, we shall be connected with the earth, though our home will be heavenly. We shall indeed reign with Christ over it. God will make the risen saints to be the intermediary vessels of His glory, and the fruitful channels of His goodness in that bright day. Does it not then show the insensate selfishness of the heart that we are so little filled with the thoughts and feelings suitable to such expectations? It is freely granted that there is a far sweeter hope, even to be with Christ Himself in the Father's house. To see His glory there is more blessed than any inheritance we shall share

anywhere. But if we look around and see all the sins, miseries, sufferings, and sorrows of a world far from God, what a cheering truth it is that the day is so near when we will be able to say even of the yet unbelieving Jews, “Their iniquities are forgiven, their sin is covered.” Will not God be magnified? A remnant of Israel suffices not: all will be saved. Further, the miracles of Christ are called the powers of the world to come, because it was the sample of that divine energy in man which will never be revoked, though it may be suspended. But it is always in Christ, though the Church may not know how to count upon Him for it, or apply it to a needy creation. But we ought to know it is in Christ for faith to draw on, and God has rebuked our low state by withholding the display of these outward ornaments. It is good, however, to remember that it is always in Christ, and that He is coming, and that the end of this age will witness the exercise of the glorious power of that exalted man, the Church too being associated with Him, and every blessing brought in to the exclusion of all evil. This is what the chapter before us anticipates.

As long as God does not put evil down, grace reigns; and now it is only grace that can deliver. But when the power of evil is smitten (and the Lord will smite before the millennium), the king shall rule. It is the kingdom of God administered by the exalted man, Christ; and a blessed thought it is that God has always had it in His view to exalt Him. Adam's sin was not the fall of man only, but of all the lower creation too; for the whole structure was ruined when he departed from God. Adam was not a mere individual but a head. All thenceforward depends on the coming in of another man, the Lord Jesus, who has won a title, not for Himself to stand, which He did not need, but for us to have a standing in virtue of His blood, and death, and resurrection. The consequence is that for the believer the glory of Christ is saving, not destructive. But much of its brightness is practically lost for those who do not dwell upon this scene of glory. The distinctive mark is the Lord reigning in righteousness; and moreover, it is a man who thus reigns over the earth, not only a divine person. God will put all things under the man that died and rose in delivering power, as truly as Adam drew down in his fall the race and creation. The world became a wilderness of thorns and briers; it was the consequence of man's fall. Do you believe it? Believe also that the Second Man would be defrauded of no small part of His heritage if He did not deliver, not believing man only, but creation, and govern it in power and glory. This future reign is necessary to vindicate the faithfulness of God, to manifest the worth of Christ and the results of what He has done, to display His bride along with Him. It is good therefore to look onward to the scene where this blessed man shall thus reign in righteousness. This would be true apart from our own share with Him, for which we must turn to the New Testament. The prophet's subject is earth; we belong to heaven. Hence it is the province of the New Testament to reveal the Father's house and heaven, no longer shut but opened, first upon Christ and consequently upon us, that we may look in peace and joy into the presence of God. What a totally different theme from the Old Testament, which brings the earth into prominence, as the scene of the reign in righteousness. In the earth it is judicial power that governs. A rod of iron, a scepter of righteousness is that by which the Lord is to break down the pride of the world.

But there are intimations of peace and comfort too. The Lord is here viewed “as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.” (Ver. 2.) The world had long been weary of the effects of sin, if not of sin itself. Now the blessing is come. “And the eyes of them that see shall not be dim, and the ears of them that hear shall hearken. The heart also of the rash shall understand knowledge, and the

tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly. The vile person shall no more be called liberal, nor the churl said to be bountiful. For the vile person will speak villainy, and his heart will work iniquity, to practice hypocrisy, and to utter error against the Lord, to make empty the soul of the hungry, and he will cause the drink of the thirsty to fail. The instruments also of the churl are evil: he deviseth wicked devices to destroy the poor with lying words, even when the needy speaketh right. But the liberal deviseth liberal things; and by liberal things shall he stand." (Ver. 3-8.) It is not as you see now, men who appear to have every good natural quality, and yet when tested have no heart for divine things, love not the name of the Lord Jesus, care not for His glory. Here it will not be so. Blessing will flow, evil be judged, shame will vanish away. Things and persons will be manifest and bear their true character. Man will be accomplishing for the first time on the earth that for which he was made. It is in contrast with all the deceitfulness of unrighteousness that has gone and still goes on here below. We know the uncertainty of human judgment, we know how men cling to and keep up appearances. There will be no vain show then. Good fruits will spring out of the rich resources of divine mercy, and, in the light of God then shining, there will also be the detection of everything that is false. If wickedness appear, the judgment of the Lord will fall upon it. For during the millennium there will be cases demanding vengeance; and God will not fail to deal with wickedness in a summary manner. There will be a solemn public sight of the execution of His wrath continually before men's eyes (Isa. 66)—the more stern in that day, because there will be no temptation to evil. Accordingly these that are the objects of God's curse will be immediately visited, so as to keep up a wholesome horror of iniquity in the hearts of men.

This leads the Spirit of God to give a warning, which will be needed, especially as the blessing of Israel will not be brought about in a single day. There will be a time of sifting. As we know there will be for Israel in the wilderness, so in Jerusalem too there will be another mode of dealing with the Jews proper. Even when the Lord appears for their deliverance, it is a mistake to suppose that all is complete at once. The Lord will gradually put down the enemies round about the Holy Land, and will use Israel as the instrument of these judgments. (Isa. 11; 63, Mic. 5, Zech. 9; 10) He will send forth His armies and deal with the nations in various ways. In His appearing from heaven He does work by His own power. The Jews will have nothing to do with the judgment of the beast and the false prophet; but He will employ Israel to put down the then representatives of their old neighbors, who rise up once more in envy against them. He will remember what their forefathers did, and will then definitively deal with them, seeing that they retain and skew the same spirit to the last. Thus the Lord will act thoroughly in righteousness, and Israel will need a warning previous to this; so I suppose this will be the bearing of it. "Rise up, ye women that are at ease; hear my voice, ye careless daughters; give ear unto my speech. Many days and years shall ye be troubled, ye careless women: for the vintage shall fail, the gathering shall not come. Tremble, ye women that are at ease; be troubled, ye careless ones: strip you, and make you bare, and gird sackcloth upon your loins. They shall lament for the teats, for the pleasant fields, for the fruitful vine. Upon the land of my people shall come up thorns and briers: yea, upon all the houses of joy in the joyous city: because the palaces shall be forsaken; the multitude of the city shall be left; the forts and towers shall be dens forever, a joy of wild asses, a pasture of flocks; until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest. Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field." (Ver. 9-16.) The allusion is to what precedes the Lord taking His place and reigning in the land. And all

the sorrow is to be until the Spirit is poured down upon them. (Ver. 15.) Then comes the great change in Israel. There is not of course the same dwelling of the Holy Ghost in the hearts of believers as now, for that He has a special dwelling in the Church now is manifest. But there will be the outpouring of the Spirit in that day as truly as now. It is a mistake to suppose that the Lord's reigning is incompatible with the Spirit's being thus poured out. He will be poured out very largely then. Now it is more the depth—if we may so speak of a divine person—than extensiveness. What is not now in extent is made up in depth. What then will not appear in depth will be made up in extent. It will be the day for a wide diffusion over all flesh. Now this is only true in principle; and so it is applied from Joel 2 in Acts 2, not as if it were the full result.

The present time on earth is the reverse of a manifestation of righteousness. The Righteous One was rejected of men. God's righteousness set Him risen at His right hand and justifies those who believe on Him. Then it will be the king, coming and sitting upon His own throne (not a rejected king exalted on His Father's): everything will be righteous. As a matter of grace our Lord Jesus puts aside for the time His earthly Jewish titles, and the heavenly counsels are accomplished and revealed while He is above. The Father has seated Him at His right hand and said, as it were, “You shall reign; only, till you are seated on your own throne, come and sit with me upon mine.” Before Christ comes from heaven, the Jews (at least a remnant of them) will have welcomed Him in their hearts. Then He will come, where they are, to bless them in the earth, to govern them, and accomplish in the children the promises that were made to their fathers. Accordingly, when the Christians are taken from this world at Christ's coming, the Jews will in due time be converted, so as to be the earthly people of the Lord, who will make good in their midst earthly glory according to the prophets, and not this only, but the Holy Ghost will be poured out upon them. This great earthly change is consequent on the effusion of the Spirit from on high. Isaiah speaks about thorns and briers until the Spirit be poured upon them. (Ver. 15.) Instead of all being in its appropriate order, everything will need to be restored round the only due center. All as regards the earth and the Jews is now in confusion and misrule, but the Spirit shall be poured out from on high, and then what a change! Thus there are two things necessary to bring in this time of blessing—the king reigning in righteousness, and the outpouring of spiritual power, specially among the Jews, but also in the Gentiles. In nothing will God fail. Then shall “the wilderness be a fruitful field and the fruitful field be counted for a forest. “Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness:” instead of its being the resort of robbers, judgment shall dwell there. Instead of covetousness hankering after the fruitful field, righteousness should remain there. Thus the work of righteousness shall be peace. and its effect quietness and assurance forever. Ends and ways shall be righteous: all is governed with blessing. “And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places; when it shall hail, coming down on the forest; and the city shall be low in a low place. Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth thither the feet of the ox and the ass.” (Ver. 18-20.) God's people shall be sheltered and prosper in peace, whatever befall His enemies. For them assured blessing takes the place of fear and evil.

Chapter 123

# Ishmael

I have been thinking a little of Ishmael now and again lately, not only as in the book of Genesis, but as in the New Testament, as in God's house as well as Abraham's. It is well to watch him closely and to deal with him decidedly, specially now-a-days, when he is becoming a little bolder perhaps than he was wont to be. Ishmael is the Scriptural personification of the religion of ordinances.

If we follow him a little carefully through Scripture, we shall find that he has acted, though always in character, yet in different forms and energies. I think I see him there as an insolent one, an accuser or reviler, an angry, ill-humored man, a seducer and a persecutor.

In Abraham's house, where first he appears (we will say), he was insolent. (Gen. 21) Isaac was little more than a feeble suckling when he was a sturdy youth of fourteen years of age. He sports with this weaned infant, he mocks Isaac who was a fit mark for him. The flesh or strength of nature might well despise Isaac, for he was a child, he could not speak. He was weakness itself in the hand of his elder brother; he can do nothing for himself through very feebleness; another must take up his cause.

In the Pharisee's house (as also in Zaccheus's, Luke 19:7) this same Ishmael is a reviler. (Luke 7) The poor woman was, it is true, a sinner of the city. She could no more gainsay that, than Isaac could deny his insignificancy or feebleness. It was equally a fact. The poor woman must be silent under the reproach; she has earned it all.

In the house of the two brothers, Ishmael is again found, an angry, ill-humored man. (Luke 15) The reception of so worthless an one as the prodigal was the elder brother's high provocation. He stays outside in proud and angry refusal to go into a house that could thus lose its character, or so far forget itself as to hazard its respectability with all proper people. He is in heat and ill temper at the way of grace.

In the churches of Galatia, the same Ishmael lurks as a seducer.

He does not stay outside because of indignation at the way of grace, that grace which had filled the house; but he gets inside to seduce those who were there from faith, the answer, the only answer, which a sinner has to make to that grace. He acts as a serpent, seeking to corrupt the mind from the simplicity that is in Christ. The same Ishmael had been in the same character at Jerusalem and at Antioch, “spying our liberty.” (Gal. 2) Against the Apostle Paul, the Ishmael of Scripture was a persecutor. (Gal. 5:11.) Foiled as a serpent or a seducer, he will not give up the field, but uses his strength as a lion, and as such has had terrible sport indeed; not only in the day or person of the apostle, but in times of papal as well as pagan Rome. Paul himself acted as a lion when he was of the mystic Ishmael. (Acts 26:10.)

This is the Ishmael of Scripture—this is the child of the bondwoman—this is the religion of flesh and blood—the religion of ordinances and impositions. And such have been its varied forms of action, mocking, reviling, hating, seducing, persecuting.

The same Ishmael is in full vigor still. He is as sturdy a youth as he was in the day of Hagar. But this is our comfort. If he be not changed, neither is the divine mind concerning him, the divine purpose about him, nor the divine dealing with him. And it becomes our consolation and our wisdom, to mark how this mind, and purpose, and dealing of God with the mystic Ishmael have been revealed from the beginning.

Abraham rejoiced over that feeble infant that was provoking Ishmael—scorn and sporting. And Sarah demanded that her Isaac should dwell alone in the house, and that the bond-woman and her son should be cast out. And all this joy of Abraham and purpose of Sarah expressed the mind of God. This voice of Sarah is called “scripture.” (See Gal. 4:30.). The Lord would have it with the poor, helpless, insignificant soul that trusts in Him, as Sarah would have it with little Isaac, and rejoices over such as Abraham did.

So, in His day, Jesus was feasted and gladdened by the one whom the Ishmael-Pharisee was secretly accusing and reviling. Simon saw the poor woman as she was in herself; Jesus, while He allowed all that, saw her and boasted in her, and rejoiced in her, as faith and love had now made her. This was the divine answer to the Ishmael-reviling of a poor confessed sinner. And this is still God's own way, in the riches of His grace, silencing every tongue that would judge or accuse such. “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? it is God that justifieth.”

So in the case of the prodigal, the joy of the father's heart, the delight of God in His own grace, answers the Ishmael elder brother. It was true, the younger son had been a great waster. And it was true, had his father's house cared only about its respectability in society, it would not have welcomed him back. But there was a heart in that house, such a heart as the morals or religion of respectable society does not understand. And the joy of such gratified affections is the excuse for the father's house and the answer given to the Ishmael ill-humor of the elder brother. “It was meet that we should make merry and be glad.” The feast is still spread in Abraham's house over the helpless one; in the father's house over the worthless one. “God delighteth in mercy.” And He will be God still, and have His way, in spite of Ishmael.

In his turn, as we already noticed, the apostle, in the energy of the Holy Ghost, has to do with Ishmael. He watches his practices and attempts as the seducer. He exposes them and rebukes them as of man, and against God's truth and way from beginning to end. He contends with them; insisting, like Sarah, that be to whom these practices belonged, and all connected with him, should be turned out of doors. He would resist him as a seducer even to the death, and so expose him as a serpent as to be ready to be torn in pieces by him as a lion. And this energy of the apostle tells us the mind of the Spirit, who was the spring of it all.

Precious relief for our souls all this is! Doubly precious in a day like ours, when Ishmael is abroad again, in full vigor and activity. He changes, as we have seen, the form of his action, accommodating himself to circumstances. He must do that. He could not have killed many, but does when he can. He insults feebleness, reviles character, is indignant at grace, seduces from faith, or slays and tears those who still cleave to it: but in every form of his action he meets resistance from God.

Blessed, simple consolation! If we do not now-a-days suffer from his word as a persecutor, we do from his tongue as a reviler. And there is a measure of suffering from the scorning of his life and

his eye. Liberty in Christ, independence of man's traditions and of the elements of the world, refusal of the religiousness of flesh and blood, are still reproached and challenged. But the Holy Ghost stands with us and helps us. And that is our victory and joy. He still encourages— “stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free.”

With what awful power the witchery of the Ishmael or religious principle shows itself in Matt. 27:6 and 25. The Jewish rulers had purchased the blood of Jesus, but they own the purchase-money to be so defiled a thing that they will not put it to the uses of the temple. They own the presence of the house more awful than the presence of Him who dwelt in it.

So the Jewish multitude. They had been deeply moved by the things which Jesus had been doing and saying for years; but now, as in a moment, at the bidding of the religious authority, they change their speech and say, “let him be crucified.”

What solemn witnesses are these to the fascinating, infatuating power of fleshly religion, the religion of law, of ordinances, and traditions, and human authority!

Chapter 124

# Jesus Christ Is the Same Yesterday, Today, and Forever

In one view of it, the Epistle to the Hebrews may be said to be a divine testimony to the truth of this short verse— “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to day, and forever.” For the thought of the Lord's stability pervades the epistle, the stability of all that He deals with, and of all who trust in Him, in other words, His perfection, or that which gives rest to God.

Over this epistle, read in this light, the believing soul might breathe out the words of Psa. 90 “Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.” For it is a psalm which recognizes the vanity or perishableness of everything by reason of sin, and that through Christ alone is anything to be “established.” He imparts “glory” and “beauty” according to that psalm, but stability also. It is like the apostle's thought in 2 Cor. 1. However uncertain other things may have been (even, if the Corinthians pleased, his purposes concerning them), yet the gospel was firm, the promises of God to the believer Yea and Amen, and the believer himself an established, anointed, and sealed one forever. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to day, and forever.

In chapter 1 the apostle looks at the stability of Jesus. He quotes Psa. 103 where, Messiah bewailing the shortening of His days, His withering like grass, His passing away like a shadow, Jehovah promises Him that He should be “the same” still forever and ever, when all else has decayed. It is the same word (■ α■τος) in chapter 1:12, 13:8. His person as God is the foundation of all His offices and works. In this way the Epistle opens with the most glorious proclamation of this truth. Heaven and earth pass away, but Christ does not. The works of God's hand perish, but the one of God's anointing never can.

His person is thus fixed and stable for eternity. The anointed Jesus is still “the same.” But so is all that He deals with or handles; as this epistle, in the progress of it, also discloses, whether it be His blood, His priesthood, His covenant, or His kingdom. There is no secret principle of decay, no blemish or cause of death, anywhere. No taint or uncertainty is found here, but stability attaches to each and all— “the same yesterday, to day, and forever."

His blood or sacrifice, as the Lamb of God, is “established” on the inadequacy of every other. It has been offered through the eternal Spirit. (ix. 14.) In token of which Jesus has sat down in the heavens, with a thought about an entirely different thing. God has promised Him that His enemies shall be made His footstool, and He is expecting that event. That is, so fully has His sacrifice discharged its business and secured the way of the grace of God, that the mind in heaven can now be occupied with glory and the kingdom, or the judgments which lead to it. There is “no more offering.”

And, accordingly, the sinner that pleads this blood is “perfected forever.” His sins are purged, and he is sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. (See chap. x.)

His priesthood is “untransferable” and “continual.” He is “a priest forever” and made “after the power of an endless Life.” And this is witnessed by His being ordained by the oath of God, the expression or language of an unrepentable purpose. He “ever liveth to make intercession.”

And, accordingly, the believer who looks to such a priest is saved “to the uttermost.” He can never fail him. Years and generations find Him the same as the beginning had made Him and left Him. (See chap. vii.)

The covenant which He ministers in like character is stable, it is never “old.” God never finds fault with it, so as to call forth another to succeed it, and thus make it old and “ready to vanish away.” It abides always “new.” It is called “the everlasting covenant.”

And, accordingly, the blessings conferred by it are eternal; the sins and iniquities it remits are remembered “no more.” (See chap. 8)

The throne He takes is “forever and ever.” It is untransferable and eternal.

And, accordingly, the kingdom, which by and by the saints order, is a kingdom that “cannot be moved.” The earth has already been shaken; heaven and earth will, by and by, be shaken; but the kingdom of the saints “cannot be moved.” The “consuming fire” can never reach it, though it may burn up all beside. The saints are heirs of such a kingdom; they receive a kingdom that “cannot be moved,” and have in subjection to them “the world to come” —a world not passed or to pass, but still to come and to abide.” (See chap. 1:8; 2:5; 12:28.)

Such is the illustration of this short verse afforded by the epistle. The practical word for us is this: not to change our confidence, or transfer it from Him, seeing that He changes not, nor transfers His things to any other. In the sight of all this glorious stability in Christ, our faith is to be stable. This is the characteristic exhortation of this epistle, as the other is the characteristic doctrine. This is the exhortation suited to the doctrine; and, therefore, the apostle is seen throughout the epistle, to be in dread of the Hebrew believers changing the ground of this confidence and surrendering their soul to the keeping of some carnal religious provisions in departure from the perfection and sufficiency of Christ. This is the fear which pervades the epistle, as the stability of Christ and all that He touches is the doctrine that pervades it. He sounds an alarm. He blows one of the silver trumpets of the house of God; and, in a different spirit from that in which it was uttered of old, says, “Let the Hebrews hear.” For he says, “whose house are we, if we bold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end;” and again, “we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.” And again, speaking as in the person of God Himself, “if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.” And the solemn words in chapters vi., x., are all upon the giving up of Christ, the “falling away” from the confession of His sufficiency, or the “doing despite to the Spirit of grace.”

Thus, then, the Lord Jesus stands strong, and all that He deals with; but He alone. “The earth and its inhabitants are dissolved, I bear up the pillars thereof.” His blood, His priesthood, His covenant, His kingdom, never wear old. And (blessed had we but hearts softened to receive the form of such a truth), He communicates all His stability to us, as we have seen. Faith appropriates it.

Thus, what Abigail said to David, that his life was bound up in the bundle of life with the Lord his God, this epistle says to us all, who by faith snake Jesus everything to us. We are interested in Christ's stability. He shares His eternity with us.

“Jesus shall our treasure be

Through His own eternity.”

It is to our blessing as it is to His praise, that the admiring apostle says," Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever."

There are two ways in which the priesthood of Christ is often wrongly used. First, as if we could not go directly to the Father; secondly, as if we sought thus to obtain righteousness.

Chapter 125

# Jesus Praying to the Father

(John 17)

MAN'S history was all but closed. The first man, Adam, had been tried with perfect divine patience. There was not a process that could be applied to the heart but what God had used. But even before new trials began, it was all too late. There might be millions on millions of men; there might be trial upon trial, but the material to be tried was altogether evil before God. And it is remarkable, too, how far the earliest statements as to the state of man go, lest, perhaps, the thought, the evil thought, might have entered the evil heart of man, that God knew not the end from the beginning. God shows from the very first that it was all perfectly out before His mind. In fact, before the grand platform for the dealings of God with man was laid, before man was under the direct government of God in every possible manner, his sentence was pronounced. Read the account in Genesis before the flood. God there tells us that every imagination, every purpose and desire of the heart of man, was only evil continually. The deluge did not mend it. Nay, so thoroughly evil was it, that, even after that manifestation of judgment, God could only repeat it. Accordingly we find, after the deluge, that it was not God's thought so to deal with man again, because every “imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth.” (Gen. 8:21.) And yet this was before the chief, detailed development of the moral history of man under law.

But now the end of it all was at hand. Another man appears—the second man. The second man! Where were all others? There had been but one morally; one miserable, self-exalting, rebellious, dying man, no matter what might be the different measures of God's dealings with him. It was only Adam, and Adam showing out what man was, let him be tried ever so, and by whatsoever advantages surrounded.

But now the Lord Jesus comes. And if He was “the second man” looking back, He was “the last Adam” looking forward. If He was the One that excluded all others between Himself and him who was the parent, through Satan's guile and power, of all the mischief that had come into the world, He was the One now that satisfied every thought of God's heart. He was the man whose own heart God could delight in. He, too, had been tried: in what, indeed, had He not been? He Himself had been found upon this earth. The Son of God and appointed heir of all things, divine glory belonged to Him by right. But how did He walk here? The dependent, obedient One, He was ever ready to surrender all, and He did surrender all. His life was but the expression of One who never sought His own glory, but only God's.

And now this blessed One, anticipating the hour and scene, with which none other can compare, when that history would be forever closed, as far as concerns dealing in the way of trial with man—Jesus looks up to heaven. It was a hopeless scene: man was altogether a ruin. Most evidently the earth was gone. Not even Jesus, true God as He is, could act upon that foul heart of man, save to draw out its foulness more manifestly. For when God came with all goodness and lowliness to meet man in all his wretchedness, what did it but extort still more the horrible evil of the human heart? And now, anticipating that cross where all that is of the creature meets its doom

to faith, His eyes are turned to heaven. It was no longer a question of the earth. The world's fate was decided; man is utterly dead before God. But the second man, the last Adam, is about to take a new place. He returns to that heaven from whence, as the Son of God, He came down, and He returns a man—He carries (wondrous truth!) human nature up into heaven. But in what a different condition that very humanity, which, through the malice and power of the enemy, had dishonored God as He never had been dishonored before! For what was all else compared to the shame and degradation heaped upon God by those on whom He had spent His love so lavishly?

Well, the Lord Jesus returns to heaven a man, carrying up human nature to the throne of God. But He returns not till He has finished the work which was given Him to do. He returns not till God is as much glorified about sin in His death, as He was already by holy service and subjection in His life, and He would not return there till He could lay down upon the throne of God that which would morally magnify God Himself; yes, if I may reverently say it, that which would put Him under an obligation to Him, the man Christ Jesus, and thus a new way be opened into that very heaven, for those who had outraged God even in the person of that blessed One Himself.

What a joy that there is such a man for me in heaven—that “second man” at God's right hand! What a comfort that He is the “last Adam!” God looks for nothing further, as if anything beyond could be needed as a title after His presence there! He is the last Adam. The question of divine righteousness is answered, just as truly as that of man's sin was closed in principle before God. There might be other men following the track of Adam, showing the same sinful nature and ways. But it is well now to know that Christ is not only the second man, but also the last Adam.

And now let us listen to what this blessed One says—and, indeed, He does say it for us! How sweet to hear what He feels about us to His Father, where there was nothing, so to speak, that could be a bar upon one thought of His heart, where there was the most entire communion between Himself and His Father—He whose heart beat in perfect unison with His! And we are allowed to listen. He “lifted up His eyes to heaven and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee.”

Mark the bent of His mind even there. If He asks for glory, what was the object? What was still the desire of His heart? “That thy Son also may glorify thee.” Never such a thought as that the glory should terminate even with Him the Son. It was not enough that He had glorified the Father on the earth. Nor was it enough for the Father that He should show His sense of it by glorifying Him in the heavens. “Glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee.”

“As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given Him.” It was no question now of anything that had to do with the world that passeth away and its delusive glory. It was no question of what was connected with man or with Jewish hopes. All that died in His death. And now, if He had been denied His glory, if the assertion of the truth of His person was about to be the shameless ground of His rejection, if His own people Israel were those who would take the leading part in His cross, what is the result? The earthly kingdom crumbled that a better, larger, deeper, brighter glory might break into view. “As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given Him.” There I find the universal dominion of Christ over all flesh. And within that universality that now comes out of His death, who was born and rejected as the King of the comparatively small land of Israel, is the blessed thought, deeper than any kingdom, “that He should give eternal life to as many as thou

hast given Him." But would they have to wait for this life? and in what did it consist? In some magnificent display of glory by and by? No; that would be in its time. But "this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." It was no longer Jehovah God who was dealing with men, with Israel, with a nation. All that had been, and it could only end (so evil is man!) in the crucifixion of the blessed One, if He came on earth to glorify God and bear witness of the truth.

But now, behind all, we find, out of the clouds and darkness that surround His cross, this eternal blessed truth shining forth—Eternal life in the knowledge of the only true God and of Jesus Christ whom He had sent. Paganism and Judaism hide and vanish away.

Nor is this all. He does speak of His own person, but He tells us more. "I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." For what had He wrought? For whom had He lived? Was it to become what He was? Assuredly He was the Son from everlasting, the delight of His Father's heart, before and in the heavens or the earth. Why, then, need He do this work, and what was the end of it? It was in the Father's heart to have fellows for Christ, sons by, and in, and around Christ the Son. It was in the heart of the Son that the heart of the Father should be satisfied—that He should have sons and have such as had known what sin and the power of Satan are—such as had been under the most miserable consequences of distance, and darkness, and death. Among these was the blessed work done; for such Jesus came. There may be some poor soul that reads, still in this condition. Do you think yourself too bad for God? Whoever you may be, who have such a thought, I would ask, Why do you think so? It is because you do not know your badness enough. There is none too bad for God. For He is not blessing because of anything in you. Nay, you blot out all the history of God's past ways with man, if you are looking for any reason in yourself why He should bless you. Is it possible God's dealings have been all in vain for you? Have you not read for yourself how your own nature has been fully tested in the person of others, as no one man could have the advantage of every conceivable trial? Why refuse through unbelief the profit of the lesson? It is unbelief to look for anything acceptable to God in the first man, Adam. But what think you of the second man, the last Adam? Do you ask what He is for you? How can you get near that blessed One? Is not He in heaven, and you an unholy, wretched soul finding your pleasure on earth and in the things that are contrary to God? What can there be for you in such a blessed One as He is? Everything. It was for sinners that He came. It was for the lost that He wrought His work. No doubt it was for God. It was the work His Father had given Him to do. But it was that God might have ever-during joy, and indulge all His own love in bringing such as you out of all your badness, and in giving you all the goodness that is in Him. Think you that He is too high for you? No, He speaks to the Father, but He also speaks to sinners, aye, to the worst. He speaks here because all is silent as the grave as to man. Why should not you have done with yourself? Why not believe what God says about Him, and about yourself too, instead of giving Him the pain, so to speak, of proving over and over that you are good for nothing? He calls upon me to believe that I am thoroughly bad. I ought not to need the constant proof of it again and again. How do I show that I have come to the bottom of myself? That I receive Him, that I believe in His name. I may not have put my hand to murder or stealing. I need not prove what I am by doing all these things; but this is what I am. Not merely what I do, but what I am, is the point. God looks at the sin-convicted man and, as it were, says, he is good for no one else—he is just the one for my Son.

Do you believe this is true? That Jesus came, and died, and rose, that God might be able thus to love the worst of sinners? This He was about to vindicate upon the cross. Himself, He was perfectly holy; absolutely without sin always. God tells us so. He was “tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin” —not merely without sins, but “apart from sin.” None but the open enemy of God and man would dare to say that He had sins. But there might; be the wicked thought that some taint of sin touched Him, because He took human nature upon Him. But He, even as concerned His human nature, being conceived by the Holy Ghost, (that “holy thing which shall be born of thee,” &c.,) was called the Son of God, and was as morally perfect here below on earth as when He returns again in glory. God uses the same expression about both; for we have in Heb. 9,” He shall appear the second time without sin unto salvation.” The same word is used in speaking of Him when He comes the second time as when He, the first time, was here below, tempted as we are. There was another moment when it could not be said that He was apart from sin, when God Himself made Him to be sin—when He who did not know sin was made “sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” So here He says, “I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.” He looks through the death that was before Him, the cross and all that hung thereon, and that solemn question that could be settled nowhere else, that must be settled if He was to have a companion with Himself in glory, and if God was righteously to have His own joy; for there was but one way of doing it. Would Jesus bear the sins in His own body on the tree? Would He endure the wrath, the judgment of One who could not tolerate sin, even in His own Son? It is done—blessed be God!—done forever.

But again, “I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world.” None could send such an One but God the Father. None could conceive such an errand but He who was “the only true God.” Surely, God might have graciously taken men out of the world, but it was to be as gathered by the Son into the presence of the Father. Accordingly, “thine they were, and thou gavest them me.” And He in virtue of what He is, and of the work of which He anticipates the fulfillment here below, says, “I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world.” This was the thought of God. He would suffer for all the evil that was offensive to His nature, that would not suit His presence. For now it was not to be man blessed on earth, but a man in heaven, and there after having acquired a title to have those, once guilty, wretched sinners in perfect blessedness with Himself in the Father's presence. Mark, too, how He owns whatever is of the Spirit of God in His people—how He estimates their faith! He puts the very best construction upon the feeblest feeling of their heart towards Himself. He says of them, “They have kept thy word.” Could they have said this about themselves? Jesus only would have said it. “Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee.” How little had they known it! It was the reckoning of divine love! “For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me.” That which revealed Himself, which the Father had given to the Son. “And they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.” And now He prays for them: not for anything that had been promised of old—that all disappears. Not for anything that had been the scene of God's ancient dealings to meet the earthly people: it was quite another; a heavenly one is revealed before the days of heaven dawn upon the earth. It was His Father's house into which He was about to usher them—to give their hearts a place there—to bind them there with Himself. They were to be on the earth, but it was to be as those whose only home was now where Jesus has His home. So He prays for them, as men who, by His own act, and by His going away, were made strangers in the world. “I pray for them: I pray

not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine.” Mark the skilfulness of Him who pleads our cause with the Father. He prays in the certainty of His love—claiming His love. Was it not the Father that had given them to Him? Would He not love them and take care of them? He was going away Himself; they would be desolate, the objects of Satan's malice and wiles, and of the world's scorn. And was that a little thing in the eye of the Father who had given them to Him? He was leaving them, but would the Father forget them? Would the Father leave them? He could not” They are thine.” How blessed! The Father's they were; the Father, therefore, must love them. But they were His too, the Son's; they were given to Him. They were bound up with His glory. Was this a little thing to the Father? “And all mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them.”

“And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee.” I have been here, He says, to take care of them. I am leaving them; I come to Thee through a sea of sorrow and blood, and these are in the world. Was this, too, a little thing? That He should be thus going up to His Father and leaving His poor ones in a world of danger and of difficulty? Oh! who could plead our cause as the Son thus with the Father? “Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one as we are.” How could this be? “That they may be one,” &c. How could oneness like this be given to such? We know what man is, and what even saints are, a little, if we know ourselves at all. How could there be this oneness as the Father and the Son are one? It was by the Holy Ghost. He, sent down from heaven, alone could make them one. And He, as a divine person. gives absolute unity to those that otherwise were but units—to those that otherwise were separate and mutually repellent, save in the instincts of the new nature. But the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, crowning that work which Jesus accomplished on the cross, would show His sense of its value. Had they not been, by Him and His cross, met in all their miserable ways? Had they not been each going his own way, but all the downward road of death and hell? Had they not been pursuing their own selfishness, and yet had not God's grace proved itself above it all? And now He would unite them in a bond that never can be broken for an instant— “that they may be one as we are.” I believe that by this is meant that unity which the Holy Ghost would produce, that is, entirely independent of all circumstances.

But along with this unity of the Spirit, still they were in the world. The world was to be the scene where they would thus be made one by the Holy Ghost, and it would need all the Father's care and name to keep them. But it is the Son pleading with the Father. “While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name; those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition.” Had He failed them in His care? Had He not been able to keep that miserable man? Was it any question of His failing? Not for a moment. If it was the fulfillment of Scripture that the Father might have His joy in the full and heavenly blessing of His own children, it was the fulfillment of Scripture that the apostate man should prove what he was. It was no failure on Christ's part, but “that the Scripture should be fulfilled.” It was not that God made that miserable man to be what he was; He never made any man bad; He made men, not sinners. He might send him that which would prove his sin; as He did under the law. But Judas, going on in sin so near to Christ and against Him, becomes a son of perdition. And this is what all men would be but for the grace of God. Lest, however, there should be the semblance that Jesus had failed, Scripture takes express care to the contrary. Were the others to fear lest they should be lost too? The very same Scripture that proved he was to be lost, proved that they would he kept. The Father would keep

them. Would the Father fail the Son? The Son had never failed Him, and now it was the Father's business, so to speak, to put honor upon Him to whom He owed the display and maintenance of His will and glory against everything that contributed to give a false thought of God and make Him appear other than He was.

There had been glimpses from time to time, but what were they? They passed away, and the darkness reigned only the more dismally. But now and here was One who came to manifest God—who did win God His vindication. And who could do this but the Son, He who came from the bosom of the Father? But now He was about to return to the Father. And were they to be left to themselves? No. The Father that had been so manifested, would He not answer the trust that the Son had reposed in Him? “And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil.” Could the heart even of a saint have thought of such a thing without the deepest presumption if the Son of God had not been here? Could they dare to say, We are not of the world, even as He is not of the world? Yet this is what He says of them. He is the measure and source of it, the only way whereby it could be realized. And the Son says openly, in order that we may know and rejoice in it, and that we may boldly take that place, “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” But were they not in an evil world, and in the midst of influences tending to draw them down to the world? And what then was to be the Father's way of keeping them from the evil of it? “Sanctify them through thy truth. Thy word is truth.” And how was it that the word of the Father would sanctify them? “And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.” “I sanctify myself!” Was there anything then in Him that needed correction? Anything within that He required to be apart from? Never. Was it merely that He was about to become a sacrifice for them, (though perhaps I should not say merely of that which was the foundation of all the blessedness of which this chapter speaks.) Nay, it is this: He was about to retire from the scene of His lower glory, that had been despised and refused. He was about to take His separate place as the heavenly Nazarite above.

And it was for their sakes. “For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth” —through the revelation of truth, the truth in Him. I could not do without Him anywhere. I need Him above all on the cross. For even if He had been here for all eternity, still there were my sins. No nearness of Jesus—no love—nothing that He could say, or do otherwise, could take away sin or sins. It was too deep and infinite a question save only to Him. But He who was Himself the Son, the One who knew no sin—He has settled it forever. He has put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

But He does not speak of atonement here. He is all through looking onward to the place He was about to take in heaven. “For their sakes I sanctify myself,” (or set myself apart). Do I not need Him there? Shall I be sanctified through the truth unless my soul apprehends the place He has taken there? He is nearer me there than anywhere. No doubt He takes my sins upon the cross. But I want not only that He should be near me in His love, coming down to me in my need, I want Him to take me out of that place of misery, and to have me in His own place. Not yet taken out of the world, but as near Him—as closely bound up with Him there, as if we were there already. He takes the place which God was waiting for—the place of the second man—the last Adam. It is the place

where He becomes the object of our heart now, on the ground of sin being completely put away, and God being satisfied, not only about Him, but about me in Him. It is God's satisfaction in that blessed One for me that I find now that He is in heaven. I find what God intends for me by looking at Christ Himself in heaven. He is for me on the cross, but I am not one with Him there. But here I find that He becomes the object of my soul, that I may delight in as my portion and model before God. “For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified through the truth,” through the revelation that the Father makes of the blessed One.

But that is not all. There were others to be brought in—persons that had not been witnesses of His love upon earth. They were not forgotten; we were not forgotten. “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.” He anticipates the work extending, souls brought in, the most diverse throughout the world. But it was not merely that these chosen objects were to have that blessed privilege—were to be one as He had said before. Now He speaks of their oneness in another point of view. He was going to make a witness of it in the world, and He prays that they all might be one—no matter who—Gentiles in due time. Had not God then separated the Jews from the Gentiles? Undoubtedly He had. How then came it that they all were to be one—all that believed in Him through their word? The reason was this. It was no longer God dealing according to what had been promised on the earth. It was a new thing—a man in heaven. And where had that been spoken of or promised? And not merely so, but, that blessed One from heaven being our object and portion while we are upon the earth, along with this the old partition wall between Jew and Gentile falls. “That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.” It was to be a testimony to the world. It might, perhaps, be a transient testimony—a bright vision that would soon pass away in the hands even of saints. For how soon did the scene change! How soon would the world find its reason for unbelief in the very thing that was to have been the demonstration that the Father had sent the Son!

Why should saints be separate? Why not be one? Of old so it was. But if there was to be the sad failure of man and even of saints here, there is another thing that will not fail: “The glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one.” Now I find that there is a new oneness— that there is a blessing where no failure can come in and mar its brightness: that it is not merely the testimony of grace in this poor world, but there is glory—that glory which the Father gave the Son—that glory for which we wait on earth. “The glory which thou gavest me I have given them;” and it will be manifest in its own time, and then it will be seen that they are one, even as the Father and the Son are one. “I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect, in one.” And what is the effect then? “That the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me.” Oh! what a joy to think that Christ will have this perfect scene according to all His heart. There has been the putting our hearts to the proof meanwhile, but He lets out to us, that the time was coming when He would have all His heart, not only in having us individually with Himself, but made perfect in one. And then the world will not be called upon to believe, but they will know it.

The knowledge of Jehovah's glory, too, will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. It is the same time, when it will be impossible to gainsay the evidence of the glory. They will see the blessed One in glory, and “when Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory.” Oh! what a joy! And men, the world, will look up and wonder. How came such poor

ones there? Known upon earth, if known at all, as unknown ones; the world not accrediting them because it knew Him not. How blessed to have His portion here! But by and by known in the very same glory as the Lord Jesus, the Son of God! And in them, manifested as one, the world shall know that the Father sent the Son, and loved them as He loved Him. For what a proof of it! How came they to be in such glory as that? They were not angels, they were men. And how came men to be in this glory with the Son of God? It was because the Son had been here, and had done His perfect work, and here was the fruit of it. Here they were, these poor and despised ones in the very same glory as the Son of God. And how then shall the world not know in that day that the Father sent the Son? It is not in glory as the Messiah that they see Him, smiting and crushing His enemies, but it is the Son; and the world shall know that the Father sent the Son, and yet more, “and hast loved them as thou hast loved me.”

And when does that love reign? Have we to wait for it in the glory? It is ours now as surely as ever it will be. If it is not ours upon the earth, it will never be ours for heaven. I must have it here, if I am to have it anywhere. It is here that I must have the love of the Father—the very same love with which He loved Christ. It is no question of what man is now. The Second man is everything.

Nor is this all. It is not now that our Lord prays merely; there is desire—an inner, deeper thing beyond what He asked or prayed for them. It was the expression of all His heart's will about them. “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am.” What an expression of a heart that loved them perfectly! Well He knew where the Father would have Himself, the Son, to whom He owed everything as regarded the vindication of His own character. Jesus uses it all for them. But there is more: “that they may behold my glory.” How blessed, again, is this, that Jesus counts upon the delight of our hearts in beholding His glory! To think that He should reckon thus about us! When we consider what we are, how apt to be selfish and cold, and yet that He counts upon this—our joy in beholding This glory! He reserves the best wine to the last. We shall be with Him where He is. No stranger eye will be there; none to intermeddle with that joy; none but those whom He has loved, and who, He knew, loved Him. It would be enough for them to be there, and thus to see His glory. “That they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.”

And if the world did enter for a moment, how terrible to think of its sentence! There is no scene of judgment, no threat pronounced of what God must execute. But it was all decided now. “O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee.” The Lord leaves the world entirely to the righteous Father. He was not even about to speak of what that world had done against Himself. All was said in saying that they had not known the Father.

How blessed it is to find that the same chapter that shows how He estimates our feeblest feeling about Himself, meets us on the simplest, surest ground possible Does He here say, in speaking' of His own in contrast with the world, that they had been true to Him? No; “But I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me.” How blessed to find, after all the heights of this chapter, and of such communications as those of Jesus which He here tells out to the Father, that He so comes down. “These have known that thou hast sent me.” It is so that He speaks, that our hearts, instead of being lost in comparing what He says of us with what we are, should know that He comes down to the very least perception the Christian has of what He is. “These have known that thou hast sent me.” The first thing for my soul that has turned to God is the last thing that

abides, passing out of all the scene of death and darkness, and recognizing the love that sent Jesus down, and given me Him outside myself.

“And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it; that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them.” When in heaven, as now, He would declare that Father's name to them as He had upon earth, and this, that they might know themselves objects of the same love as Himself, yea, that they might know Himself in them, their life. May our blessed God grant that every word that our Savior has thus spoken may be graven upon our heart! May we delight that these should be His thoughts about us! They are the true means and motives of heavenly practice. It is not insisting on what we must do or be, that gives power to us. That which alone fits for doing anything according to the heart of Christ, is that our hearts dwell in Him and His fullness of love with the Father. These are the thoughts that the Son utters to the Father and that the Father reciprocates with the Son, in order that such as we may know, and enjoy, and live in them, and know Christ in us, their source and power, even in this world.

Chapter 126

# Thoughts on John 16:1-15

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

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

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

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

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

“And these things will they do unto you,” &c. Very often when we have received truth from God, we must be content without being able to satisfy others that it is truth. And if others cannot understand, so neither can we explain. We must go on patiently, though we have to act in a way

unintelligible to many. We must expect to be despised. The Lord set His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem; and it was the very thing that brought out man's opposition. The path of faith can never be understood, though communications of truth may be.

Verse 5. “None of you asketh me whither goest thou?” We are constantly acting in unbelief in this way. The Lord often tries our hearts. The disciples were thus tried in the prospect of the Lord being taken from them. What comfort they had had in His blessed presence! And now, sorrow filled their hearts. (Ver. 6.) The sorrow was legitimate, but they were filled with themselves—their own grief, instead of seeing how God was working, and what were His purposes. The real truth was, that the Son was going back to the Father. We may lose God's purpose of blessing to our own souls, by not seeing His mind in that which grieves us. The disciples were shut up in their own sorrows and thoughts, instead of inquiring where the Lord was going. But He would comfort them, in spite of this weakness of faith, and gives them the promise of the Comforter. (Ver. 7.) What a wonderful blessing the presence of the Holy Ghost must be, when it needed that the Lord Jesus Christ should go away in order that He might come! It is well for us to ask ourselves whether we do really believe in this personal presence of the Holy Ghost down here. A soul might say, “Ah, if I had the Lord here to direct me, how well should I do and bear!” But if we know redemption-deliverance through the death and resurrection of Christ, we have Him still with us, and in the best and nearest way. For the Holy Ghost dwells in us to unfold Him to our souls, to teach us the glory of Him who has loved us, and shed His blood for us, and has all power, Head over the Jews, Head of the Gentiles, Lord over everything. Nor is it only the glory of His person, but His titles we learn. “At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.” We have the Holy Ghost too as the guide; and the Lord would have us guided not ignorantly, but in intelligence. The presence of the Holy Ghost presupposes judgment having passed upon the flesh, which naturally resists guidance, and the flesh must not be allowed place in the Christian, if he would be guided of the Spirit.

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

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

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

God said, “I have yet one Son; it may be they will reverence him.” It was His last trial of a world lying in the wicked one, full of all kinds of corruption. He was reconciling the world unto Himself, and saying, as it were, Receive my Son, and I will not impute your sin; but they cast Him out and slew Him, and thus proved that willful sin was in man. There was the perfect light of God in love

and grace, in the person of His Son, coming down to earth, and men loved darkness better. This was their condemnation. It is not God coming in the terrors of the law, to frighten men, but in grace to attract; and they will not have Him. There is no reason why the Son of God was rejected, but the utter wickedness of man's heart.

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

This rejection of Christ is the one great sin that the Holy Ghost deals with the world about. Why do people prefer vanity—everything—anything—to God's Son? Because they are perfectly opposite to God, and that is sin. It is the plant, and pith, and alp of that which is in my heart by nature. And if the world is convinced of sin, there is an end of righteousness. The only righteous One who ever came into it, was rejected and allowed to suffer before God. On the cross, God leaves the righteous One to be utterly rejected. But righteousness came in by this way; and it was proved when He, who had been obedient unto death, went back to the Father. What an answer to all that He had done was there in this acceptance! He had accomplished all that gave Him a title to be at the right hand of God; He had proved Himself fit for God's throne.

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

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

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

“He will guide you into all truth.” This has nothing to do with the world, as the world. But as when the Lord said, “What I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you.” “All truth.”

The whole truth of the glory and person of the Lord Jesus Christ—all ours. We know but little of it, it is true; but the Holy Ghost is down here to unfold it to us. He brings down to us the things from heaven, the glories of the Father and the Son, fellowship with the Father and the Son, not what is

going to happen to Nineveh. All the counsels of God in Jesus are ours, in the power of the Holy Ghost. What a wondrous field of spiritual thought in this new world to which we are introduced! It is filled by Christ for our use. Our portion is to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. It is not speaking to us of miracles, but taking the heart of the saint into all that God has to say about His Son Jesus. What a blessed place the saints are in! the Holy Ghost to reveal to them all that God delights in as regards the Lord Jesus, His person, His work—all that the Father has given Him—all His coming glory.

We may not say, “These things are too high for me.” The question is not that we have been far from Him, but that He is near to us. Suppose my father is the great judge of the country, I ought to be outside the arm of the law, but I am interested because it is my father's work. How that little word “my” — “our” —comes home to the heart! And all things are ours!

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

Chapter 127

# John 6

The early chapters of John's Gospel strikingly shew us that the Son of God, when on earth, would be received as a Savior, or not at all. The mother understood Him as a doer of wonders, Nicodemus as a teacher of heavenly secrets, His brethren as having power to awe the world into astonishment and submission, but these apprehensions of Him are only a trouble to Him. He is weary to bear them; and even the multitude that would receive Him as their king, and set the crown on His head, are an offense to Him. (See chap. 6, 7)

There may be observed a great deal of earnestness in the manner of His withstanding all these approaches. His reply to the mother is, “Woman, what have I to do with thee?” The shortness with which He turns upon Nicodemus is a vivid expression of this same earnestness. And the character of His answer to the desire of the multitude conveys the same. “When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force to make him a king, he departed alone into a mountain.” And in like manner His reply to His brethren expresses deep and entire alienation of mind from the motion and will of their hearts. The same decisiveness appears in His answer to the Pharisees who would treat Him as a judge in chap. viii. 6.

This I may say of chapter 6 in company with all the early chapters of this gospel. But, of course, it has its own peculiar character also. And at verse 26 it begins to present itself to us, I judge, very distinctly.

The Lord warns the multitude to work for the meat that endures to eternal life. The multitude then ask Him what this work was to be, how they were to work the works of God. He tells them that the work of God, the way to please and serve and obey Him, was to believe on the One whom He had sent.

They, rightly understanding this to mean that they were to transfer all their confidence for acceptance with God and for eternal life over to Him, ask Him for His credentials; telling Him, at the same time, that Moses had shown his credentials to their fathers, inasmuch as he had given them bread from heaven.

In reply, the Lord, shortly denying that Moses had given them that heavenly bread, or worked the miracle of the manna, reveals Himself to them as the true Bread or heavenly Manna. And, pursuing the figure, He further tells them the quality of this bread—that it was, so to speak, such as none but a convicted sinner, one consciously exposed to judgment, could relish. He lets them know that it was as paschal food they must eat it, like another generation in days of old who fed upon that very lamb whose blood on the lintel was sheltering them from destruction.

Thus does this great discourse vindicate and set forth the thought, that the Lord will be received only as a Savior, a Lamb slain for sinners. A saving knowledge of Him lies in that. He came, not to satisfy the Greek in his search after wisdom, nor the Jew in his looking for a sign of power, but as the true Manna for hungry souls, the Paschal Lamb whose blood shelters the Israel of God.

But further as to this chapter. It was the time of the Passover; a season which should have told them that but for blood they would all have perished. Their own history had taught them this. (Ex. 12) Had they learned the lesson of that history, they would have known this. But in this chapter the Jews betray the fact, that they had never learned this lesson, this first lesson, of their national history, their history as God's people. They had never in reality kept the Passover, however they may have flocked to Jerusalem at the appointed season. To this hour they were disclaiming the thought of being such an exposed people as that nothing but blood appointed of God could shield them from the destroyer.

The Lord was not taking them by surprise, when He demanded of them to eat His flesh and drink His blood. It was only, in other words, to keep the passover, the feast of that day (see ver. 4), in reality, or according to its divine meaning. And none can keep it, but a convicted sinner, one who recognizes his exposure to judgment but for the blood of a victim appointed of God.

However, therefore, the multitude may have admired Jesus, and been ready to hail Him as their King, they were showing that they had never as yet even begun their history according to God's mind, or in that way which is the only divine way. For Israel began their journey as a redeemed or blood-bought people. They had to take that character at the very outset. And therefore, of the month Abib (which had been the seventh month, being the month in which they were sheltered by the paschal-blood), it is said, “This month shall be unto you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year unto you.” The Son of God could not own them in any way, till they had taken this necessary character. (Ex. 12:2.)

Peter's confession distinguishes the Jew at the true passover. It signalizes faith as apart from the apostate, unbelieving condition of all beside. (Ver. 68.) It bowed to Jesus not as king or as teacher, or as a doer of miracles, but as the life of a sinner.

This is all simple and sure; and, I may add, it has comforted me to remember that it is in the same character we are to be introduced into heaven. As it was as sinners we went to Jesus at first (like Israel beginning their history at the Passover) and found a hearty welcome in that character, so will it be as accepted souls that we shall enter heaven. Works may follow there, as here. Here we have been ordained unto good works, after our new creation in Christ. (Eph. 2:10.) There their works may follow the saints (Rev. 14:13) and dignities in the kingdom be awarded, cities allotted them; to some ten, to others five. But still, it is only as pardoned sinners m he had before trusted in Christ (Eph. 1:12) that we shall be received into heaven.

That is happy for our souls. And we may ask ourselves, do we reckon on going to heaven exactly and only in that character? Do we believe that it is only as blood-bought sinners, as a paschal Israelite that even the bravest of us, the most devoted, will be received there? It is so; and that is a comfort. I may be outshone and outrun by the light and speed of all around me, but our entrance into heaven is in a common character. As sinners who boast only in Jesus, the common character, are we all received there, though the honors of the kingdom by and by may be in various orders.

But this, as we pass. I observe further on this chapter, that when the multitude ask the Lord to give them some sign, by doing some miracle, after the pattern of Moses, He does not answer this demand, or work any miracle as the ground of the faith in Himself which He was requiring of them.

And why this? Are not signs and wonders proper seals of any divine mission? They are. Just as fulfilled prophecy is. Both the fulfillment of prophecies in Him and the doing of miracles by Him are seals of His mission, and a due ground of challenging the obedience of faith.

Why, then, did the Lord refuse them this ground of confidence, as they were requiring? I might say, He had already given them a sign. The multitude, who at that moment was following Him, had seen the miracle which He did with the loaves and fishes. But beside this, I say, a miracle is not the proper or immediate ground of divine or evangelic faith, i.e., such faith as the Spirit works and as saves the soul. No. The faith that saves the soul takes such acquaintance with the Son of God as convicted sinners alone have. It is that which the conscience makes. All John's Gospel has been showing us this. Accordingly, in this very chapter, the Lord, instead of working a miracle after the desire of the multitude, talks with them in a way to discover whether their conscience had been reached, whether they were following Him as sinners who needed life, or merely as an admiring and interested populace.

A miracle may draw attention, and in this way be the distant parent of faith. But the faith that saves, the faith that the Christ of God (looked for as we have seen), is that of a sinner convicted of his need of life. And with such an one, I will add, fulfilled prophecies or miracles become entirely secondary.

Nathanael and the rest in chapter i. of this gospel were saved without witnessing any miracle at all. So was the Samaritan in chapter iv. So, among others, I might mention Levi the publican, in Matt. 9:9. So, as a striking instance, the dying thief. And so Peter; for though arrested by the draft of fishes, yet quickly that miracle became altogether secondary to him, and the discovery which his conscience had made of Christ is everything to him, as his confession in this very chapter tells us. (Ver. 68.) And there is not one of us, I may be bold to say, but that (however we may use such phenomena in dealing with others, and offer to them the evidence of the fulfilled prophecies or of attested miracles) to ourselves, to our souls, they have become altogether secondary.

What did the jailer and his family, I would ask, think about or talk about, as they sat together at meat with Paul and Silas? Was it the recent earthquake? or was it the need which their consciences had discovered, and of those suited resources which Christ alone had for it? Sure I am that they forgot the miracle; or, if they remembered it, remembered it in the divine grace, and not in the marvelous strangeness of it. It had become entirely secondary to them, as miracles do in the esteem of every quickened soul. The Eunuch, in like manner, forgot the rapture of Philip, most wondrous as it was, and under his own eve, in the occupation of his soul with a freshly discovered Jesus.

This chapter, indeed, further shews, in connection with all this, that the faith merely grounded on a miracle will never do. It may lead to admiration of Christ, or to some other affection kindred with this, but there is no salvation in all that. (See ver. 14, and also chap. 2:23-25.) Life or salvation rests on Jesus being apprehended and resorted to for life and salvation; and nothing does that but a convicted conscience. The faith that justifies deals with God as a justifier, apprehending sin in us and redemption by blood in Christ.

NOTE. - Death came in by sin. If Christ give life, He must put away sin. It' we enjoy life from him, we must trust in Him as the Purger of sin—in the language of this chapter, feed on His flesh and

blood, His sacrifice, as pardoned sinners have done from the beginning. This life He gives is eternal— “His flesh is meat indeed, and His blood is drink indeed;” because it is victorious life, life acquired in conflict with death; life, therefore, not to be tested like Adam's, but life already proved. No acceptance of Him, save as the One who died to put sin away will do; it does not recognize our death-estate. A teacher, a judge, a king, may be received to improve the old thing: that will not do; it must be renounced. Peter receiving Him, as having the words of life, used Him as the root of all to him, not as the cultivator of what he himself already had, as Nicodemus would have done. The cherubim taught Adam there was no recovery of life for him but through the gospel of a dead and risen Savior.

Chapter 128

# John— the Penman of Revelation

In the progress of this book we see John moved by different affections. He trembles in chapter 1:17; he weeps in chapter 5:4; he wonders with great admiration in chapter 17:6; he loses himself in worshipping delight in chapters 19:10 and 22:8.

That is, he trembles in the presence of the judicial glory of the Son of man; he weeps at the sight of a sealed book, which, had it been unsealed, would have told secrets about Jesus; he marvels at the sight of Christendom's apostasy; he loses himself in joy when he hears of the marriage of the Lamb, and when he sees the Bride of the Lamb.

What suited affections! what creations of the Holy Ghost in the soul of a saint! He never trembles, after the One who was alive tells him not to fear. He that had the keys of death and hades encourages him: and that, surely, is enough for us.

Chapter 129

# A Few Thoughts on Joshua 4

IN this chapter we find two remarkable facts: the setting up of twelve stones in the midst of the Jordan, and twelve stones taken out and set up at Gilgal on the Canaan side. All this has its voice for us. As God would have the children of Israel forever remember this fresh introduction of His power on their behalf, putting the memorial of it before their eyes, in a manner suited to the dispensation; so He would have us continually to bear in mind the infinitely more marvelous and blessed way in which He has wrought for us in Christ.

It is well to consider the twofold bearing of this type of Jordan. In Col. 2; 3, we have that which clearly. corresponds to these two things. The end of chapter 2 reminds the Colossians that they were “dead with Christ.” Verses 12, 13 show the two things. “Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him, through the faith of the operation of God who hath raised him from the dead;” and then he repeats it in another form to show what their state was when this mighty change was wrought in them. “And you, being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with Him,” &c. Then in verse 20 he takes up one of these truths— “dead with Christ.” This answers to the center of Jordan, that place where the waters of death were ordinarily rolling, and completely blotting out from view all that was beneath them. “If ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world,” &c. Then, in the beginning of chapter iii., we have, “If ye be risen with Christ.” This answers to the stones taken up out of the water and placed on the other side. “Seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.” Then in verse 3 we have both truths again: “For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God;” and put before us as we now are. “Ye are dead.” We have the stones set up in Jordan. And “your life is hid with Christ in God” —that which is represented by the stones taken out and put on the other side. We have our Lord risen from the dead and seated in heavenly places, and we are in Him there. Then “seek those things which are above.”

And mark the association it was not a single stone that was put in memorial, but twelve, both in the river and on the farther side. If the death of Christ alone had been shown, one stone might have expressed it; but our very life, Christ, is in the presence of God. “Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.” And in this truth we have what ought to be just as much as ever before our souls as the stones were before Israel, though we must own that we are little conversant with it. We looked at the death of Christ for comfort, when our souls were troubled because of sin, and we got the assurance of forgiveness. Have we rested there? Is not this the history of many a soul? But it is plain that it falls far short of what we have here, and that the knowledge of the passage through Jordan is a marvelous step in the ways of God's grace. Therefore we may ask, Have we realized our complete deadness to everything here, as before God? Are we dead to the law, to sin, to the world? Have we seen, as it were, the twelve stones taken out of Jordan, in God's own land?

When this is entered into in spirit, it is no question of the trials of the wilderness alone for the heart. The believer is no longer occupied only with the comfort of such a word as this— “There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man,” &c.; but he gets the victory over present

circumstances, in the power of what he possesses beyond. It is worthy of remark that to the Corinthians, who were addressed as “babes,” having become such as had need of milk, so many allusions were made as to Israel in the wilderness. (1 Cor. 10, &c.) Flesh always falls in the wilderness. It must be judged there. Every person must be put to the proof in the trials of the way. The Lord knows how to do this. But the Jordan forever closes to faith the question of the circumstances of the wilderness. And what we find here is the constant memorial of it, the abiding token that death and resurrection were needed in order to bring them into the land. And thus are we put in spirit into heaven, where the conflict with Satan is carried on. This is a deeper tiling than meeting the trials of the spirit in outward things. Through those we learn profitable lessons, but it is not proper conflict. When by faith we have laid hold of our oneness with Christ, immediately mortification of flesh is the question, and we are in the presence of God to enjoy what He has given us; and there we learn the spring of those things which hinder our communion with God, and which Satan is always on the watch to use for hindering our enjoyment of the full blessing.

Along with this, there is the disciplinary process, which God uses to bring us into a better knowledge of Himself. He desires, too, that we should know what it is to be offering and eating of the fruits of the land. The manna was suited to the wilderness; but when the experience of the wilderness was past, they ate of the old corn of the land—resurrection-food.

The great point I would desire to leave on our souls is this—the amazing pains our God has taken that our souls should have unqualified rest and joy in being one with Christ. We are in Him dead to everything that the flesh values and covets in this world. A Christian is dead not only to the evil of the world, but to its very best—to all that man likes most and that tends to exalt him and give him a place in the earth. The death and resurrection of Christ have given us to know that the flesh is good for nothing; that everything to which man can be formed by moral or religious education only proves that the flesh is thoroughly useless God ward, nay, hateful and already condemned. Man says, “Touch not, taste not, handle not;” but God shows that for us He has done forever with this principle. All the system of restraint was connected with the old man, which faith now has to treat as dead. My case was so utterly desperate that I needed a new creation. This He has wrought for me in Christ: I am now identified no longer with the old thing, but with His condition, and this is intended to govern my ways. What can be of greater consequence for us practically to bear in mind? It is a truth that touches everything in the walk of a Christian here below as he waits for Christ. Any union with the world in its schemes, objects, and ways is unhallowed union with it—is as unnatural as the marriage of a corpse to a living man. We are not only dead with Christ, we are alive with Him. Do we sufficiently bear in mind that God has, in Him, raised us from the dead? I speak not, of course, as to our bodies yet, but as to our new life. So truly am I one with Christ, that whatever is an object of interest to Him should be an object of interest to me. It is easy enough to take up even souls, preaching, anything, in short, in connection with self instead of with Christ. We have to guard against this continually. Self is apt to be a defiling snare. But let us bear in mind, in order to an unsparing, habitual self-judgment, that we are risen with Christ, and that, as such, our hearts should go out in everything that is precious to God.

Chapter 130

# Scripture Query and Answer: The King in Daniel

Q. Can we take “the king” in Dan. 11:36, as the king of the north, and understand verse 40 as meaning that the king of the south shall push at him: (i.e., the king of the north:) and the king of the north shall come against him, (i.e., the king of the south,) so as to identify the rest of the chapter that follows with the same personage? J. B.

A. To me it is evident that “the king” is distinguished from both these monarchs, and that the characteristics and the locality, as well as his abrupt introduction into the scene, as some well-known personage at the time of the end in the holy land, exercising royal rights over the apostate mass of the Jews there, point to one conclusion—that he is the “man of sin” of 2 Thess. 2 and “the antichrist” of the Epistles of John, “the beast of the earth” (or land) and “false prophet” of the Apocalypse. This being so, verse 40 is quite simple, and shows us “the king” assailed both by the ruler of the south and by him of the north. With this, too, agrees verse 41, where “the king of the north” enters into Palestine. Again, in verse 45 he plants the tents of his pavilion in that land. “The king,” on the contrary, lived and reigned there. If “the king” can be naturally understood of one who reigns in the holy land only, the question is decided, and the kings of the north and south mean those of Syria and Egypt respectively. It would be violent indeed to identify “the king of the north” with antichrist or “the king,” of whom he is the deadly enemy. 2.

Chapter 131

# Fragment: Law Not the Measure of God's Acting in Grace

Law may be the perfect rule of man's duty toward God and his neighbor: that, no doubt, Christ fulfilled. But it is not the measure of God's actings in grace toward man, and that Christ displayed too; and yet did so in obedience to His father. But no law of loving God as the responsibility of the creature to God can measure Christ's self-sacrifice for us, nor, consequently, the path in which we are called upon to follow Him.

# Fragment: Luke 9:37-43

The disciples ought to have been able to use the power of Christ against the enemy. Their being unable to profit by it, becomes an occasion for judgment. Since it was so, it was therefore useless for Christ to remain on the earth. “how long shall I be with you, and suffer you?” and so it is with the church

Chapter 133

# Remarks on Mark 1:1-13

Mark gives us the ministry of the Lord. His account is brief; and there are few events which are not recorded by Matthew and Luke. Nevertheless, what a gap there would be in our view of the Savior's life and work here below, if we had not Mark! In none have we a more characteristic manner of presenting what is given us. In none have we such graphic, vivid life-touches of our Master: not only what He said and did, but how He looked and felt. Besides, there is the evident design of drawing our attention to His gospel-service; and all the incidents chosen, and the peculiar mode in which they are handled, will be found to bear upon this weighty and affecting theme: the Lord God as the servant, in lowly, faithful ministration of the gospel here below.

The very opening illustrates this. “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God: as it is written in the prophets, Behold I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. The voice of one crying,” &c. We at once enter on the great business the Holy Ghost had in hand. There is no blowing of trumpets to usher in the king in due style and title. This has its just place in Matthew, where the descent traced from Abraham and David, along the chosen royal line of Solomon too, so admirably agree with God's object there. And the circumstances before and after His birth follow, all carrying out the same end of presenting Jesus as the true and blessed Messiah of Israel. Luke and John, it could be readily shown, were endowed by the Spirit with equally striking and suited wisdom for maintaining the aim of their gospels respectively; but space forbids, for the present, our delaying to speak of these things particularly.

It is well, however, in noting the beautiful immediateness of the picture here brought before our eyes, to observe that there is no precipitancy, no omission of what was a most important preface for the account of Jesus thus ministering—the previous appearance and services of John the Baptist. To this there seems to be an allusion in the opening words. It was more than prophecy, though in accordance, as verses 2 and 3 prove, with the prophets. “The law and the prophets,” we are told elsewhere, “were until John,” who took a great step in advance— “the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ.” Such was the voice of one crying in the wilderness, after long silence had reigned as to God's testimony in Jerusalem.

Further, is it not touching to see that, if we are about to follow the steps of God's faithful and only perfect servant, the change which the Holy Ghost, in sovereign wisdom, makes in His citation (ver. 2) of Mal. 3:1, attests the divine glory of Jesus? In the prophecy it is Jehovah sending His messenger who would prepare the way before Him. In the evangelist it is still Jehovah sending His messenger, but it is now before “thy face,” i.e. the face of Jesus Christ. The truth is, Jesus, humble Himself as He might, was Jehovah. Matthew elicits the same truth from His name. “Thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins.” Now the Jews were the people of none but Jehovah. It is the more remarkable in the opening of our gospel; for Mark, unlike Matthew, rarely quotes the Scriptures. How perfectly it is in keeping with the gospel, and its opening part also, is evident. If the Lord of glory was coming or comes in the form of a servant and

the likeness of men, it was most appropriate that prophecy should (not be broken but) bend before Him, and that a new and still more blessed testimony should begin.

But where cries this voice of the herald, and where was he baptizing? “In the wilderness.” What, then, was the state of Jerusalem and the people of God? They must go outside to John if they would take their right place before God. What be presented was the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. The effect was great; I say not savingly, but extensive, and not without touching the conscience. “There went to him all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.” All this is here sketched by Mark, clearly but rapidly and in brief, without stopping by the way to set before us, as was needful to the purpose of God in Matthew, the proud and false-hearted men who stood in the place of religious leaders of the day, objects of God's certain and scrutinizing judgment.

But if John had his own special place, and if his abode, and garb, and food, (ver. 6,) witnessed his separation from the evil state of Israel, it was his happier task to testify the superiority of Christ's person, and of His ministry, as compared with his own (ver. 7, 8). Nothing is here said of baptizing with fire, as in Matthew and Luke, to both of whose subjects it was requisite. But Mark was inspired to speak only of that part of John's testimony which is directly associated with the Lord's gospel work, namely, baptizing with the Holy Ghost. It is not, of course, that, under Christ repentance ceased, and can ever but be in a world of sin, the necessary pathway of a soul that is born of God. Still, the turning of a soul to God, in a sense of sin and self-judgment, is different from the divine power which sets evil aside on the basis of a redemption accomplished by the grace of God. This is the characteristic blessing of Christianity.

Yet was Jesus, the baptizer with the Holy Ghost, Himself baptized by John in the Jordan (ver. 9), Himself receives the Holy Ghost! What a sight and truth! Infinitely above sin and sins, (which He did not even know,) yet was He baptized with water: He had no unrighteousness to confess, but thus it became Him to fulfill all righteousness. From Nazareth of Galilee came He, who was God over all, blessed forever. There He dwelt, as Matthew tells us, so that the prophets' saying might be in this, as in all else, fulfilled. Could heaven behold unmoved such grace? Impossible. “And straightway coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opened [cleaving asunder], and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him.” What meaning had that act of baptism in the mind of God! “And there came a voice from heaven saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” “Him,” as John says, “hath God the Father sealed.” It is not merely the fact, but “He saw,” &o., which is here recorded. Though truly God, He was man; though a Son, He became a servant, and was now about to enter on His ministry. He receives the Spirit as well as the recognition of His Sonship. He had justified God's sentence on, and call to, Israel; yea, He had in grace joined the souls who had bowed to it in the waters of Jordan; but this could not be without the answer of the Father for His heart's joy in the path He was about to tread. The one was the fulfillment of every kind of righteousness and not legal only (this in grace, for there was no necessity of evil in His case); the other was His recognition thereon by the Father in the nearest personal relationship, over which His submission to baptism might have cast a cloud to carnal eyes.

“And immediately the Spirit driveth Him into the wilderness; and He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts, and the angels ministered unto Him.”

(Ver. 12, 13.) What a picture of His position in a few words of God! Moses, the lawgiver, had been with God on the mount forty days; Elijah, the prophet, had been in the wilderness with God for the same, sustained without the need of man's food. But what was either miracle compared with the position of Jesus? For Him the Son, to be with God was, and had been from all eternity, His natural place, so to speak; but now He was come down to the earth, a man among men; and in the wilderness, to which sin had reduced this fair creation, He is for forty days tempted of Satan. Man was not there; but the wild beasts were, as our evangelist so forcibly adds; and there too the angels were ministering to Him. It was all His wondrous preparation for a service no less wondrous.

Chapter 134

# Remarks on Mark 1:14-39

We have seen thus far in Christ the great preparations for the service of God, the first of them, at least and of course, modified by His intrinsic and absolute sinlessness. And such, I believe, to be, in measure, true of every one whom the Lord calls to follow in His own path. There is, first, the owning of our true place before God. And what real enjoyment of our spiritual relationship can there be, till we bow before God in the truth of our condition? There maybe a sort of joy arising from the thought of sins being forgiven; but forgiveness of sins, however sweet and important, is, after all, but an act—an immense, divine act—of sovereign grace through the blood shedding of the Savior. It is not in itself the existence or the enjoyment of our new definite relationship of sons with the Father. This, along with the seal of the Spirit, is what is next given. We, too, led by the Spirit, have the happy witness that we are the children of God. But, following this, there must be the consciousness of what the power of Satan is, and of the wilderness, too, before there can be the full ability to serve others in the power of God.

“Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God.” This was the fitting moment for his public ministry. It was an hour little suited for nature, when Messiah's forerunner was tasting the enmity of the world; but Jesus came not to escape the sorrows of love in a hating world, but to make known what God is, in spite of, yea, because of, such a world. Therefore He says, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Repent ye, and believe the gospel.” There was no more delay for the testimony of grace. It was no question of the law, but of repentance and believing in the Gospel. But though it was now the time for divine action, grace will have sharers of its own joy. Accordingly we have Simon and Andrew, James and John called to become fishers of men. (Ver. 16-20.) They had known and believed in Jesus before, but now they must follow and be with Him. Boats, nets, father—their earthly property, their ordinary occupation, their natural relationship—must yield to the call of Jesus. Not that all are called to go after Jesus thus; but assuredly it is the Holy Ghost who leads the soul that is born again to call Him Lord: Is this confession to be real or is it unmeaning? By His blood we are redeemed to God, We are not our own; we are bought with a price. He is our Lord; not only in great things, but in the smallest matters of everyday life. And sure I am that a crisis comes in the history of believing souls, when they must be put to the proof how far this is true in their experience. For Satan does seek to tempt us; out of the happy place of the servants of Christ, to make ourselves lords, as it were. Are we seeking our own interests, our own pleasure, our own ease? Are we struggling for our own will? Are we seeking to be something in the world, or, at any rate, something in the Church? What is this but to be lords instead of His servants? But to own Him as Lord, to do His will, this is our own proper business. For this we are saved. This is what He died for; and this is what we ought to live for—to own Jesus Lord. To live for ourselves in anything, is to defraud Him of His rights; and it is to deny, so far, the great price He paid to make us His.

“And they went into Capernaum, and straightway on the Sabbath-day he entered into the synagogue and taught. And they were astonished at his doctrine, for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes.” This is the first and essential point in the ministration of

God's word, that it should be spoken with authority. Flesh may imitate it. The world thinks that self-will is the only thing that can avail to effect any end. But however strong man's will may seem in the things of men, the certainty of God's will is the one thing by which the Holy Spirit clothes the word with authority in divine things. This was pre-eminently the case with Christ, for He alone as man had the Lord always before Him. But even with us there should be the speaking with assurance of God's mind and will, (1 Peter 4,) if we speak for God at all; otherwise it would be better to be silent. With the scribes it is not so. They may reason or they may dazzle, as argument or fancy preponderates. But for us, it is better not to speak if we have not the certainty of that which God would have spoken at any given time. By speaking uncertainly, we only communicate our own doubts or darkness to others. But if we have by grace the certainty of God's truth, let it be spoken with authority. It is as servant that Christ does so here. He was Himself the perfection of humility; for it is in no way inconsistent with a lowly mind, to speak with the fullest authority where we have no doubt about the mind of God.

But next we find “there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, and he cried out saying, Let us alone: what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy. One of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him.” How strikingly these demoniacal possessions appeared in the presence of Jesus! One might almost think, as we read the gospels, that all then, existing and possible cases had been crowded around, Him. But the truth is, there may have been as many before, but the presence of divine light brought it all out then; the presence of Jesus, the Son of God, drove Satan to bay, and withdrew the mask which may previously have covered his victims. And in a degree this may be observed wherever the power of God's truth and holiness are at work. Does He raise a standard? Their opposition will at once be felt, and the enemy will declare himself. The unclean spirit would gladly be left alone, but owns the power of the despised Jesus of Nazareth. The power of Satan could but feel the presence and supremacy of the despised of men, but Holy One of God. Jesus, however, rebukes him, and delivers the possessed to the astonishment of all who own the new doctrine by reason of the power which judged and expelled the enemy.

Nor is this all. The divine word was felt, and demons were forced out. Sickness, too, flees before His touch; and this not only in the individual case of Simon's wife's mother, but in crowds of others, miserable and distressed in every form. As to this, indeed, we have but to humble ourselves before God; for the Church was once the seat of this same wondrous energy of rebuking diseases and casting out devils. They were the powers of the world to come. But God has stripped the Church of her ornaments to our shame; and it becomes us to be humbled for it. Let us, however, turn to Jesus. Unwearied with His day of toil and service for others, at even it was still the same. He evermore carries on His work of love; for “when the sun was set, they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils, and all the city was gathered together at the door, and he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils, and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him.” He refused that mixed testimony. It must be divine, in order to be accepted of Him. But what is so blessed for us and so instructive too, is the next lovely feature that we find in the Lord as the servant on earth. “In the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.”

Occupied though He had been, early and late, with the sorrows of others, yet here we find Him long preventing the dawn, while it was yet the dark of night, in order to bold intercourse with His Father. And what were the communications between such a Father and such a Son! The Old Testament tells us, “The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary. He wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned.” The New Testament tells us how He went a great while before day into a solitary place, and there He prayed. And if He thus retired to be with God, Himself the Lord God, before He entered upon the work of the day, can we wonder that we fail so much in outward labor, who fail yet more in this inward intimacy with our Father? Be assured, the secret of holy strength and endurance in service is found there alone.

Chapter 135

# Remarks on Mark 1:40-45

Before we speak of the cleansing of the leper, let us consider a little the structure of our Gospel as compared with the others. A close inspection will soon satisfy the reader that Mark follows the order of the facts, as does John, with a very slight exception, so far as he gives us an historical account. Neither Luke nor Matthew adhere to the obvious successional, order of events: the former, with a view to developing the moral bearings of the facts, recorded the real condition of man and the admirable resources of divine grace; the latter, so as to manifest more vividly the change of dispensation consequent on the rejection of the Messiah. This, I believe, to have been the aim of the Holy Spirit in their Gospels respectively, without pretending to say how far the authors may have entered into the far-reaching purposes of God in their own inspired writings. In general, the character of the New Testament inspiration is intelligent communion with the mind of God, and not an instrumental medium only, as was the case ordinarily with the Jewish prophets. (1 Peter 1) The great question, however, is as to God's intention; and He looked to the permanent instruction and blessing of His Church through the written word.

Difference there is, frequent and grave, between the various presentations of the Lord in the Gospels; and this both in the order of the narratives and in the manner in which the separate circumstances and discourses are brought before us. To what are we to attribute these constantly varying shades? Is it to the mere infirmity of good men, who did as well no they could, but could not be expected absolutely to tally, as even the best and ablest will disagree in their thoughts, feelings, apprehensions, and judgments? Or, on the contrary, are we to attribute these seeming discrepancies not to man's weakness but to God's wisdom? And are we reverently to ponder their every divergence from one another, as no less fraught with truth than their evident unisons? Not that we would for a moment forget that in the books of Scripture we have the beautiful maintenance of the individual style and manner of the writers. But let us all and always remember, that individuality sustained is a very distinct thing from error allowed, and that divine inspiration neither admits error nor destroys individuality.

That there are numerous and striking differences in the Gospels is plain to all but the most careless reader; that these differences are divinely given, and not the flaws of oversight, is equally certain to the believer. To confess the inspiration of the evangelists, and withal to attribute to the Gospels mistake of any kind, is to deceive oneself as well as sin against God. Inspiration is no more inspiration if it be compatible with error. To account for the shades of difference, to show how necessary, and reasonable, and divinely perfect they all are, is another matter, and depends on our measure of spiritual understanding and power; but no Christian ought to hesitate for an instant as to resenting every impeachment of the word of God. Now God has taken care that of the writers of the Gospels, two (Matthew and John) should be apostles, and two (Mark and Luke) not, though all, of course, are alike inspired. Further, His wisdom has arranged that, of these two classes, one of each (Mark and John) should adhere to chronological order, and the others (Matthew and Luke) should adopt, to a certain extent, a grouping of facts necessarily different from the simple transcription of the facts as they occurred. It is remarkable that to our evangelist, though not an

apostle, we are indebted for the clearest view of the historical line of our Savior's ministry, followed by that which closed and crowned it, from the cross to the ascension. The proofs that Mark, in his brief, rapid, but most graphic sketch, preserves the series intact, will appear from time to time as we pursue its course. The fact is stated here, the importance of which, if accepted as true, is manifest; for we thus have a standard of sequence whereby we can measure, as on an absolutely perfect scale, the displacements of Matthew and Luke. We have, then, to consider in detail the principle and objects which the Holy Ghost had in view when He led these evangelists to gather together certain incidents, miracles, or discourses, taken out of their place, but according to an order quite as real as that of Mark, and, of course, still more proper for their own specific design.

The omission or insertion of particular points in one or more Gospels, not in the rest, is due to the same cause. For example, the first dawning of the true light on the hearts of Andrew, John, Peter, &c., is given nowhere but in John 1. “He calleth His own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.” On the other hand, not John but the other evangelists show us their official summons to follow Christ and become fishers of men; but of these Luke only (chap. 5) furnishes, and this out of its actual date, the details of the miraculous draft of fishes which the Lord caused to act with such searching power on the soul of Peter, as well as on his partners. Otherwise, the succession of events in Luke coalesces with that of Mark, save that the former alone opens with the scene in the synagogue at Nazareth, (Luke 4:16-27,) which so livingly portrayed the intervention of divine goodness, Jesus anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power; and, on His rejection by His own people, the overflowing of grace to the Gentiles. Matthew here (chap. 4:23-25) has no details, but dwells on His preaching and miracles throughout all Galilee, and its wide-spread fame and effects; after which broad outline follows the Sermon on the Mount, transplanted from its place as to date, so as to give at the outset a fuller exposition of the principles of the kingdom. Mark has not the Sermon; his task was not to unfold the character of the kingdom of heaven in contradistinction to the law, (as the prophet like unto and greater than Moses does in Matthew,) but to recount the works and gospel-ministry of the Lord; its place, if it had been inserted there, would have been, I believe, in the middle of chapter 3. Thus, the comparison of the chronological line of things in Mark, as being, so to speak, a fixed scale, greatly facilitates our perception of the displacements in Matthew or Luke, and our consideration of the divine wisdom which, in either case, so ordered their accounts.

To return, “There came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.” What a picture of helpless misery this leper kneeling before Jesus! not therefore without hope, for he besought the Savior in his deep distress. There was no cure for leprosy; if God cured, there were offerings for cleansing. “Am I God to kill and make alive,” said the alarmed king of Israel, “that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy?” In truth, to be a leper was to be “as one dead, of whom the flesh is half consumed when be cometh out of his mother's womb.” (Num. 12:12.) Yet was this leper importunate with Jesus, of whose power he had no doubt. “If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.” This was the only question in a heart broken down to feel his real condition, his urgent and extreme need. Was Jesus willing? And what an answer came to feeble faith! For God will be God evermore, and surpass even our truest thoughts of Himself. “And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth His hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean.” What new thing was this on earth! A man most surely, yet, as surely, infinitely more than man; a heart touched with exquisite

feelings of pity; a hand stretched to touch a leper! Was this law? Had it been only law, and a mere man in question, there would have been not the cleansing of the unclean, but the defilement of him who ventured into contact with that loathsome, forbidden object. But descend ever so low as He might in grace, Jesus was the Son of God, a divine person, who alone of all men could sinlessly say, “I will; be thou clean.” No exertion of power could have so met the leper's wants, his wants of soul as well as of body. The tenderness, the perfect, unselfish love that touched him—what should not this be to our hearts? Assuredly, it revealed the heart of Jesus, as no words alone could have done; and yet the words revealed One who was God on earth. It was divine grace in man, in Jesus, the perfect servant of God, and the more blessedly serving man's necessities, because thus perfectly serving God. Hence, immediate cleansing followed, the very reverse of contamination contracted. “And as soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed.”

“And He straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away; and saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man,” &c. It was of importance that the priest, at the sight of the leper cleansed, should be compelled to own and witness and, as it were, formally take cognizance of the proof that the hand of God was there at work, not now writing judgment on the proud profanity of man, but in the might, and withal deepest condescension, of grace, working the cure of abject and otherwise hopeless wretchedness and suffering, the standing type of a sinner. Besides, grace respects and maintains law till death and resurrection brought in another, and surpassing, and abiding glory for those who have their portion in it by faith; neither does it seek its own credit, but that God in all things should be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

“But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places; and they came to Him from every quarter.” Jesus sought not His own things; and just, as in the previous scene, (ver. 37,) human applause was but the occasion of His turning away from the éclat of miracles to other and more despised work; so here He avoids town for neglected wilds, though ever open to the appeal of need, come whence it may.

Chapter 136

# Remarks on Mark 2:1-23

WE have seen the Lord formally introduced and entering on His public gospel ministry, endowed with the power of the Spirit and tempted in vain though to the uttermost by the devil. We have seen Him, after calling chosen witnesses, expose and expel the unclean spirit which possessed a man. There was the power of God, no less than the authority of the Word. Extreme violent sickness fled and strength was ministered—strength to minister—at His hand: diseases and demons alike yielded to this minister of good in an evil day, who sought not their testimony but the face of His Father, in secret, while men slept. But if preaching the gospel and driving out devils was His main service, His compassionate heart and hand were open to every cry of need, as the leper proved who came in the abject confession of his misery, whose healing He subjects rigorously to the Levitical law of cleansing and thus compels the priests themselves to behold, in this very subjection to the law, the evidence of the presence and power of One who was above it.

After an interval spent in desert places with such as flocked to Him by the fame which kept Him from any city, we find our Lord once more in Capernaum; and at once crowds besiege, not the house only, but the very door, to hear the word He was speaking. (Ver. 1, 2.) Alas! Capernaum, wert thou not exalted to heaven? Art thou not brought down to hell? The mighty works done in thee were less mighty than the Word which thus attracted thee, as a very lovely voice of one that had a pleasant voice and could play well on an instrument; and yet all fell on heedless hearts and unploughed consciences; and they knew not, though they did know and will yet, that a prophet, and more than a prophet, was among them. But if the mass listened only with their ears, there was faith which persevered in face of difficulties, and failed not to make its suit to Jesus. What could seem more desperate? The leper at least could come to Him, could beseech, could kneel down to Him; how could the paralytic pierce the throng which severed him from the Savior? If he could not come himself, he could be brought. And so it was. They come bringing the paralytic on his bed, or couch, which was borne of four. “And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was; and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay.” (Ver. 4.) O Lord, how sweet, how refreshing to Thy heart this confidence in Thee, this most eloquent, even if unuttered, appeal to Thy love and power! It was faith, not alone of the patient, but of his bearers; and faith, now as ever, gets not only what it asks, but far more and better. “When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.” (Ver. 5.)

Yes! this was the root of the evil, deeper than either leprosy or paralysis—sin—which man accounts so small a matter, a mere moral scar on the surface!

What was sin not to Him who on the cross was made sin? who put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself? Filled with love, and in view of the faith which has there sought Him out, He acts in the sovereignty of grace and pronounces the wondrous words, “Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.” He who knew all men, and did not commit Himself to them; He who knew God and His handiwork, commits Himself to faith. It may be weak faith, but it is of God; and His eye was quick to see it and

to bless it according to all the love of His heart. “Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.”

But Satan, too, had his congregation there. “There were certain of the scribes sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?” They were wise in their own conceits, they were judges of law and gospel, and neither doers of the one, nor believers of the other. They were worse. Rejecters of Christ and His mercy, their proud reason disdained the blessed truth of God; their proud self-righteousness spurned and hated that grace of which they never knew the need. The amplest evidence of holy power, the power of God, in opposition to Satan and in compassion to man, had been vouchsafed; but what of that to reasoning scribes, used to the world as it is, and jealous of their own religious importance? One here below pronouncing the forgiveness of sins to a miserable sinner who had not even sought it! This was in their eyes startling, blasphemous, an encroachment on God's prerogative. Not that they cared for God or loved man, but they hated Jesus for His grace; and if it were the truth, their occupation was gone. But no, it could not be; it was unheard of since the world began: “Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?” Ah! there was the secret; the glory of Jesus was unknown, His divine dignity entirely left out of the account. The principle they urged was true, the application fatally false. How often this is the rock on which religious unbelievers split and perish!

And yet forthwith (ver. 8, 9) He gave them evidence of what and who He was; for He perceived in His spirit that they so reasoned in their hearts, taxed them with their hidden thoughts, and appealed to themselves whether it was easier by a word to convey forgiveness or a bodily cure. Which claim was readiest? Who but a divine person, or the wielder of divine power, could say either the one or the other? They were equally easy to God, alike impossible to man. “But that ye may know,” says He, (in evident reference to Psa. 103:3) “that the Son of man hath power (■ξοθσ■αν, the right as well as the ability) on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy) Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house. And immediately be arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all, insomuch that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion.” (Ver. 10-12.) The outward sign of power guaranteed the gift of grace; and both betokened that He who spoke was the Son of man on earth.

It will be observed that, though the Lord does here appropriate to Himself the double character of mercy, which Israel are yet to attribute to Jehovah in Psa. 103, it is not as Christ or Messiah, properly speaking, but as “Son of man.” So He was ever wont to speak. It is the title of His manhood, both in suffering rejection and in glory; as such He blesses faith here, as such He will judge unbelief by and by. (John 5) Thus He vindicated on earth, by the powers of the world to come, that mercy which forgave the sinful soul before them. What a withering rebuke to caviling scribes! What a triumphant testimony to the gospel of grace in the name of Jesus! And God does not now leave Himself without a witness, where His Spirit carries to the heart the power of that name; and a witness that fails not to tell on the consciences where there are eyes to see the holy strength and liberty of one previously degraded in sin, and shame, and folly. Sin withers the man, as well as covers him with guilt. He who pardons, communicates life and power, to the glory of God; and this as Son of man, the name of mercy to the ruined that bow to Him.

The next scene, after the record of His teaching by the seaside, (ver. 13,) still more opens and manifests the outflowing of grace: the call of Levi, the publican (or Matthew, as he calls himself).

What a step and change! From the receipt of custom to follow Jesus, soon to be an apostle when the twelve were ordained! (Mark 3) No trade, no name was more scandalous in Israel. This was the very occasion for grace, as our Lord proves by His choice. Nor was this all, for as Jesus sat at meat in his house, “many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and his disciples; for they were many, and they followed him.” In Pharisaic eyes He could not have gone lower in familiar love, unless He had turned outright to the Gentiles; for shepherds were not more an abomination to the Egyptians, than publicans were to the scribes and Pharisees. Hence, when they saw Him eat with these reprobates, they say, not to Jesus but to His disciples, (for only pride and mischief were in their hearts,) “How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?” But this effort to undermine Him with His followers and so to shake them, only draws out from the Lord His own strong, increasingly strong, expression of grace, as well as His exposure of His and their enemies' self-destructive pride: “When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous but sinners.” (Ver. 17.) On their own showing what claim had they on all He had to bestow?

Next, a similar spirit of dishonesty and ill-will, which entangles the disciples of John also, goes to Jesus about His disciples; (ver. 18;) for they and the Pharisees, who used to fast, came to Him asking why His disciples did not. But the Master stands up in their behalf and shows that a wisdom above their own led them in their weakness. Where was the sense, the propriety, the reverence in fasting if the Bridegroom was there? John Baptist had announced better things; but Pharisaism despises Jesus and had no heart for the joys of His presence. Let them all learn, however, that the days were coming when He should be taken away, and then should they fast.

In truth, the whole scene intimated to those who had ears to hear the grave economical change that was at hand, and that Messiah's presence now was but transitional. His call of Levi and His eating and drinking with publicans, were no dark signs that Israel as such wore lost; the disciples' enjoyment of His brief stay before His taking away, plainly signified the abrupt and impending catastrophe—seemingly His, but really theirs; and the verses that follow (21, 22) bear witness to the new character of God's ways therein and to their incompatibility with Judaism. Neither its displayed form, nor its inner power can blend with the old thing: the kingdom of God being not in word but in power, must have a new and suited vehicle wherein to work. Legal forms only prove their weakness if there be the energy of the Holy Ghost. The worn-out Jewish garment and old bottles disappear: new wine demands new bottles. Christianity, in its principle and its practice, is a fresh and full development of divine blessing. It was not a question of mending the old, but accepting the new.

Chapter 137

# Remarks on Mark 2:23-28

THE incident of the first Sabbath-day is here recorded, which, in point of fact, took place at this very time; for we must constantly bear in mind that Mark pursues the thread of history. Our Lord is intimating the break that was about to take place with Judaism and the introduction of the new character and power of the kingdom of God. Now this is a very serious truth always, but it was peculiarly solemn to Israel. What more perplexes a godly person than the very thought of God changing His mind? What difficulty greater than the notion that God could, as it were, unsay or undo what He had previously laid down? And I think there ought to be great delicacy in dealing with souls where we find there is a godly jealousy as to this, even though it may be ignorant, and not without prejudice. But still it was the evident fact, that what God set up for a specific purpose in Israel never fully reflected His own mind. Eternal truth, breaking through the clouds of Judaism, shone out in the person of Christ, and is now verified in experience as well as faith by the Spirit's working in the children of God.

In a word, it was never the purpose of God to reveal Himself and bring out all His mind. in connection with the Jews, but with the Church. Christianity and not Judaism is the expression of God's mind. Christ Himself, properly speaking, is the image of the invisible God; and Christianity is the practical present result. It is the application of the life, mind, and affections of Christ to the heart and walk of those who are brought to God; and this, founded on His work and correspondent to His place in heaven by the Spirit sent down. All through the Jewish system, as well as before it, there were souls waiting for Christ, and the only persona that ever honored God in the Jewish system were those who, by faith, were above that system. Those alone walked blameless in the various ordinances of the law who looked for the Messiah. It was this expectation, given by the Spirit of God, which lifted them above the earthly thoughts, the groveling desires, the selfishness of nature. It raised them above themselves, if one may so say, as well as above their fellows, for there is always divine power in Christ; and although it was far more fully displayed after Christ came, yet, (as one may see before the sun rises, there is such a thing as the dawn, and streaks that betoken the coming day) so those who looked by the faith of Christ beyond the mere passing shadows which met and satisfied the religiousness of nature—those only honored God even in the outward ordinances of Israel. It is the same principle now as ever, but in a fuller way; because nothing is more certain than that the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the saint of God, in the Christian. But how is it fulfilled? Never merely by endeavoring to keep the law. It never was fulfilled in that way nor can be. In point of fact, as we know, the men that were thus jealous for the law were themselves the greatest and bitterest of the enemies of the Lord Jesus. You know it was fleshly pride as to the law which blinded them into the delusion, that even our blessed Lord Himself did not sufficiently honor it. We easily gather that Paul was taxed with the same reproach. And Stephen too was stoned to death because of this fertile and fatal mistake. So that we may lay it down as a fixed point, that the men who put the ordinances, or the outward regulations of God, in the place of God and Christ Himself, are men that never keep it; even as Stephen told the Jews that they received the law by the disposition of angels, and had not kept it. These were the men

whose voices were loudest about it to those who really honored God in that law as well as in the faith of the Messiah.

Take every believer—I do not say on every occasion; for there is, sad to say, a danger of our own nature working, and that nature neither believes in Jesus nor keeps the law, but is a lawbreaking, Christ-denying thing: the flesh is enmity against God Himself, and nature working its own way always dishonors God. But take the believer—not when he is yielding to his own corrupt nature; take him where, in truth alone, so to speak, we can rightly think of a believer as such—in the exercise of his faith, in the manifestation of the new life which the grace of God has given him; and what is the character of this life? It cleaves to God, it delights in His word, it loves His will, it is attracted by whatever manifests Him. All proves that the believer loves God in heart and soul, loves Him better than himself, for he hates himself, and is ready to own, just so far as faith is in operation, his own folly, his frequent and shameful failure, while he seeks to justify and cleave to God, and delights to make Him known. How comes this? It is that divine principle of life, the energy of the Spirit of God, acting in the new man which enjoys each thing that flows from and displays God, and is the exercise of the new nature which we derive from God. Again, the believer, just in proportion as he has Christ before his soul, walks in the Spirit according to the will of God: if he has not Christ before him, it is as if he had no new nature; life is there, but it is only Christ that maintains, and manifests, and brings it out, giving its full exercise and scope. The believer's heart goes out towards misery, yea, towards poor guilty sinners. Flesh despises and hates, or is indifferent; but the new nature, under the Spirit's power, goes out in compassion and desire for another's blessing. There, I say, is love again; and thus you have the two great moral principles, love to God and love to man. The believer, and the believer alone, walks in them; if he has Christ in his eye, he has them in his heart, and the Holy Ghost strengthens him to walk accordingly. It is thus that the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in those that walk after the Spirit. The Spirit of God, is careful to show it is fulfilled in them that walk after the Spirit, not in such as only stand for the law.

Take the Jew, to whom the law was given; does he manifest real love? I do not say that some are not upright men, possessed of natural benevolence. The question now is of the manifestation of active love to God and man. If men have merely the law before them, what then? The Jew himself is the most striking example and proof that flesh is good for nothing; he is bent upon his own things in this world, coveting a place everywhere, loving money, and so on, of which we are all of us apt to be guilty by nature. Undoubtedly this is the case with the mere unconverted Israelite or the nominal Christian, in whom the Holy Ghost does not act. Unless Christ, either as an object of hope before He came, or now since He has come as the object of faith, be before the heart, there is no reality, nor can be, because the flesh is a false and hating thing. Unless a man have a new nature distinct from and above his own, there never is true (that is, divine) love. The one means of accomplishing the law is to have Christ before and above us, yet in that our portion by faith. Hence it was that Enoch and Noah, and the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who never heard of the law, yet obeyed and pleased God. Were they not holy and godly men? Certainly they were. What made them so? The faith of the woman's seed, the promised Son, the Messiah. Then, when the law was given, what was it that made Moses and Aaron saints of the Lord? The law? Never. It was Christ. It was having Him before their soul. Not that God's law was not honored; but what enabled them to delight in the expression of God's mind—be it what it might—was their looking for

and believing in God's blessed promise of the coming Deliverer, the Kinsman Redeemer. And now He is come, that which has delivered us from wrath and judgment, delivers us also, in proportion as it is the object of our souls, practically from self and the world, from corruption and violence of every kind. Let Christ be forgotten by a believer, what is the effect? He shows the pride, vanity, foolishness, malice of the old man; it is not of course, what is proper to him as a believer, but what belonged to him as a man before he believed. Self is allowed to come out and show its own hateful colors, when Christ is not the one standard and object who fills the mind's eye and heart.

Now our Lord, at this very time, brings out, in His pointed acts connected with the Sabbath-day, an illustration of what has been before us; and I take this opportunity of dwelling on it a little in a practical way and also doctrinally, seeking the instruction for our own souls that the Lord gives us in these incidents. It is true, that the first and primary object was to fill up what He had already shown. To put a new piece upon an old garment would only make the rent worse; so to pour new wine into old bottles would only risk the loss both of the wine and the bottles. The attempt to mix the new forms and spirit of the kingdom of God with the old ways of Judaism, would only end—not in mending Judaism nor in preserving Christianity, but—in the ruin of both. And this precisely has been the issue in the history of Christendom. The palpable failure of the outward Christian profession is the practical evidence of this truth. What Satan aimed at was to mingle together the old Jewish ordinances with Christian truth, and the result is such painful confusion that the light of truth and the grace of God are utterly darkened; such a complete jumbling together that simple souls are perplexed, to their exceeding loss and damage. They cannot in such a state see the difference between grace and law, and what it is to be brought under the name of Christ. All these things are dim before them; and hence ensues uncertainty of soul and powerlessness practically in glorifying God.

Our Lord follows this up by the instruction of the Sabbath-day. “It came to pass that he went through the corn-fields on the Sabbath-day, and his disciples began as they went to pluck the ears of corn. And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the Sabbath-day that which is not lawful?” Now it is clear that there was no law of God against the case. The censure was a law of their own, and a notion of men which looks upon an outward fact and made a system of it—man's constant danger. It is quite true that God had ordained upon the Sabbath-day rest for man and beast; but there was no ground whatever from the law of God to forbid a hungry man, as he passed through a field, from plucking the ears of corn to satisfy his want; nay, it was thoroughly according to the beneficence of God to provide from His people's plenty for such urgent need. There was remarkable care in Israel for the stranger, the bereaved, and the suffering. The poor in the land were not to be forgotten in the joy of harvest, and an express ordinance of God forbade their making clean riddance of the corners of the field. But how came it to pass that there should be famished Israelites thus passing through a corn-field? And if such want existed, was it God or His enemy who turned the Sabbath-day into an iron vice for afflicting the sad at the will of heartless religionists? Thus it was that the Pharisees in their pretended desire to honor God, on the one side, showed, on the other, their complete ignorance of His heart and character, which breathed the fullness of mercy towards want and wretchedness; all was set aside by the miserable codicil that man added to the will of God. But there was One on earth who at once detected the forger's hand that presumed to meddle with the first testament. The Lord stands up for the guiltless. “Have ye never read what David did, when he had need and was an hungered, he and

they that were with him? How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the show-bread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them that were with him?”

Our Lord here points to the rejection of the object of God's counsels—of David, for instance, in his day, who was the anointed king, even while he was the despised one and hunted for his life upon the mountains of Israel. He and his company typified Jesus; and Jesus was found now in circumstances morally similar to those of David, anointed but not yet come to the crown. Thus it is that the Lord vindicates the disciples and maintains the principle that when God's witness is refused, it is madness for the rejecters to pretend to be glorifying God. Were they then despising a greater than David? For such to talk about the Sabbath-day, in order to lay heavier burdens on the righteous, what was it in God's eyes? The Lord of glory was upon earth, and how came it that His disciples wanted even ears of corn to stay their hunger? What a tale this told! How was it that the disciples of Jesus were thus miserable? How out of course must be the foundations, for the Lord and His disciples to lack the most ordinary necessaries of life! Who were these graters of malicious words about the Sabbath-day that could forbid even this scanty pittance, while God's mercy would refuse to none, and least of all on that day? But that the Pharisees, rejecting the Lord Jesus, their own Messiah—that they should have the face to abuse the Sabbath against His disciples! David, when he was in destitution because of the wickedness of Saul, who held the throne in an evil way, David and his followers could eat the shewbread which was only, had things been in order, for the priests. If thus the hallowed bread became common, what was the past to the present? In the presence of the evil that despises God's beloved and faithful witnesses in the earth, the outward ordinances of the Lord lose their application for the time being. The sanctity of ritual disappears before the rejection of the Lord and His people.

“And he saith unto them, The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath.” The Sabbath was not intended to be a means of increasing the sufferings of poor man. If God sanctified it after the creation and enacted it at the giving of the law, was it that God wanted to make His people miserable? On the contrary, not only in its higher character, and beside the thought of His rest, of which it is a type, the Sabbath was made for man. Pharisees might turn the Sabbath into an engine for torturing man, but, in God's mind, the Sabbath came in most mercifully. There were the days of labor which God Himself had known something of in figure, for there was a time when He had wrought and made the earth; and God Himself was pleased to rest on the Sabbath and to sanctify it. Then sin came in and God could no longer own it, and His word is silent. We read of the Sabbath no more until God takes up His people in delivering mercy, and gives them manna from heaven. Then the Sabbath-day becomes again a marked thing, and rest follows, the type of Jesus sent down from above. It disappears from the beginning of the first book of Scripture and re-appears in the second. God makes rest once more. He was giving to man in grace when He brought Israel out of Egypt. Of this the Sabbath was the appropriate sign. But Israel, understanding not the grace of God, accepted the conditions of His law. They took their stand upon their own righteousness when God gave them the ten commandments, and the consequence was that man under law failed miserably, dishonoring God, setting up calves of gold, bringing discredit, shame, and scandal upon the name of God throughout the whole world. This is no more than we have each done. The Israelites made this fatal mistake when they surrounded Mount Sinai. Instead of reminding God of His promise to Israel, instead of confessing that they

could not be trusted and that it is only the mercy of God that enables any one to do His will, they, on the contrary, undertook boldly to earn the promised blessings by their own obedience. But they broke down increasingly till it came to the crisis of David's rejection in Israel. God showed where His heart was, as He loves to do at such a time. Granted that the shewbread was only for the priests; yet for them to keep their consecrated bread and let the anointed king starve would be strange homage to God and the king. And now the Son of David, the Lord of David, was there, and more rejected, more despised, than David himself.

The Lord, after He has thus drawn out of Scripture the true lesson for the day, brings out the general beneficent object of God in the Sabbath for all days. “The Sabbath was made for man.” The Pharisees thought and spoke as if man was made for the Sabbath, to be put under it thus; but the Sabbath was made for man's good and rest, raising his thoughts above the mere labor of his hands. But He brings in another principle; “The Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath.” He connects that with the Sabbath being made for man, but breaks out into a greater truth: the person of Christ is above all ordinances. His glory, even as the rejected man, eclipses all the twinkling rites instituted by the Lord Himself. I have no hesitation in saying that the Lord who gave the law at Sinai, and He who afterward was born and lived a man upon the earth, was the same blessed divine person. He who always acted throughout the Old Testament in government, who came down and suffered and died upon the cross in grace—He now maintains, not merely that He is Lord of the Sabbath in virtue of being divine, but of being Son of man; and what is the importance of this? “Son of man” is the title of His rejection. “Son of man” is the name that He assumes when the Jews refused Him as the Messiah. You will find a remarkable proof of this in Matt. 16:13, and Luke 9:18, (the same fact recorded in the two different evangelists.) He forbids His disciples to say that He was “the Christ.” He leaves aside for a while the glory of His Messiahship: as such He had come and presented Himself to the Jews; but they would not have Him. Now He says, as it were, it is too late: I have given them ample proof—miracle, prophecy, My own ways and words; everything shows that I am the Messiah, but they will not have Me. It is not that proof is wanting, but their hearts are steeled against all evidences. They are the enemies of God, and proved to be such by refusing what God has fully vouchsafed. Now He takes another character altogether—“Son of man.” And what may well and deeply affect us is this, it is as Son of man that He suffers on the cross. “The Son of man must suffer many things and be rejected of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day.” “The Christ” was a title in particular connection with Israel after the flesh. He was their Messiah. He belonged to no other nation. He was the promised King of the Jews. But the Jews would not have Him. Well, says the Lord, you cannot deny that I am Son of man. It is a lowly name; but, after all, the Son of man opens the way to His magnificent rights and glory over all mankind. The Son of man comes in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. The Son of man takes the kingdom over all tribes, and nations, and tongues. What leads to it all? His rejection as Messiah. He suffers as Son of man first, because it is determined, according to God's counsels and grace, to have companions with Him in the very same glory. It is through that very same fact that Christ has suffered as the Son of man, and has surely taken His glory because of it, that we shall be with Him—that all Christians will be without a spot or stain, or any such thing: all through the suffering Son of man. But if I have Him humbled, I have the glorious Son of man.

In the present case, however, the Lord does not go further than the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath. He accepts His rejection, but He pleads for His disciples before those who boasted and disputed about the Sabbath, while they were dishonoring the Lord of the Sabbath. Could they deny what David had done, and God had sealed, sanctioned, and recorded for Israel's instruction? That is the first defense. The next is that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for it. The third plea, which is rather a consequence, is, that He who was a blessed man, the Son of man, is Lord of the Sabbath. It is the glory of His person as the rejected, suffering Man: as such, and not only as God, He is above the Sabbath day—its Lord.

Chapter 138

# Remarks on Mark 3:1-6

JESUS is in the synagogue upon another Sabbath day; and there was a man there which had a withered hand, and they watched Him whether He would heal him on the Sabbath-day, that they might accuse Him. How remarkable it is that Satan gets an instinctive sense of what the Lord was going to do. Satan outwits himself in his servants by expecting good from the Lord and the Lord's people. This is a remarkable thing. Again, if you find a child of God doing something wrong, the world feels it at once. Even they have an instinctive feeling of what the child of God ought to do. They know that he has no business with the pleasures and vanities of the world. They are surprised to see a Christian there. Why is this? They have not a bit of conscience themselves. Those who have got a purged conscience or those who have got no conscience at all, are far more likely to see what is right than those that carry a bad conscience. The man who had no conscience at all offers to follow the Lord wherever He goes. There was no struggle in it, no reality, no moral purpose. It was the mere vanity of the flesh, the same kind of presumption that said, “All that the Lord hath said will we do and be obedient.” The flesh always assumes its own competency, whereas faith feels that it is only God who can work anything good and can ripen the fruits from trees of His own planting.

These men, I must repeat, who were assembled in the synagogue, expected the Lord to do good. They were looking for this; but they judged from their own thoughts what an awful thing it would be to heal on the Sabbath-day! Our Lord knew what they thought about it, but faith and love are very different things from human prudence. Mere prudence would have led a man not to have given them the smallest excuse, but grace does not mind giving people handles if they are disposed to take them. Grace is bent upon pleasing God, whether people like it or not; and Jesus therefore says to the man that had the withered hand, “Stand forth.” He gives it a publicity and stamps the character of the transaction in the most manifest manner—makes it a sign of what grace is, before them all. “He saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath days or to do evil? to save life or to kill? But they held their peace; and when be had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand, and he stretched it out, and his hand was restored whole as the other.” But those that would not let our Lord do what was good, were ready, even as He hinted Himself, to do what was evil on the Sabbath-day. They conspired to kill Him, the Lord; and to kill Him, for what? Because He brought the goodness of God before their very eyes; and they hated God. They would not have allowed it to themselves for a moment, that Jesus was even a good man; so blind and perverted is the judgment when the heart is not right! All the grace of Jesus only appeared to their eyes as the most abominable iniquity. We may well think what the heart of man is, and learn hence what our own natural thoughts and feelings are—not a whit better than theirs. The point of this second tale is not so much the passing away of mere ordinances in presence of the rejected Christ, or the supremacy of His person above the highest earthly claim; rather is it the necessary superiority of grace, as God's character and work in a world of sin and misery. How came this man with a withered hand in Israel? It was through sin somewhere, and the evident token of misery. Could

God rest where there reigned either the one or the other? Was either the manifestation of God? And what were these proud sabbatarians, these enemies of grace and of Jesus? Were they, or was He, the true witness of what God is? Not more surely were they false representatives of God's character than Jesus was the manifestation of God's power as well as of His love. Jesus showed both in that word, “Stretch forth thine hand” and by its restoration to be “whole as the other,” proved that God, the goodness of goodness, was there. And He was there, not maintaining the Pharisees in their thoughts about His law, but vindicating His own grace; for grace alone can bring blessing into a sin stricken world. This may suffice for the general teaching of the second Sabbath-day, which I think is full of instruction, as giving us the witness that our Lord bore, His patient, gracious ministry in deed as well as in word.

But a few words must now be said upon our relation to the sabbath. When God sanctified and instituted that day, whether you take the time of creation or the giving of the law, it was emphatically the seventh day and no other. No man could have been thought to honor God, had he kept the fourth or fifth, or any other but the last day of the week. Instead of this, to have kept the first day of the week would have been an act of rebellion against God. How comes the mighty change? Is it that the first day is simply substituted for the seventh day? Is this what Scripture teaches? Taking the Acts of the Apostles, we find there that the apostles and others used to go on the Sabbath-day into the synagogue of the Jews—used to teach the Jews on that day, whenever there was an open door. On the first day they used to meet with Christians to take the Lord's Supper, or at any other services which might open. There was no such thing as dropping one day for another. Had it been a substitution, they would not still have gone on the sabbath-day with the Jew, and on the first day with the Christian. Yet they did both. At first such of the Christians as had been Jews went to the synagogue; and they were at liberty to take a part in reading Scripture. If this were done now? generally, the person would be considered an intruder; but in a Jewish synagogue it was allowed and welcomed. The apostles, therefore, and others, were perfectly justified in using this liberty for the truth; they were acting in the spirit of grace. Wherever we can go with a good conscience, and without joining in anything that is contrary to the Word of God, there one may and ought to go, if it would be a service to the Lord. But where one is required to join in that or with those we know to be opposed to the will of God, how are we free to go? Are we at liberty in anything to make light of what we know to be disobedience? But in this case there was nothing of the kind; for at the synagogue they simply read the Word of God and gave leave that it should be expounded. Who could say that this was wrong? If we knew that the Scripture and nothing but the Scripture was read upon any day of the week in a so-called church or chapel, and there were perfect room left to help, should one not be delighted to go, if indeed there would not be a kind of obligation upon us? If it were a mere crowd of heathen reading the Scriptures, one might enter it, and speak with them. The door would be, I believe, open, on the Lord's part, and grace would take advantage of it.

These facts are enough, then, to show that it is a great mistake to suppose that the Lord's day is a mere substitution for the sabbath. On the contrary, the Lord's day has a far higher character than the ancient day of rest. Not that one would for a moment forget that the sabbath-day was divinely appointed. It was founded upon two great truths of God. First, it involved, and displayed, and promised, as it were, (in type at least,) creation-rest: it witnessed rest after God had finished His work of creating. The second notable connection with the sabbath day was this: it was the day of

law. On these two occasions of surpassing moment to man and Israel was the sabbath brought out by God with peculiar solemnity. The sabbath-day rests therefore upon divine ground; but it is the ground of creation and law. Is either of the two the Christian place? In no wise. Are you a mere child of man, a creature now? Then you are assuredly sinful and must be cast into bell. Are you on the ground of law? Then you are lost and condemned, for you are under the curse. But the Christian is on the footing neither of creation nor of law. On what is he then? He belongs to the new creation and stands in grace; the clean, exact contrast of the foundations of the sabbath-day. Hence it is that the first day of the week comes before us as a wholly new thing, the holy memorial of divine blessing, proper to the Christian individually and to the Church of God. And on what basis does it rest? When Christ rose from the grave with a new life to give to every soul that believes in Him, at once Israel is set aside. Risen from the dead, what more connection had He with Israel than with the Gentiles? He was entirely above them both. We meet Him there, His work done, in resurrection-life. He is found, after that, meeting with disciples only; not with Jews and Gentiles, but in the midst of the assembly or that which is the type of it. But He first meets with individual saints, Mary Magdalene and others. We find Him in the assembly on the first day of the week. And the Lord's day has this character to us now. It is first the day of Christ's resurrection, when not merely the work of redemption was done, but the work of new creation begun in mighty power. Thus the new day is founded, not upon creation, but upon redemption, and it is the expression of grace, not of law.

These are the Scriptural ways of putting the matter. Therefore is it to be maintained, not that the Christian man has got no special day in which he meets his Savior; for he has one incomparably more blessed than the sabbath of man. It is not that he has not got as good a day as the sabbath of Israel: he has an infinitely better one. He is not merely remembering a creation, which is passed away; but he has entered on a new creation. Not that he is occupied with a paradise that is lost; he looks onward confidently to that which is gained. The paradise of God is opened to him. It is not that he is following and occupied with Adam that fell; he has before his soul the Second man, the last Adam, that rose. These are our hopes. He is not, therefore, within the domain of the law that will curse him, but in the atmosphere of grace by which be is saved. This shows us why people, whether they understand the difference or not—all Christians—keep the first day and not the sabbath. They may call it the sabbath-day; but this is quite a mistake, and a grievous one. Those who view it as the sabbath may be most excellent persons, but the notion is seriously an error in doctrine and practice. It is an earthly, Jewish principle; and it is a Christian's duty, if he know better, not to spare it, however he may feel for the prejudices of the godly.

I have heard of believers who could say, There is no harm in working upon the Lord's day. Who put such a thought into their heads? Seeking gain upon the Lord's day! Why even the world shames those who do so. Christendom owns the Lord's day. They may not enter into it intelligently. It is impossible for them to appreciate its roots and fruit. But a Christian behaving more selfishly or loosely than a worldly man—what a picture! How is the Lord's day then to be kept? It is a remarkable fact that nowhere is it made into a commandment. This is not the character of Christianity. When the Lord (as in John) speaks about commandments, they are always of a spiritual nature, and not like an ordinance. Take even baptism. People may call it an ordinance, but it is a misconception. So as to the Lord's Supper. When the Lord says, “Do this in remembrance of me,” how lowering to call this a commandment! Supposing you were at the dying

bed of one who loved you better than any one else in this world; if he said, Here is my Bible, take it and keep it in remembrance of me; would you call this a commandment? Would it be the reason for keeping the Bible that you had a peremptory injunction to keep it? Such a thought would show that there was no heart there, and very little head either. I can understand a person in authority, if a child lacked feeling and sense, laying down something as a positive charge, just because the child wanted heart to do the right thing, unless it were made a matter of stringent obligation and penalty. But not so does the Lord speak to us. If you love the person who gives you the Bible to keep in remembrance of him, it is not as a mere commandment; but his heart gives you this token of his love to you, and your love keeps it, of course, and keeps it best because it is love that does it.

There are places where commandments come in most beautifully. Where in the New Testament do you hear of commandments most? In the gospels where the Lord's Supper, Christian baptism, or both, are shown out, commandments to the Christian are not, as such, mentioned. On the other hand, it is in the Gospel of John that we have the Spirit of God so full of the new commandments that the Lord lays upon us. These were the expressions of His mind. They brought in not His love only but His authority, which is blessed whenever it does come in, and the child of God loves and values both thoroughly. But if you bring in such thoughts into the Lord's Supper, what a complete misapprehension of the Lord's mind! It falsifies baptism and the Lord's Supper, to change them into things enjoined in the way of commandment. They are the most precious institutions of the Lord, the symbol and acknowledgment of the great standing facts of Christianity.

As to the Lord's day, I must again recall the remarkable manner in which it is introduced in the New Testament. There is no positive word such as, “The first day of the week thou shalt keep.” Wickedness thence infers that it is not to be kept. Some take advantage not to observe the day, because the Lord does not make it a matter of positive command. Another class take advantage of it in another form, and assume that it is the business of the Church to decide in such matters. One is human laxity, and the other the self-importance of man. The Lord's day comes before us as those that are quickened with Christ; stamped with His own special presence. Christ was, and I believe is, with His disciples in a manner peculiar to that day. I do not say that the Lord did not visit His disciples upon other days, but He was specially and pre-eminently with them gathered together on that day. This is enough for me. If I own the word of God as that which has supreme power over my soul, if I value every act of Christ as that from which I am to gather divine instruction, how can this be lost upon me? But the Holy Ghost follows it up. That day which our Lord consecrated with His own presence in the midst of His gathered saints, the Holy Ghost impresses upon His people. It is not brought out in the form of law or injunction or threat; but the Church of God, whatever other days they might meet on, took especial care to meet on this day. There was also a sweet connection between the Lord's Supper and His day. The earliest disciples took that supper every day; they seemed as if they could hardly part when they got together; and they came together as often as they could, and everything gave place to this. Not that I think that the Pentecostal state of things was the most maturely blessed. There was singular power of simplicity in them, and very wonderful manifestation of divine grace: but I have little doubt there were many souls that went on and grew and enjoyed the Lord more than they ever did on that day. It is an evil, unfounded notion, because the flesh constantly tends to draw the believer back from the first enjoyment of the Lord, to think that therefore it must be so. There is no necessity for

declension at all. There is a kind of first fervor and freshness that is very apt to be lost in the soul; but if there is real integrity of heart to the Lord, positive growth in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ will follow. And although there may be a certain kind of joy that is not so great at the end of ten or twenty years as it was on the first day of coming to the knowledge of the Savior, yet I do not believe that it is therefore a wore spiritual state or more glorifying to God. One is the blessedness of an infant; the other of a full-grown soul, more firmly, calmly, unselfishly, it may be, honoring God in its way, provided the soul, along with increase of knowledge, maintains its singleness of heart to the Lord. That is where we fail: but as far as the power of the Spirit of God goes, there is no reason why a soul should not be as happy after fifty years as at the first.

In the course of the New Testament, I think you find this very thing; the Spirit of God taking up the first day and showing that it was not merely a hasty feeling of the disciples, but a truly godly one. The Spirit of God directed it when the apostles were there, and not only leads them on, but preserves the record of the fact for us. Therefore, in Acts 20:7, we have it recorded, that so it was after the Jerusalem-state, when they went up to the temple to worship and used to break bread at home. For let me say in passing, the margin is correct; it is in contrast with worshipping in the temple. They used to pray in the temple because they had been Jews, and they took their Christian feast at home. Now it may have been always the same houses where persons went. There is no such idea as moving about from house to house, but it was at home, i.e., in a private house and not in the temple. After this state of things was past away, we hear of assembling to break bread on the Lord's day, the first day of the week. And, when we think of it, there is peculiar force and blessedness in the first day of the week being the Christian day. What is the idea of the Sabbath-day? I take the first six days to myself, to the world, to earthly things, and then at the end of it, when I may be tired of serving myself and other people, I finish up with the Lord and give the last day to Him. But now how beautifully the Christian form of the truth comes in! It is the first day. I begin with the Savior. I begin with His grace. I begin with Him that died for me and rose again. I am not a Jew, I am a Christian, and therefore, let us not forget, it is the seventh day which is the Sabbath, for the one; but the first day, which is the Lord's day, for the other; the day of Him who by His own blood, death, and resurrection has acquired a just title for my eternal and heavenly blessing. He had it in His own person; He was Jehovah, the Lord of all, before ever He came into the world; but now He is Lord on another ground—that of redemption—because He has died and risen. There is at once the open door of my blessing—of your blessing—divine blessing to every poor soul that is brought by grace to receive Him and bow to Him.

We will not dwell farther upon this subject now. I have desired to convey with simplicity the general principle of these two sabbath-days. Instead of pursuing the subjects of the chapter for the present, it seemed better to bring out the divine character of the sabbath-day and the still more blessed and equally divine character of the first day; the one being the day for the Jew, the other for the Christian. The sabbath-day will re-appear on the earth in the millennium. I mean that the seventh day of the week will be then kept by the Jews. The prophecies are plain that the sabbath of the Lord is yet to be observed. But by whom? By Israel and by the Gentiles, too; for the Gentiles by and by will be subordinate to Israel, and both on earthly ground. God's intention is to exalt Israel to the first place on the earth. Meanwhile, what becomes of Christians? They will be taken out of the earth altogether; they will be in heaven; all question of particular days will be completely at an end; we shall be in the day of eternity, we shall have entered upon the rest of God, the sabbatism

that remains. In spirit we have done so even now, because we have received Christ and eternal life in Christ. But then we shall be manifestly in the eternal day, when there will be neither first day nor last day, but one infinity in the glorified state, blessedly serving our God and the Lamb. But upon the earth, when Israel will be restored and brought back to their own land and converted by God's goodness there, will they observe the Lord's day? No; they will keep the Sabbath. If you look at Ezekiel, you will see the force of it exactly. You might be able from thence to form a map of Israel's condition in the land—it is given there so distinctly and positively, that a person might with little trouble lay down the landmarks of each tribe of Israel. Thus clear is the word of God as to the future disposition of each tribe within the borders of the Holy Land. They will have not only a glorious city and temple—the name of it, “The Lord is there;” but when that day of glory comes, they will not be as we are, keeping the day of resurrection, but the sabbath, which was a sign between the Lord and Israel. Looking at the Scriptures, you will find how often the sabbath-day is said to be Jehovah's sign to them;. and He will cause His people then to keep the sabbath-day. They will do so in a far more blessed way than ever they did; they will rest upon Christ, though they will not have the same heavenly assurance that the Christian has now. When Christ rose from the dead, He had done with the world; and we, too, in Him, have done with the world now in the spirit of our souls, and in the character of our relationship to God. “They are not of the world.” How far? “Even as I am not of the world.” Christ is the measure and standard of how far we are not of the world; and not being of the world, we have a day that bears the stamp of joy upon it. The day that Christ rose from the dead and was manifested as not of the world, that is the day for the Christian. But inasmuch as the world will be made a blessed world then, and the Lord will make it His own world, they will have a day suited for the world, the sabbath-day. Nothing can be more plain or more important, practically.

May our souls, each of us for himself, learn the truth, and, having learned it, may we be witnesses of it in word and deed! May we stand forth by His grace as those who now have nothing to do in this world but the will of God, for the glory of the name of the Lord Jesus Christ! That is the business of every soul that loves Jesus and rests upon His blood and is risen with Him.

Chapter 139

# Remarks on Mark 3:7-35

JESUS was now made manifest in the holy grace and power of His ministry, the vanquisher of Satan, and—withal subject to God, superior to ordinances even as Son of man and the asserter of God's right to do good in an evil world. Much as man might like to profit for his own interests by His power and the mercy in which it was wielded, enmity to God in Him soon displayed itself. The self-righteous and the profane take counsel how to destroy Him.

But, His hour not being yet come, Jesus withdrew with His disciples to the sea, retiring from the hypocritical malice of His enemies, but unwearied on the errand of love on which He was sent. “And a great multitude from Galilee followed him, and from Judea, and from Jerusalem; and they about Tire and Sidon, a great multitude, when they had heard what great things he did came unto him. And he spake to his disciples that a small ship should wait on him because of the multitude, lest they should throng him. For he had healed many; insomuch that they pressed upon him for to touch him, as many as had plagues.” (Ver. 7-10.) After all, how little can man arrest the stream of blessing! Till God's time arrives to yield to the cross, the stream of testimony may be diverted, but it will flow to the eternal joy of the poor and needy who bow to Jesus. In the cross it overflowed. But the Lord, intent on the best blessings for man, provides against the over-pressure of a crowd too engrossed in the relief of bodily weakness and suffering; while He refuses the testimony of the unclean spirits, compelled to bow and own His glory. (Ver. 11, 12.) It was not for such to make Him known. He received not testimony from man as such, much less from demons. What was the value of any recognition of His person unless it were of God's own working by the Spirit?

Far, however, from hiding the light under a bushel, our Master now enters on a new and momentous step in the testimony of grace. “And He goeth up into a mountain, [for ministry has its source on high, and in nowise has its sanction from the multitude,] and calleth unto Him whom He would; and they came unto Him, and He ordained (or appointed) twelve that they might be with him, and that He might send them forth to preach, and to have power to heal diseases and to cast out devils (demons).” It was an act not only new and strange to man's eye, but in truth independent of Israel and man, and most significant in every point of view. The Lord separates Himself from men to God and summons in sovereign choice whom He would; and they came. And if He caused twelve to be with Him specially and to be sent by Him, it was, as in His own case, with marked prominence given to preaching, but with title and ability to heal diseases and expel demons; and even among the apostles there was a peculiar place assigned from the first to Simon, surnamed by Him Peter, and to the sons of Zebedee, whom He surnamed Boanerges, followed by the rest, though one of them, Andrew, was certainly among the first who saw and followed by Jesus, and was the means of bringing to Jesus his own brother Simon. But there are last who become first, and the Lord, who calls and orders all, alone is wise and worthy. What a testimony to the condition of men and things around! Men, the Jews, needed to be preached to; all was out of course. It was not a question of heathen only. It was in the midst of self-satisfied Israel that the lowly Son of God thus wrought.

On their coming home, a crowd again assembled so that they could not even eat bread. But His kinsmen felt the reproach of the world and went out, at the singular tidings to lay hold on Him as if He were out of His mind! They were ashamed of a relative, mad to their thinking, who virtually condemned all the world, especially in what He had just done. It was nature, always blind in divine things.

Not so merely, “the scribes which came down from Jerusalem and said, he hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the demons He casteth out demons.” They were filled and guided of the enemy, and knew well it was no case of a madman, but of a real power which cast out demons. This their malice attributed to Satan in their effort to explain, weaken, and defame what they could not deny. The energy which dealt with Satan, in mercy to man, was owned; but if they owned it to be of God, their religious importance, their occupation, their gain was gone. And the highest of occupations is proverbially the basest of trades; and trading in souls and truth or falsehood exposes men to Satan. And the fatal die was cast. And these proud teachers, setting up to be authorized of God to reject His Son, sunk into the merest slaves of Satan. How solemnly and with what unbroken calm the Lord deals with them! “And having called them unto Him, He said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan? And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end. No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house. Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: but he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation; because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.” It was not only self-contradictory and attributing good to the evil one, but blasphemous; yea, it was to blaspheme against the Holy Spirit; and judgment, eternal judgment, is the sentence of His lips, “because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.”

The concluding scene (ver. 31-35) is the grave and fitting sequel; for therein the Lord, in the bearing of a crowd that surrounded him, renounces as it were all natural ties, were they the nearest ones of His mother and His brethren, substituting His disciples, whosoever should do the will of God, in the place of that relationship to Him from which apostate Israel was falling.

Chapter 140

# Remarks on Mark 4

The Lord Jesus had been announced as the Messiah by His forerunner, had manifested Himself fully as such, so that all were responsible from the chief authorities down to the people at large. The last chapter showed what the result would be, the crowning testimony of the Spirit rejected as well as the Son of man in person, the unpardonable sin of that rebellious and apostate race, and the formation of new relationships, characterized by the doing of God's will, in lieu of the natural ties which were now solemnly and publicly disowned of the Lord.

This opens the way for a parabolic description of the Savior's ministry, its course and results, His attitude meanwhile and at the close, as well as the circumstances of His disciples while engaged under Him. Mark does not present a full view of the dispensation of the kingdom of heaven, which has its appropriate place in Matthew. Nevertheless, both he and Luke give us in a very complete manner, each suited to the special aim of the respective gospels, the parable of the sower.

“And he taught them many things by parables, and said unto them in his doctrine, Hearken; Behold there went out a sower to sow: and it came to pass as he sowed, some fell by the wayside, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up. And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth: but when the sun was up, it was scorched; and be» cause it had no root it withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no fruit. And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred. And he said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.”

This was His work now, scattering abroad the seed of the word. There was nothing in man acceptable to God. It was a question of something new and divine, the fruit of the operation of grace. A new life there must be if fruit unto God be looked for. There was nothing like it before: not even John's preaching went out thus far and wide, and still less the law and the prophets.

But then there are divers lessons to be learned; for the action is always responsible even where it is not efficacious. The seed was good; there was no defect there; but man as such is good for nothing, and the effect, where there is not the saving work of the Spirit, comes to nothing sooner or later. Much, therefore, was, in this point of view, lost.

The first class, where all fails as to result, consists of the wayside hearers; “When they have heard,” says the Lord (ver. 14, 15) in explanation, “Satan cometh immediately and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.” This answers to the fowls of the air coming and devouring the seed that fell by the roadside. This is the direct, destructive power of the enemy which hinders the entrance of the word. It does not penetrate below the surface, never goes farther than talk, speculation, or admiration of the preacher. The moral state of death is evidently untouched, and Satan has it all his own way.

Next, we have the case of the seed that fell on stony ground, where it had but little earth, and the effect was full of instantaneous promise. “Immediately it sprung up, because it had no depth of

earth: but when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away." Here we have the flesh or nature doing its best, but proving its utter weakness. They are the persons, "who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness; and have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended." Here the work went no deeper than the affections, without reaching the conscience and convicting it before God. To take the joy of Christianity where there has been no judgment of the life and state as in God's sight, is really to slight and ignore Him altogether, making much of self. Haste in reception of the blessing is anything but the indication of a divine work. Hence the all-importance of repentance, which has been too much lost sight of through a desire to guard the freeness of grace and deliver the gospel from legal clogs. But this remedy is, at least, as dangerous as the disease which it was intended to cure. We must not weaken the solemn dealing of the Holy Ghost with the conscience. It is good, wholesome, and essential that the soul should weigh its condition in God's light and pronounce His judgment on itself; though, doubtless, repentance is of faith, and not a preparation for faith. Still there may be no kind of peace and all but despair as yet; the heart may be plowed up deeply and with scarcely more than a hope of mercy, which keeps it from utterly sinking; and the Lord in due time brings home the word, "Thy sins which are many are forgiven Thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace." Then, indeed, there is, at once, and lastingly, peace and joy in believing.

Where there is not the sounding of the heart thus morally, as in God's sight, the same haste which receives easily, gives up without difficulty in presence of fiery trial. Well, in truth, it is for the soul, thus captivated by an imaginative joy through a mere feeling of the beauty, the truth, and the attractiveness of God's most unselfish love in the abstract, which may be mistaken for its own deep enjoyment of His grace to a sin-convicted soul—well it is, if it discover the fatal error, and, after being turned aside, if it return, or rather turn in reality, to God, in divinely wrought sense of its sin and guilt, to find in Christ Jesus the only answer to its wants.

The third case is where some seed fell among thorns; but, being choked by the growing thorns, it yielded no fruit. Such are they who hear the word; but the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful, (ver. 18, 19,) a serious and not infrequent thing. May we beware! There are various forms in which the evil works, but it is worldly lust and real selfishness, in distrust of God and indifference to His interests, so that the heart gets either overwhelmed with anxiety, or active in the pursuit of present things. The very semblance of devotedness is lost, and the soul goes back, it may be with intense avidity, to the world it had seemed to leave. There are none without the need of God's guard against them all. But ye that are poor, watch against encroaching cares; ye rich, be not enticed by the deceitfulness of riches; both of you, see that ye judge "the lusts of other things!"

On the other hand, there is seed that falls on good ground, and yields fruit, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred: even there the result is checkered; for that which is fatal to the unbeliever may injure grievously the fruitfulness of the faithful. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." (Ver. 9.) It is a grave matter for every soul—grave for him that hears; and what is it for him who has no ear to hear?

"And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable. And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them

that are without, all these things are done in parables: that seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them. And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables? He explains the mind of God, not to the twelve only, but to those who were about Him. They were those within: all else were “without,” to whom all things happen in parables, a rebelling people without even a reprover now. But those within have the privilege of knowing the mystery of the kingdom: grace thus wrought, distinguishing those separated to Christ from the guilty nation, given up increasingly to judicial darkness, though it reproved them for their want of understanding. Nor was this parable hard to discern, but elementary and fundamental, a sort of introduction to those which were to follow. Nevertheless, the gracious Lord, if He rebukes, proceeds to expound it, as we have seen in verses 14-20.

But, beside saving the soul, the engrafted word issues in testimony; and this is the next and characteristic statement of the Lord in our gospel. “And he said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick? For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was anything kept secret, but that it should come abroad. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.” The word is not “seed” only to produce fruit, but a candle or lamp to shine in the witness of God's grace and truth in this dark world, even as Christ, lowly as He was and servant of all, was its perfect expression personally. Was it then come to be put under a bushel or a bed, and not rather on its own appropriate stand? It could not be: for, in truth, “There is nothing hid which shall not be manifested; neither was anything kept secret but that it should come abroad. If any man hath ears to hear, let him hear.” Thus we have the responsibility to shine in the world, holding forth the word of life; and this with the settled certainty that all must come out whether of good or evil, closing with the solemn appeal to individual conscience once more.

Again, He said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given. For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath.” It is still responsibility in the service and testimony of the Lord. We must take heed, then, what we hear: for what we receive, we are bound to communicate. Want of value for the treasure of God, want of confidence in His grace, reaps its own bitter harvest. “With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you; and unto you that hear shall more be given.” Such is the special connection here. Those only possess who give out in grace, and such shall receive yet more abundantly; while they who have not in reality, shall lose even the show they have.

The next parable, which is peculiar to our gospel, is singularly characteristic of it. It is the work of the kingdom. “So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.” The absence and apparent disregard of the Lord are supposed, not His manifestation and active interference. Harvest being come, He reaps, instead of sending His angels, as in Matthew.

This is followed by the mustard seed, (ver. 30-82) which shows its growth from a small beginning into a great development, and a system of protection on the earth even for the emissaries of the

god of this world. “And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it. But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples.”

The final scene of the chapter (ver. 35-41) sets forth the trials to which His people are exposed in their work, with Him in their midst. Their foolish, selfish unbelief is as plain as His calm supremacy over that which He only could control, and His just rebuke of their timidity, blind to the glory of His person.

Chapter 141

# Remarks on Mark 5

WE have still an unfolding of the service of Jesus. In this chapter, it is not simply the ministration of the word with its various hindrances and measures of success as far as God is pleased to work both in quickening power and fruitfulness, and this to the end. Neither is it a picture of the tempest-tossed condition of the disciples, Jesus with them, meanwhile, in their dangers, but apparently heedless till appealed to, yet all through the security of His people.

Now we have another thing, the ministry of Jesus in presence of Satan's power and the utter confessed weakness and misery of nature. An instructive lesson indeed; for not only do we see the all-conquering might of Him who was crucified in weakness, but the extent of the deliverance shown forth in him who was both set free from the thralldom of Satan and who afterward became the active witness to others of the Lord's greatness and power to others. It is not merely sin here, or the lusts of the flesh and the world. We know how continually God does save from human violence and corruption and their consequences. In Legion, however, we have rather the direct agency of Satan paramount if not there. As to this, men ordinarily are incredulous; or if they admit it ever thus acted, they would limit it to the time of Christ on earth. That there may have been a greater rising up of the enemy's power in opposition to the Son of God when here below, is a very different statement, and I believe it; but it is a most erroneous conclusion that his power was then so shattered as a matter of fact that cases of demoniacal possession were never afterward to appear. The New Testament refutes the illusion. After Christ died and rose, (and this must have gone in the direction of destroying the energy of Satan further than anything else,) He charged His servants to preach the gospel with this sign accompanying them: “In my name they shall cast out devils.” And so, in the Acts of the Apostles, we find the word confirmed thereby. Sick folks were brought, and persons vexed with unclean spirits; “and they were healed every one.” (Acts 5:16.) This was after the descent of the Holy Ghost, too; so that this mighty event, following redemption, had not of itself extinguished cases of possession. Nor was this confined to Peter or the other apostles; but similar power accompanied Philip, the evangelist, at Samaria. “For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them; and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed.” I need not dwell on such strong cases as the divining damsel of Philippi, nor that at Ephesus, (Acts 19,) which the seven sons of Sceva proved to be too real to their cost: they are well known.

The truth is, the great victory of Christ is for faith and the Church's deliverance and joy, though no doubt it was attested largely to the world in miraculous signs, as it will be applied by and by in a power which will bind Satan first, and finally crush him forever. But in the meantime the Church is the scene where Christ's victory and power are made good by the Holy Ghost. The world, so far from being made better, is proved to be farther than ever from God, as Satan is proved to be its prince and god in the cross of Christ, but for this very reason the object for the time of the fullest testimony of God's grace in the name of' the Crucified. The gospel which is sent so abundantly to gather out of the world—mark, not to bless it, but to gather out—treats the world as already condemned and only awaiting unsparing judgment when Jesus is revealed from heaven. Hence

separation from the world is the paramount duty of, and only right course for, the Christian, guilt of the blood of Jesus lies upon it: and the only escape for any soul is by faith in that blood, which, if it bring nigh to God, puts the believer in principle outside and above the world: such is the ground, and seeking, and walk of faith. Hence also the possible amelioration of the world, and of man, as such, is a practical denial of the gospel, and a deep, though in many cases an unwitting, dishonor to the Lord Jesus. No ignorance justifies the allowance of such thoughts, and the more knowledge of divine truth there is, the more guilty they are. The grace of God supposes the total ruin of the objects of grace; and the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven will execute divine vengeance on those who feel not their sin and ruin, and who despise His grace. Mark, then, describes in detail and most graphically the torment of this man in an unclean spirit. “And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains: because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones.” The solitude of death, the rejection of human restraint and influence, the restlessness and the cruelty of that which possessed him, were most conspicuous; but not less so his recognition of a superior power and glory in Jesus. “When he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him, and cried with a loud voice and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not. For he said unto him, Come out of the man, unclean spirit.”

It is remarkable by the way how the man is identified with the unclean spirit, just as now in grace the Holy Spirit blends most intimately with the believer. The man cries, “Torment me not,” though it was a question of dealing with the spirit. So he answers, “My name is Legion: for we are many. And he besought Him much that He would not send them away out of the country.”

On the other hand, it was of importance to give the distinctest evidence that the dwelling of demons in a man is as certain and real, as it is of the utmost gravity. Hence the Lord hears their petition that they should be sent into the great herd of swine which was feeding at hand. “And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirit went out and entered into the swine; and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand,) and were choked in the sea.” In some instances, the possessed had a serious disease also; in Legion's case we hear of none; but even if there had been, it would be absurd to suppose the transfer of disease to all the swine, and such an effect as their immediate frantic rush to destruction. But the expulsion of all the devils from the man, and their possession of the herd, was an opportunity to show their love of destroying when a mightier hand no longer controlled their spiteful malice.

But, alas! what is man in presence of Jesus, or the merciful power which thus rescued the victim of the devil's torture? “They went out to see what it was that was done. And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed of the devil and had the legion, sitting and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.” Yes, afraid before Him who breaks the captivity of the devil; more afraid of Jesus and His grace, than of the devil and his works! Nay, more than this. “They that saw it, told them how it befell to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine. And they began to pray him to depart out of their coasts.” Alas! alas! the swine and the devils were to them pleasanter neighbors than the Son of God. They had never sought to be free from either; they did seek to be rid of Jesus. Such is man; such the world was and is.

It is sweet to see the reverse of this in the heart of him who was emancipated. Not only was he at ease before the Savior, “sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind,” but all his affections were towards Him, and where Jesus went, his desire was to follow. “So when Jesus was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil, prayed Him that he might be with Him. “Howbeit, Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.” The spiritual feeling that knit his soul to Jesus was of God, and would be gratified and satisfied in due time. But the grace of the Lord thought of others in this miserable scene of the enemy's wiles, to whom He would bless the testimony of him that had known so painfully the power of Satan. His “friends,” therefore, rather than strangers, were to hear the message. “Tell them,” said the Savior, “how great things the Lord hath done for thee.” “And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him; and all men did marvel.” And so may we, not only at the great things done, but at the simple faith displayed. “The Lord,” for him, was “Jesus.”

We have, next, the Lord going at the call of one of the rulers of the synagogue to heal his sick daughter, lying at the point of death. (Ver. 21-24.) On the way, and in the throng, His garment is touched by a woman which had an issue of blood twelve years. Here, too, man was unavailing. Instead of finding relief from those most skilled, she had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse.” What a picture of human woe! and how common! “But she said, If I may touch but His clothes, I shall be whole;” and she was right, as faith always is. “Straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up: and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague.” But even conscious assurance is not enough for the grace of God. She had stolen, as it were, the blessing; she must have it, a free and full gift from the Lord, face to face. “And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes? And his disciples said unto him, Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me? And he looked round about to see her that had done this thing. But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him and told him all the truth.” Blessed Lord, it is good somehow, anyhow, if it be Thy hand that does it, to be brought to tell Thee all the truth! For of a truth, it is but to have the cup filled of Thee to overflowing. “And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole: go in peace and be whole of thy plague.” Was the blessing less now that the gain of the believer was countersigned of the Lord? Was not the deed of power enhanced by the gracious words that sealed it hers with His own signet?

Such is now the blessing that faith seizes while the Lord is on the road to heal the sick daughter of Judah. And if evil news met the ruler's ear, while Jesus was crowning His mercy to her who touched Him, how swift is His goodness to shield a feeble heart from despair! “Be not afraid: only believe.” It was not troubling the Master, but His proper work. With chosen witnesses, pillars of the circumcision, He goes, turns out the vain weepers who scorned His words of comfort, and in presence of the parents and His companions wakes the damsel from the sleep of death, to their great amazement. (Ver. 35-43.) So at the end of the age He will raise up Israel.

Chapter 142

# Remarks on Mark 6:1-29

THERE are three divisions I would make in the portion before us, in order to examine it more conveniently: first, the unbelieving rejection of Christ in “His own country;” secondly, the mission of the twelve; thirdly, the power, yet alas! fatal weakness withal, of an unpurged conscience, as illustrated in king Herod's behavior to John the Baptist.

First, the unwearied Servant comes into His own country, followed by His disciples. “And when the sabbath-day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him, were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at Him.”

But what a lesson! The power of His teaching was owned, and the mighty works done by His hands; but even the despised Nazarenes were stumbled at the lowly Lord—the lowly Servant—of all. The meanest of mankind is not free from the same spirit of the world which blinds the highest. In truth the god of this world blinds all that are lost. The fact may come out more conspicuously in the princes of this world, where resources cannot help them to discern and proclaim the Lord of glory; but the universality of the moral blindness is shown in such conduct as that of the men of Nazareth to the Lord Jesus. That the true heir to the throne of David, to speak of His regal glory, should be a “carpenter” was and is too much for flesh and blood. And yet, when it is believed, the grace of His humiliation is as striking, as the need for it was urgent and absolute, if God was to be glorified and man delivered according to His mind. It is clear also that the grace of all He became and endured is only rightly seen by those who see in Him the Son—He is the true God and eternal life.

Here, however, even as prophet He is rejected; and Jesus bows to it as the common lot of those who labor for God in a world which knows them too well to pay them honor, and yet knows them not, as it knew Him not. “A prophet,” said He, “is not without honor but in his own country and among his own kin, and in his own house.” And as thus He speaks, so He acts, or rather does not act. For “he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them.” How admirable the perfection of His service! It seems to me that nothing displays it more than such ways as these: “He could there do no mighty work.” Yes, He, the Creator of all, the Sustainer of all, could do nothing mighty there. He was the ever dependent and obedient man who had come to do not His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him. “All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made;” yet He could there do no mighty work. Blessed Lord! greater art Thou to me in Thy weakness thus, than in Thy strength, whereby all things consist. And yet there was the gracious exercise of healing as far as was morally consistent with the people and the place in God's eyes. For He did lay His hands upon a few sick folk and healed them. “And he marveled,” adds the Spirit of God, “because of their unbelief.” This did not, however, hinder His testimony in the neighborhood; for He “went round about the villages

teaching.”

Secondly, He called the twelve and began to send them forth by two and two, and gave them power over unclean spirits, and commanded them that they should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only, &c. I do not think the importance of the Lord's sending out His servants, whether the twelve or others, is adequately estimated by most. It was not yet, it could not be till His death and resurrection, that their mission could have its full character of world-wide grace. Still it is a most precious principle, this sending out of His messengers with a message of grace; as it was a new thing in the earth. And what a tale it told of the real, though hidden, glory of Him who sent them! For who could thus commission, and qualify with power over unclean spirits, save one who was consciously divine? And what injunctions for His ambassadors! “No scrip, no bread, no money in their purse, but shod with sandals, and not two coats.” Truly His kingdom and His service were not of this world: else would the Lord have provided otherwise. Yet they went forth with the fullest sense of authority. “And he said unto them, In what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye depart from that place.” How wise and careful of the dignity of His messengers, as well as watchful lest the message should be compromised by the self-seeking of those charged with it! “And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them.” That He was the Son of God, the Savior, did not lessen but aggravate the criminality of those who despised Him in their persons. “Verily I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment than for that city.” The substance of this preaching was that men should repent. There is no divine work in the sinner without repentance. There may be a sort of belief of no value without it: indeed nothing is more common in Christendom. But it is not so where the Holy Spirit is at work, who plows up the conscience as well as brings home to the heart the good seed that may be sown. External signs accompanied them; for they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.

The third point to be noticed now is the solemn history of conscience in king Herod; who, on hearing the fame of Jesus, imputed the miracles to John the Baptist, as risen from the dead. There was the usual variety of opinion and uncertainty among men: but Herod's bad conscience made him positive that it was John whom he had beheaded. What a torment even here it is, unless in the yet more desperate case of those who are religiously seared! the Holy Spirit then turns aside to give the account of the circumstances, and to explain why Herod was thus uneasy and perplexed. The wicked Herodias, whom the tetrarch had guiltily married, though she was his brother's wife, had sought her revenge in vain. For, spite of his censure, John stood high in Herod's esteem as a just and holy man; and Herod, having heard him, did much and listened gladly. But there the fair show ended. Satan found the way to shut him up to a course from which there was no escape, save by repentance and the acknowledgment of his sins. It grew out of a royal revel where Herodias' daughter danced to the content of Herod and his guests, and drew from the king the rash promise, with an oath, to give her what she asked to the half of his kingdom. Now was the opportunity of the vindictive adulteress, who instructed her daughter to demand at once the head of John the Baptist upon a dish. And the king, (whose fear for John had no higher source than nature,) while very sorry, yields for the sake of his character before his guests, immediately sends one of the guard to dispatch the prisoner, and presents his head to the damsel, as she also does to her mother. What an evident net of Satan's laying for the feet of one who was not without

feeling! and how powerless is conscience, where God's servant is in one scale and the poor plighted honor of man in the other! How simple it all is in God's presence! The devil's promises are better broken than kept.

Chapter 143

# Remarks on Mark 6:30-56

THE latter part of the chapter, as well as the former, is singularly full of instruction for the service of the Lord. First of all, we had the Lord's own portion. Not only was He refused in His title of King or the Messiah, but despised as God's servant. They heard His doctrine and were astonished at His wisdom no less than His power; but there was one thing that outweighed all in their minds— “Is not this the carpenter?” and so He was. It appears, hence, that our Lord really thus wrought. He was not only the son of a carpenter, but a carpenter Himself. The Creator of heaven and earth spent a considerable part of His sojourn in this world in this lowly labor day by day.

Our Lord, accordingly, shut up from doing great deeds, turns to an unobtrusive work. Although debarred by their unbelief from rendering a conspicuous testimony to His glory, He did lay His hands upon “a few sick folk and healed them.” There was no such thing in our Lord as mortified feeling; He turns calmly from the scorn that hindered His mighty works there to occupy Himself with cases few and inconsiderable. Can we overlook, even in this, Christ's perfection as the servant?

The next thing we saw was the sending out of the twelve. There was the combination of two elements in them, hard to reconcile. They were to be placed in circumstances that would leave them open to the contempt of every one. They were to have no money in their purse, not even two coats, not shoes but sandals: they were to be without scrip or provision for the way. What could seem to be more helpless or more dependent than their condition? Yet none the less they, being sent forth as the messengers of the King, were invested with His own power. One remarkable proof of it was the power given them over unclean spirits. “He began to send them forth by two and two [there was association in their service] and gave them power over unclean spirits.” And so sent out, not only did they preach that men should repent, but they cast out many devils and anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them. The paramount thing in the mind of the Lord was the dealing with the power of Satan. There is much unbelief among men as to this. The world has grown old in material inventions; and as times pass over the earth, men get so accustomed to the power given to man over external nature, that they are apt by these very circumstances to forget and deny the unseen power and wiles of Satan. It was, therefore, of great importance that the disciples, who were called and sent by God's authority, in going forth through the land of Israel, should be clothed with the divine power, as far as it was communicable for Christ's sake.

But there is another thing, too, which is of great. importance for the service of the Lord. As they called men to repent, so there is an astonishing answer in the conscience. The word reaches the heart even where it is least likely, as in the case of Herod, who is the instance the Spirit of God gives us here. Where men do not repent, still there is conscience, and the word does not fail to probe it. They may not heed the warning, they may turn from it, they may try to forget it and may succeed for a time in stifling all right feeling: but the barb is there, and although, as in a strong man, the effect of a wound may not be palpable for a time, still when the day of weakness comes,

then the old wound re-appears, and what youthful vigor enabled him to slight may give increasing trouble till the whole scene is closed. We have in Herod the history of a soul that had his conscience reached by the word of God, but nothing more. We know well that there is such a thing as resisting the Holy Ghost on the part of unconverted men; it is the commonest thing possible, where God's word is known, though it is not only resisting the word, but the Spirit of God. Therefore it was that Stephen said, when addressing the Jews, “Ye do alway resist the Holy Ghost, as your fathers did, so do ye.” The Holy Ghost so far uses the word as to touch the conscience; and whosoever refuses this, resists both the word and Spirit of God. In Herod's case it was only John's testimony, but it was a mighty one, as far as the conviction of sin was concerned. John the Baptist did not pretend to bring in redemption; his main object was to point to One who was coming. But there was a mighty work produced through him in leading men to the sense that they could not do without the Lord. Thus he brought before men that all was ruined in the sight of God, and that so far from things being prosperous or happy, the ax was lying at the root of the tree; judgment was at the door. And so it was: only that, first of all, the judgment that man deserved fell, by grace, upon Christ. That was the unlooked-for form in which divine judgment took place then in the cross. It was a most real dealing of God; but it was a judgment for the time stayed from falling upon the guilty, which fell upon the guiltless Son of God, and thereby redemption is accomplished. The whole work of Christ for the Church of God has come in during the time of man's—Israel's—being left by the Lord to himself. It is the time of God's long-suffering, the world being permitted to follow its own way in the rejection of the gospel as much as in the crucifixion of Christ. This is what the world is doing now, and soon to consummate, when judgment will come. Thus, conscience is shown in a man that felt what was right and heard the word gladly for a time. But there was no repentance, no submission of his soul to the conviction that for a moment passed before his mind of what was true, just, and of God. The consequence was, that circumstances were so managed by the enemy, and permitted of God, that Herod should evince the worthlessness of natural conscience even as regards the very person whom he had owned as a prophet. But at any rate all was lost now: and a guilty hour at a banquet, where the desire to gratify one as bad or worse than himself, ensnared his weakness and involved his word. There is the end of natural conscience. Herod orders what he would not have conceived it possible for him to do. But we little know the power of that unclean and subtle adversary, the devil. It is just the counterpart of what the Lord was doing in grace by His disciples—He gave them power over the unclean spirit. Men repent, and the power of Satan must be broken in order to this. Here, on the contrary, was a man who knew he was in an evil case; but the power of Satan was never really broken. There was no going to God in the sense that he could not deliver himself. The result was that Herod went on till in this evil hour the terrible deed was done; all was over, and he, no doubt, given over to despair or indifference. Had there been the sense of the grace which is in Christ, there was grace enough to have blotted out that or any sin: but the heart that refuses to bow in conscience to God, never acknowledges the grace there is in Christ.

Having thus, again, a little sketched the truth in this part of the chapter, as regards the principles of God for guiding in service, we may pass on. The apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught. Now there was great simplicity in this, and a most wholesome thing it is for anyone engaged in the Lord's work to go to Jesus with what has been done and taught. It is well to examine, and perhaps rehearse; but to whom can we do it with safety but to Jesus? There is such a thing as going out in service, but

there should be the returning and telling Jesus all that we have had to do or say. There may be occasions where it is well and comely to cheer others with the wonderful works of God; but there is no time where it is not well and wholesome to go to the Lord about it. In His presence there is no danger of being puffed up and thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought to think. There we learn how little we are and the defectiveness even of that which we most desire for the edification of one another. Our Lord thoroughly shows His interest and sympathy in this, and says to them, “Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat.” Well for us if we needed thus to rest more; that is to say, if our labors were so abundant, our self-denying efforts for the blessing of others were so continual, that we could be sure that this was the Lord's word for us, “Come ye into a desert place and rest awhile!” I am afraid that sometimes we rather need to be stirred up to feel what a claim souls have upon us, what we owe not merely to the saints of God to seek their blessing but to every creature, for we are debtors to all. Having such a Christ as we have, we ought to feel that we have riches enough for every. thing—riches of grace in Him, not merely for the saints of God, but for the poorest of sinners. The twelve had so discharged their mission that our Lord could tell them thus to turn aside and rest awhile. There was more than rest for the body: with Him what repose for the soul! It is a good thing at times to be thus alone, and yet not alone—alone from man that we may be with the only One who can give us fresh strength and, at the same time, adequate lowliness for the better discharge of our service, whatever it may be.

They depart then into a desert place by ship privately. Now it is the Lord's ways of goodness that I think so well worthy of note in this place. We do not make enough of the Lord; we are not quite simple in our thoughts of His interest with us in all the details of circumstances day by day; we do not always think of Him as a real, living, tender friend occupied with us and intent upon our good and even deigning to care for our bodies, as well as our souls. Here is the proof of it as to the twelve.

“And the people saw them departing, and many knew him, and ran afoot thither out of all cities, and outwent them, and came together unto him. And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things.” This is exceedingly sweet, because His object in retiring was to have given His disciples leisure: they had not time, so much as even to eat, and the haste of the multitude was really an intrusion; and yet the Lord at once turns to the crowd in love. Here again there is no such thing as the slightest expression of disturbed feeling. There was no coldness shown to the intruders. On the contrary, He enters upon this fresh service with the same alacrity that He had turned aside with His disciples in order to give them a little rest by the way. More than that, He looks with compassion upon the multitude “because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things.” He, at least, knew no leisure; at any rate, where did He ever take advantage of it, although there was infinitely more to try and weary Him as a man than ever fell upon any other? At once He turns to teach these needy men that which they little knew they needed.

“And when the day was now far spent, his disciples came unto him and said, This is a desert place and now the time is far past. Send them away, that they may go into the country round about and into the villages and buy themselves bread; for they have nothing to eat.” Oh! do we not see the reflection of ourselves here? “Send them away.” Was that all the disciples could think or say? Had

they not profited more by the past experience of their Master? Had they not profited by the grace the Lord had been for so long a time displaying towards poor, shepherdless Israel? “Send them away.” Send them away from Jesus! Without refreshment from Jesus! This was what even disciples could propose to the Lord Himself. Is not this what we learn of our own hearts? Do we not continually discover our little ability to count upon grace and to turn its boundless resources to meet present difficulties When we have seen the Lord's wave, we may admire them; but faith is especially shown in knowing how to avail ourselves of what is in Christ for the want that is actually before us. Here the lack was in others; but what a lack in themselves, when the unbelief of disciples thus vents itself to the Lord? “Send them away that they may go and buy bread. But he answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat.” It is always so that He acts— “give.” He loves a bountiful giver: He was so Himself and He was now about to open the hearts of the disciples to feel aright. It was not only what was needed in an authoritative mission throughout the land of Israel, when the kingdom was going to be set up; but now it was a heart for the poor, despised, and wretched in Israel. The Lord would give the disciples His own sympathies. He would make them know what they themselves lacked—teach them to feel what there is in Christ, even for the men who had no feeling for His wants, no consideration for the Lord in the retirement that He had sought. But this does not change the grace that is in Christ. Whatever may be the fault of another, we have to look well to it that it brings out from us the patient wisdom of grace. It is the hardest thing we have to learn. Here the disciples break down; but it was in the presence of One who only turned it to the account of leading them to a perception of His own grace. This is the great point of the whole chapter; it is the fitting of others for the service on His own approaching and entire rejection.

Here we have not only adequate power, but adequate affection. Power over the unclean spirit we have seen; moral power through the word, even over a natural man's conscience, had been proved; but now we have the perception of the Lord's feelings, His compassion for a multitude, even though unbelieving. There are many who truly believe in the love the Lord has for the Church; but they do not at all understand the deep pity He has toward poor man as such. Now this the Lord was showing here. It is not a question merely of believers, but we have persons who, it is plain, were merely seeking to get what they could from Jesus; following Him on their own account—not for life eternal, not because of their sins, nor was it for the miracles even that they had seen, but for what He could give them for this life. The Lord did not refuse even this, but the disciples knew nothing of this grace. They had authority conferred on them; they had proved communicated power along with this; they had come and told the Lord what they had done and taught. But where was their affection answering to the Lord's? That they had it not, is betrayed by their words to Him. The Lord had now to communicate His own thoughts and feelings to them; and He does it after this sort. “He answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat.” They do not need to go: they do not need to buy. What Jesus tells them is to give: “Give ye them to eat.” “And they say unto him, Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread and give them to eat?” This is another working of unbelief in them. Not that they had the least thought of going and buying; but they wanted to put their insuperable difficulty before their Master. But what do we need such an one as Christ for, if not for that which we cannot even touch? The greater the difficulty, the more suited is the occasion for the Lord to display Himself. He is Lord of all; and if He is, what can a difficulty be, but only an appeal to His power, and which shows it was ever beyond measure. “Give ye them to eat.”

“He saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? Go and see. And when they knew, they said, Five and two fishes.” This is a feature that I think it well to notice, because it is important practically. The Lord loves, however truly working in His own power, to make use of that which we might despise in human wisdom. Moses may plead his impotence; but the Lord will make use of that man of slow speech. If he employ Aaron too, He will put the sentence of death upon everything that flesh leans upon. So now our Lord draws upon the resources that were already in the hands of the disciples. Not that such things as they had could have availed without Him; but that He is ever with us, in one way or another, ever ready to work—and bless according to His almighty power and goodness.

When they bring word that there were five loaves and two fishes, doubtless it was with the conviction that no answer could be less satisfactory. How wise they were in thinking it a vain thing that such a multitude could be fed by anything that they possessed! But it is the way of God to make use of the weak and little, as truly as to abase that which is self-confident of its greatness. And as the Lord was about to act upon this very principle with the twelve, He was now teaching them the same as to the feeding of the multitude then around them. It was the exerting His own creative power on that which was utterly contemptible, at least in human eyes. The five loaves and two fishes seemed to be absurd for such a multitude. But what was it not in the hands of Jesus?

But He does another thing. He commands that they should sit down by companies upon the green grass, and they sat down in ranks by hundreds and fifties. The Lord is not unmindful of outward order and decorum in His arrangements. He was about to work a stupendous miracle, and He arranges the people carefully, bringing before their eyes the conviction of what there was in Him for the need of man. He was really there, the promised One, that was to feed His poor with bread. Where were they that they had never thought of Him, that they did not count upon such love as this for a still greater want than the bread that perishes for the body? But it was the Lord acting from His own goodness, and in no respect even according to the mind of a disciple.

The multitude was unprepared for the work; but the disciples were just as blind. They no more expected what was coming than the multitude. Our being believers is no proof at all we shall have faith for any particular exigency before us. Present dependence upon God is necessary to give us a just thought of the Lord's ways; otherwise we may be as foolish as if we had no faith at all; and we shall be sure to be so, if we do not measure the difficulties by Jesus. Bring Him in and the difficulty is at an end.

But, further, the Lord employs the disciples between Himself and the multitude. How continually we find the Lord returning good for their evil, putting honor upon the poor disciples who so little appreciated His feelings of love and compassion! He does not distribute the bread directly, as if He made no account of His servants. He meant to show His disciples that the love of Christ delights to work in human channels. The same unbelief, which on one side sees nothing in Jesus, on the other is apt to overlook and deny the use Jesus makes of suited instruments to dispense His blessings in this world. But as it was Jesus alone who was the source of it all, the disciples were to be the channels, both learning and teaching what grace could do to them, and through them. The disciples, accordingly, take the bread from the hands of Jesus; and thus it is that the supply is provided for the vast multitude. It was the Lord's way then, and it is His way now. The wonders of His grace are not as it were all reserved for His own exclusive hand: for although He alone is the

constant, active spring of grace, yet at the same time He works by whom He will, and He puts often the most honor upon the least comely member; for as we know it is in nature the most vital and essential member that is the most guarded and the least apparent, so it is in His body the Church: “He that glorieth let him glory only in the Lord.” He Himself was among them as “he that serveth.” It is in no way the Lord showing the worth of this one or that one, but displaying His own grace and power according to His own sovereign will. But the disciples must learn that, if they were rebuked, and their unbelief made most apparent, the Lord's grace was not altered towards them; may His grace could employ them immediately afterward to be the distributors, to the famishing multitude, of the bread of His providing. What grace toward them!

The whole scene is most instructive, and particularly so as giving us to see the manner of His own service, and the failure of others. “When he had taken the five loaves and two fishes He looked up to heaven, and blessed, and break the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided he among them all. And they did all eat and were filled. And they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments and of the fishes. And they that did eat of the loaves were about five thousand men.” The very fragments far exceeded the provision they had at first, but even the fragments were not to be forgotten or despised. What simplicity of care, even where He insured that there should be the testimony before their eyes of the miraculous character of the whole transaction!

The next scene has also its lesson for us. “Straightway he constrained his disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side before unto Bethsaida, while he sent away the people. And when he had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray.” It was one of the great signs of the Messiah that He would satisfy His poor with bread, as you may remember in Psa. 132. The Lord ought to have been thus recognized; but He was not. Accordingly, He sent them away. The people, instead of being gathered to the Lord as to their King, have been for a season, at least, put aside. He has dismissed the multitude, because of their unbelief; He has departed from Israel for a time, and gone on high to take the place of intercession. And while the Lord is there, the disciples are exposed to all the storms and fluctuations of this lower scene. “And when even was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and he alone on the land. And he saw them toiling in rowing, for the wind was contrary unto them.” It is a little picture of what was to be accomplished by and by. The Lord is gone on high now; He is not with the multitude, neither is He in bodily presence with the disciples. He has left the Jews for the time, He is also away from the disciples. They have their work to do, but apparently they make no progress. But in the midst of the contrariety of all things around them, He comes again. “About the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them. But when they saw him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and they cried out. For they all saw him and were troubled. And immediately he talked with them, and saith unto them, “Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid. And he went up unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased.”

Then we find that, having come to shore with the disciples, the Lord accomplished all that was spoken. “When they were come out of the ship, straightway they knew him. And ran through that whole region round about, and began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard he was. And whithersoever he entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch, if it were but the border of his garment; and as many as touched him were made whole.” It is a little picture of what will be the consequence of

the Lord's return to the earth. When the Lord and His disciples rejoin the shore that He had left, when He comes back again, whatever there is of human woe, wretchedness, weakness, sickness, in this world, all will flee before the presence and touch of the Son of God. He will then and thus manifest His goodness. Accordingly what we have here is the consummation and triumph of all ministry, in His own ministry. The disciples are shown in their weakness meanwhile, but encouraged by the prospect of His return in power and glory, when all shall be made good that the Lord has ever promised, and that He has led His people to expect in this world. It is a good thing for our souls to realize that while our Lord is away, we are not to be discouraged by difficulties—not cast down if the wind is contrary and ourselves toiling in vain, yet not in vain. It is He who has sent us across that troubled sea; it is He who meanwhile intercedes for us; and as surely will He come to us; and when He does return, all that is lacking He will supply, all that hinders will be removed, and then will the universe duly, fully exult in its Lord, our Lord and Master, when He shall be exalted from sea to sea and from the river unto the ends of the earth. This is what the final circumstances of the chapter typify. It may cheer us in any little service that is before us now. It is instruction for the service of the Lord, beginning with His own rejection in shame and ending with His glorious return, when all sickness and misery disappear before His presence.

Chapter 144

# Remarks on Mark 7:1-13

In this chapter the scene is totally changed. It is no longer the accomplishment of promise, nor merely the retiring before the oppressive cruelty of him that was then in the place of outward authority. We have here the Lord morally dealing with, and judging, the religious chiefs of Jerusalem who, in their confidence and pride, undertook to blame His disciples and Himself with them. It was themselves, however, who had made the word of God of none effect through their tradition. Thus we are on ground of peculiar importance at this present time, and indeed at all times in Christendom. For there never has been a time in which this danger has not existed ever since the word of God was given, partially or completely, to the Church. Traditions began to multiply apace when the apostles passed away. As the word of God, more particularly the New Testament, is not in the form of mere command, there was peculiar openness in Christendom to the influence of tradition. In the Jewish system, all was ordered by rule. It was the natural and obvious fashion of the Jewish economy that God regulated all their intercourse, gave positive injunctions as to the whole policy, left scarcely anything open to His people, but prescribed their private and public obligations, whether individual, family, or social; their religious duties as well as their political. In fact everything was made a matter of plain commandment, and yet even in that system, so inveterate is the heart of man in departing from the living God, that even there we find the leaders of the Jews taking away the people from these expressed commandments of God by putting them under the authority of their own tradition. How comes it that there is this continual tendency in the heart of man and specially of those that take the place of guides of God's people, no matter when or where you look at it, to supplant His word by their tradition? It is because tradition gives importance to man, leaves room for superiority to self. The consequence is that not merely the religious chiefs are thus fond of gratifying their self-importance by imposing rules of their own, but the people love to have it so. This painful fact is brought out in all the word of God. Thus, throughout the Old Testament not only were the priests ever rebellious, but the people also: man never was subject to God, but has continually departed from God, in whatever way He might be trying him. This then came to an issue between the Lord and the Jewish religionists.

“Then came together unto him the Pharisees and certain of the scribes which came from Jerusalem.” They had the highest authority as far as the earth was concerned; they came from the holy city of ancient religion, clothed with the credit of divine law and authority. “And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashed hands, they found fault.” Now there was clearly nothing moral in this—nothing that could touch the soul or that affected a man's relationship with God; but it was contrary to their traditions, and therefore they found fault. It is easy to conceive that this tradition may have had a pious origin. There may have been in the minds of these leaders an idea of keeping up before the people the importance of personal purity; for washing the hands would be a very natural sign that God looks for and insists on holiness in the works of His people. At any rate such was the custom expected from every professor, whether from that idea or any other of presenting to the minds of the Israelites their duty in the things of God. They may have pleaded indirectly. No doubt it was drawn from the word of God, because

there were certain washings which men always practiced. Thus, the priests were to wash the sacrifices presented to God, as they had been themselves washed at the time of their consecration, and had always to wash hands and feet before entering the tabernacle. It seemed a reasonable and meet inference that this rite, at once simple and expressive, ought to be observed by every man among the holy people in his ordinary dealings day by day. Who in fact could have the necessity of personal purity kept too much before his eyes? But there was precisely where man was in fault. The great principle of the word is that, God being infinitely wise and holy, where He does not lay down any positive injunction of His own, woe to him who infringes liberty. Man, on the contrary, takes advantage of the opening, and, where God has not laid down a law, he makes one of his own. But God has given no warrant thus to legislate; and half the disputes and schisms that have occurred in Christendom are due to this cause. The haste of man to solve a difficulty has recourse to such measures, and the desire of man to enforce his own will where God, instead of laying down anything positive, has left things as a test for the heart, and therefore has purposely abstained from a command. It cannot be surprising that what is thus introduced is almost always evil; but supposing the thing imposed might seem ever so desirable, the principle is always faulty.

I desire to press the immense importance of giving no authority to any rule except the word now written. To hear men of God, to be helped by servants of God, to value an exposition of the truth, is all well, but is a very different thing from an authoritative canon or creed which men impose as binding upon conscience. It is never right to accept thus what comes from man. God alone and His word bind the conscience. His servants may teach, but if they teach aright, it is the truth of God. They bring the word of God to bear upon the conscience, and therefore nobody that understands the place of God's servant, would wish to create a divided allegiance by imposing his own thoughts and words. His proper function as servant, is rather to maintain the undisguised supremacy of God's word, so that the conscience may be put under a positive and increased sense of obligation. Whenever the work is well done, and blessed by God's grace, further question is at an end. This is the true aim of such ministry as Scripture recognizes. The truth is sufficiently brought out that men's consciences should be called into action. The Spirit of God gives divine force to it, so that souls are left without excuse. Even in the preaching of the gospel every unconverted man is under the responsibility of receiving the testimony of God, but still more in divine things, after we have received the truth and have discovered the inestimable place and value of the word of God. It is of all importance that our souls should hold fast and firm, that, whatever the helps imparted through man, whatever the light of God that shines through the vessels He employs, still it is God's light, God's truth; nothing else than God's word ought to be acknowledged as authoritative.

Assuredly the business of a Christian, of a servant of God now, is not to stand between man and God, which was the position of a priest in Judaism, but to put away the obstacles which act as veils, that man may face the truth, and, indeed, God Himself, without being permitted to escape; so that the light that comes from God may shine full upon the conscience and the heart of man. This does not suit man left to himself; it displeases the world, which prefers a distant reserve; and these Pharisees and scribes, though they came from Jerusalem, were really of the world. Hence they reasoned in divine things, as men do now, from principles that are true enough in worldly things: the word was not mixed with faith in their hearts. No doubt, in the outward world, God has left man to himself in great measure, save that He keeps a certain providential check upon him.

Government of the earth is committed to human hands, and man comes under the responsibility of exercising or observing that government here below. But still he is left to judge according to the means God has given. There may be certain landmarks God has laid down; for instance, the sacredness of human life, which God asserted before He called out Abraham, and which is a principle as obligatory now as ever it was. “Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.” This was what God instituted at the time of the flood; but with such-like slight exceptions, man is left free to arrange, according to the circumstances, the various punishments and rewards in this world. But in divine things, the main point is God dealing, by His word and Spirit, with conscience, as immediately subject to Himself. And hence it is, that everything which intercepts the direct application of the Scripture from God Himself to His children is the most positive injury. It is man stepping into the place of God. This at once furnishes a sure test for deciding what is of God and what is not. If you speak to me of helps for understanding the word of God, these exist and are given of God. Such is the object of ministry, which is the service that God has instituted for the purpose of giving effect to His word. But none the less is His word the means of dealing with sinners and of building up His children. True, it is the service of God in His word, not a rival or co-ordinate authority.

On the other hand, tradition is essentially different. It proceeds not from God, but from man. We find the attempt to introduce it even in the New Testament, and while the Apostle Paul was in the midst of his labors. The church at Corinth shows, perhaps, the first attempt of the enemy to insinuate human tradition. They had allowed women to preach in the public assembly, which the apostle denounces. There was a good deal to be argued for it. People might have reasoned—if women had gifts, why should these not be used If gifts were possessed suited to bring out the truth of God, why not turn these to the utmost account in the Christian assembly? The word of God positively interdicts this. It allows that a woman might prophesy; as for instance, the four daughters of Philip, the evangelist, no doubt, did prophesy. The question is, where and how? In the first place, they were not to prophesy to men, because that would be an inversion of God's order. A woman is not suffered to teach or govern. Consequently, while they were allowed to bring out whatever light they had, even of the highest character, yet it was to be done in subjection to the word of the Lord. A man, as the apostle shows, is the glory of God; whereas the woman is put under subjection. Man has the official place of superiority to the woman. It could, therefore, never be supposed that God would give a gift to a woman in such sort as to set aside, in so important a manner, the difference established from the beginning, and sanctioned and insisted upon in the New Testament. In the next place, within the public assembly, woman's speaking in any form, even asking a question, is forbidden. They are to ask their husbands at home. It was this very thing that drew out the apostle's condemnation of tradition. The Corinthians seem to have allowed and contended for liberty to be given to these gifted women to speak in the assembly. But the apostle takes them to task, and urges that if any of them were spiritual or prophets, they would be subject to the word of the Lord. On the other hand, if any of them were ignorant let them be so. What a blow to the would-be-wise speculators to hear their theories treated as mere and willful ignorance! “If any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant.” These high-flown men were really ignorant of the mind of God.

This, it is evident, is exceedingly important, because it puts us in presence of the great truth which the Church of God has forgotten and trampled under foot in all ages. The word is not to come out

from ourselves. We want the word that comes from God to the Church; and not what the Church, so-called, pretends to utter. The Church never teaches nor rules. That which comes from man or from the Church has no authority whatever: on the contrary, the Church is called to be in the place of subjection to Christ; she is not in the place of the Lord, but of the lady. Jesus is Lord; He alone commands the Church, which is put by God in the place of the woman, as subject to the Lord. This at once becomes a very weighty difference in practice. For we can all remember the day when we thought that human rules in the things of God were right and necessary. It seemed to us as if the ecclesiastical state could not be held together without human regulations. We judged that the present state differs so from what existed of old, that it is impossible to apply the word of God in its integrity to the Church now, and, therefore, new rules must be introduced to suit our days. In admitting such a principle, you do two things—You dishonor the word of God, for the word of God is not a dead letter, like man's: the word of God is a living word now as then. Every Christian believes this for the salvation of his soul, but not for his walk and conduct every day; and more particularly not for the worship and government of the Church. Is it not, on the very face of it, a mischievous principle to allow the word of God to be a living authority in one thing and to treat it virtually as obsolete and dead in another? Is it not venturing near the fatal slide of infidelity I do not say that the persons who speak and act thus are infidel; but it is an infidel principle to consign to the grave any part of God's word; to maintain that all that part which dwells so largely upon the union and worship of Christians, the ways in which they are to walk together in the confession of their Lord, and in common subjection to the word and Spirit of God—that all this is out of date and no longer obligatory on the saints. But you do another dishonor by such a course; for you not only dethrone the word of God from its supremacy in the conscience, but you exalt the commandments of man; you slight the true authority and recognize a mere usurper. It is evident I must have something that governs me. If I am not simply subject to the word of God, I am sure to bow to the word of man. Some may prefer their own thoughts, if they think their own wisdom is superior to their neighbors. But the general form taken is not so much an individual showing self-sufficiency, but rather the union of a number who encourage one another to join in this race of independence, which involves disobedience to the word of God. We are living at a time when Satan does all to lower Scripture, and when God has brought out its value and pressed its practical moment more home upon the conscience than in former days. There was a time when not one of us had ever been exercised upon this subject. It was taken for granted that a human supplement of rules is necessary. But any rule invented by man for the government of Christians is a tradition, and of the worst kind, because it is thus made a thing of positive authority for faith and practice.

The Pharisees in our chapter brought out this conventional washing of hands, and pressed it upon the disciples. The Spirit's comment is that “the Pharisees and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables.” Every spiritual man must feel the quick, cutting condemnation of the whole principle, root and branch, which breathes through the language of the Spirit of God. However subdued the tone may be, the whole thing is treated as utterly weak and childish. The washing of persons is classed with the washing of cups and pots. Many like things they do. What a religion! “Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands?” It is remarkable how the Lord answers them. It is not by discussing the source of the tradition or

showing its futility. He deals at once with its broad character and its moral effect on the obedience that is due to God. This is, doubtless, a most admirable pattern for every Christian man. The Lord lays bare the moral fruit of these traditions, and thus the simple escape the snare of the enemy. “He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you, hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”

And this is His method of proof. He takes one of these noted traditions and shows that, plausible as it might seem, it was but the cunning slight of deceivers, led by one more cunning than themselves, and destructive of the true fear of God. It drew men into disobedience, and made excuse for sin or rather denied it. Thus their zeal for tradition blinded them to what ordinary conscience must have felt, “for laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men.” He does not call it a wicked tradition: it was.” of men” and is not to be held. “And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.” There is the process: give up what is of God and then you will fall into the hands of man. There is great importance in the principle. It is not a comparison of things as to whether this is better than that. The evil is laying aside the commandment of God and preferring man's tradition to it. The only thing that has claim upon the Christian heart is what comes from God. Whatever God wills, whatever is His revealed mind on any given subject, demands the believer's reception and obedience. “For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do.”

What is the harm of all this? It may not be wise, but is merely innocent, a person might argue. But the Lord does not judge so lightly of nullifying God's commandments by the deference that men show to the will and word of man. “For Moses said, Honor thy father and thy mother; and whoso curseth [or, speaks ill of] father or mother, let him die the death [surely die].” There we have the plain revelation of God's mind. To honor parents is right and of God; to make light of them unfits man to live in God's estimate. How did tradition dissolve so plain a duty? “Ye say if a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; and ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother, making the word of God of none effect through your traditions which ye have delivered: and many such like things ye do.” Just consider what an issue this was. A man sees his father and mother in want; he has received in earthly goods that which would relieve them, but the tradition mongers have invented a plan to benefit religion so-called at the cost of filial duty. If one said “Corban,” the duty was totally changed; and that which would have been due to the parent must now be devoted to the priest. No matter what the need of father and mother, that word “Corban” estopped all action of heart or conscience. The leaders had devised the scheme to secure property for religious purposes and to quiet persons from all trouble of conscience about the word of God.

But the Judge and Lord of all meets this at once. Who had given them authority to say, It is Corban Where had God warranted such a practice? and who were they that dared to substitute their thoughts for the word of God? It was God who called on man to honor his parents, and who denounced all slight done to them. Yet here were men violating, under cloak of religion, both these commandments of God! This tradition of saying “Corban” the Lord treats not only as a wrong done to the parents, but as a rebellious act against the express commandment of God.

For my part I never heard of a tradition introduced into any religious body, or imposed upon any individuals, that was not contrary to the word of God. Such are the rules made by man in the things of God. Indeed, all religious societies have a system which they do not even profess to have derived from the word of God. There are those now in Christendom that cast themselves upon the word of God alone; but such one would not lower to the level of a religious society. I say, then, that wherever you find men who join together in these voluntary societies, large or small, they introduce a system of their own for the purpose of distinguishing themselves from others, and regulations that they consider necessary for the establishment or extension of the society. They invent and impose human rules, which not only differ from the Scripture but contradict it. God's word is a living reality, and a complete standard of truth and practice. Everything that man adds as a supplement is a deformity; it is that which, as it does not flow from God, is inconsistent with the light. Man is incompetent to regulate what belongs to God.

Thus, persons say it is impossible to go on unless you have rules about ministry; it would not do to have everybody rising up and attempting to minister. It is freely admitted that, if there were not the looking to the Holy Ghost, there would be confusion; and that even where there is faith in Him, there is always the need of self-judgment why one does this or seeks that; but God is equal to all the difficulty. If we submit to the word of God, nothing can be more distinct or positive than that there is no such thing as a universal right to minister, on one hand, and no such thing as a process or any human means of conferring a title to minister upon a man. Not the Church, but Christ; not the subject woman, but the risen man and Lord can call to the work of teaching the saints or of preaching the gospel. It surprises many to hear that there is no such thing as a human institution to warrant the preaching of the gospel. A single text would destroy my statement, if it were not true; but no scripture can be brought forward. The general practice of Christendom has no divine ground whatever for its justification. Hence they are obliged to take their stand upon tradition, which contradicts the plain word of God. For if any Christians have the power to preach, which comes only from the Lord, they are not only at liberty but bound to preach. It is a question of positive responsibility to Him before whose judgment we must all be made manifest. The Lord, if He lights a candle, does not intend it to be put under a bushel, but to be set on a candlestick. It is at man's peril if he attempt to hinder the going forth of the energy of God's Spirit. Whoever has the power of the Spirit to preach, should go forth and use it: woe to him if he does not.

Take another case. There is no such thing in the New Testament as a person set apart by any human mode simply to teach the Church. Whereas when we look around, we see one and the same principle, running through a vast variety of forms, from the Pope down to the ranting preacher. All have got their self-devised methods by which none can be a minister in the denomination, unless he go through their own human process. But such a routine is wholly unsound and contradicts the word of God, and every Christian person is bound to give effect to this by renouncing in every way what is contrary to the word of God. Do you think and say that this is too hard? Then it is you who are too bold, not I. For am I not asserting what I can prove? You have your Bibles, and can search for yourselves. But it may be said, Was there no such thing as ordaining? Certainly there was when apostles or apostolic men constituted elders, &c. But our Lord still sends, as He used to send, men out to preach the gospel. But I contend that a human rite, before they permit souls to preach to the world or teach the Church, is a tradition of men and contrary to Scripture. You will find in Scripture that there were persons appointed by the apostles

to take care of tables; persons chosen by the apostles or their envoys to a certain work of supervision. Some were called elders and others deacons; but neither the one nor the other was necessarily a preacher or teacher. It is nothing but a blunder to confound elders and deacons with ministers of the word as such. Those who were evangelists, or pastors and teachers, exercised their gifts, not because they were made elders or deacons, which they might not be, but because they had a capacity from God to preach, teach, or rule. To confound these gifts with eldership is a great mistake. When once the difference is seen, it clears the way and brings one either outside the traditional paths of Christendom, or, if disobedient, within the range of our Lord's rebuke.

May we all bear in mind how deeply we need to watch against the spirit of tradition! Wherever we impose with absolute authority a thing that does not proceed from God Himself, it is a tradition. It is all very well to take counsel of one another, and it is not a happy feature to oppose others needlessly; but it is of all consequence that we should strengthen each other in this, that nothing but the word of God is entitled or ought to govern the conscience. It will be found that, when we let go this principle and allow a rule to come in and become binding, so that what is not done according to that rule is regarded as a sin, we are gone from the authority of the word of God to that of tradition, perhaps without knowing it ourselves.

The Lord here shows convincingly where these Pharisees and scribes were. They had never considered that their principle of Corban made void the word of God. But let us, too, bear in mind that after we have had any divine truth pressed upon us, we are never the same as before. We may have been simply and honestly ignorant then; but we are thenceforth under the increased yoke of God's known mind, which we either receive in faith or reject, and harden ourselves by rejecting, in unbelief. Therefore, let us look to the Lord that we may cherish a good conscience This supposes that we have nothing before us, which we cleave to or allow inconsistent with God's will. Let us desire and value nothing but what is according to His word, lest peradventure any of us be left where Christ leaves these Pharisees, under the terrible censure that they made void the word of God through their tradition. If but one example was taken up, it was a sufficient sample of the things they were doing continually.

Chapter 145

# Remarks on Mark 7:14-37

Now we turn to another subject—the condition of man. We are first shown that religion without Christ is but hypocrisy, and that man's interference in divine things ends in setting God's word aside to keep his own tradition. The next thing we see is what man really is, religious or not. “When he had called all the people unto him, he said unto them, Hearken unto me every one of you and understand.” The Lord here brings to light the broad principle which of itself would account for his sentence on all tradition. Does it come from man? It is enough. How is it that which springs from such a source is bad and untrustworthy? It concerns every soul; for it is no question of controversial strife. Protestant and Papist, beware of slighting the admonition of the Judge of quick and dead. “There is nothing from without a man that, entering into him, can defile him; but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man.” This, if we apply the principle in all its extent, involves the character of tradition; for tradition comes out from man—not a word to man with the authority of God, but a human word that beggarly pride would fain invest with purple and gold to cover its nakedness. This may show the connection; for undoubtedly the Lord here judges the moral issues of the heart and all the ways of man. “If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.” The disciples could not understand Him. What a lesson for us! Christ's servants could not understand Him. The very apostles were slow to believe that man was utterly corrupt. Is there any one here that doubts the thorough evil, not merely to be found among men, but of man? Does any one think that human nature can be trusted? Listen to the Savior—the Savior of the lost. “If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.”

“When he was entered into the house from the people, his disciples asked him concerning the parable. And he saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile; because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draft, purging all meats? And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within and defile the man.” There is nothing in the heart of man that so hinders his intelligence as the influence of religious tradition; not only this, but tradition darkens a disciple wherever it works; and one effect and invariable accompaniment of it is, specially, insubjection to the humbling truth that there is no good thing in man. I do not deny that God can bring everything that is good into the heart. For He gives His Son, and in Him eternal life; He washes the believer in the precious blood of Christ and gives the Holy Ghost to dwell in him. Neither do I speak of what is the fruit of divine grace working in man; but I maintain that what comes out of man as such is invariably bad. As to this the disciples were dull of understanding; yet there was not one obscure word in what Christ uttered. Why is it that divine truth seems and is so difficult to apprehend? Our obstacle chiefly lies not in the head, but in the heart and conscience. It is not the bright or the powerful intellect that understands the word of God best; it is the man whose purpose of heart is to serve the Lord. Wherever there is a simple-hearted desire to do His will, “he shall know of the doctrine whether it

be of God.” “If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.” It is not, If thine eye be keen or farseeing; but, “If thine eye be single.” What a comfort to a poor soul that is consciously weak, ignorant, foolish, it may be! Such an one, nevertheless, may have a single eye, and consequently see farther, spiritually, than the brightest of men, whose heart is not unreservedly toward the Lord. What in this case hindered singleness of eye? Why were the disciples so undiscerning? Because they did not like to receive such a tremendous sentence on man. They had been accustomed to make conventional differences.

The Pharisees and scribes, the great men of Jerusalem, were still of a certain value in their eyes, just as you find the vulgar crowd gaping after the sounding titles of the religious world. How little are the mass of God's children emancipated from the delusion, that there is something in these names that guarantees or presupposes real intelligence! Never was it so, and never less than now. Can you point out a time, since Christendom began, when there was such a complete giving up of the mind of God in the places of highest pretension? There have been seasons when the world was more hostile and the form of hatred more formidable, as far as persecution goes; but never was there an hour, when Christendom, aye, Protestant Christendom, had so many swamps of indifference to God's authority, with here and there a standard of rebellion against the truth of Christ. This may seem strong, no doubt; but I have made the assertion according to God's word, and, as far as that may go, with a closer study of Christendom in its various phases than many persons. I am not afraid, then, to re-assert my conviction, that there never has been a display of man's evil heart of unbelief in the shape of indifference, on one side, and, on the other, of enmity against the truth, equal to the present aspect of the age. Even when Christendom mumbled over their devotions, saturated with religious fable, and thoroughly subject to a crafty and ignorant priesthood, the word of God was less known and less slighted than now. The dungeon-wall of superstition is partially fallen, the light of God's testimony has been seen enough to provoke the malice of men. People are energetic enough in these days, but their energy is against the gospel. It is not so with all, thank God; but the peculiar feature of the present age is that the active aggression is against Scripture, an organized rebellion proceeding from professors in the high seats of human learning. Not only daring individuals here and there attack Scripture, but the nominal teachers and heads of the clergy combine to do it with comparative impunity, as if they were determined to concentrate the whole weight of their personal and official influence. This has a voice for us; if we have understanding of the times, let us take care that we stand firmly, conscientiously, and uncompromisingly, though humbly, on the foundation of Divine truth, caring for nothing else. We shall he counted harsh: this is always the portion of faithfulness. But the name of the Lord is our tower of strength for the last days, as from the beginning. So Paul warns Timothy in his last epistle, as he looked at the perils of these days (which are still more emphatically true now than they were then); and what is the resource for them? Not tradition, but the written word of God. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable,” &c. It is not teachers, nor godly men raised up, however precious both may be: nothing but Scripture can be a permanent standard of truth.

As to things that defile, they come out of the man. This is true in all things, and of all acts of evil; they invariably spring from within, from the corrupt will of man. Thus, for instance, it is plain that if the law execute the capital sentence on a criminal, it is not murder, but, contrariwise, the vindication of God's authority in the earth. It is not a question of evil feeling against the culprit, and

there is nothing defiling in it. But if you were so much as to injure a man in deed, word, or thought, there you have what defiles. The moment there is that which is a part of your selfwill, without God, which comes out of you, and you yielding to it, there is the taint of defilement. “Murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within and defile the man.” In a word, we have the doctrine most plainly laid down here, that man, i.e., man in his present state, is only the source of that which is evil. I require another absolutely perfect One, who is outside me, to be my life; and such an one I have in Christ. If I am a Christian at all, Christ is my life; and the business for me thenceforth is to live on and according to that good which I have found in Christ. Therefore, the happy man is he who is always thinking of and delighting himself in Christ. The man, on the contrary, who is striving to find some good in himself, is under the error of the disciples before they learned to bow to the word of the Lord. His light was too bright, too searching, too severe, too unsparing for the will of the disciples; they did not accept the truth with simplicity, and therefore they found it a hard saying.

Verses 24-30. We have seen that which cometh out of man, and how defiling it all is. We are now to learn what comes from God, and how full of mercy and goodness this is, delivering those oppressed by the devil. But there was, I am persuaded, a significant previous act in our Lord's going from the scene where He had rebuked the traditions of earthly religion, and the universal sink of corruption in the heart and its issues, which they but conceal. The only real remedy is the deliverance of sovereign grace in Christ who arose from thence and “went into the borders of Tire and Sidon, [those world-renowned monuments of God's sure judgment,] and entered into an house and would have no man know it; but he could not be hid. For a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell at his feet.” What claim had she? Not the smallest” the woman was a Greek, [or Gentile,] a Syrophenician by nation.” She was from the fertile stock of Israel's enemies, the corrupt and idolatrous despisers of the true God. But if Jesus desired an opportunity to show the grace of God, above all question of right, desert, or any conceivable plea, save that of utter misery cast on divine mercy in Him, never was there a more needy suitor. “And she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter.”

Yet if the faith of the woman was to triumph, none the less was it tried. And I consider that it is morally instructive to observe that the richest grace on the part of Christ does not make the trial of faith less but more. The soul that is little exercised never eats the kernel of the blessing, never proves the depths that are in God and His grace.

Mark, precise as his gospel usually is in details, does not give us the particulars of her first appeal to the Savior as “Son of David,” the propriety of which in Matthew is evident. Neither does our gospel bring out His unwonted silence, and the disciples' entreaty, and the firm statement of His mission as minister of the circumcision, for which also we must turn to Matthew.

Nevertheless, even here, our Lord does maintain the principle of “the Jew first;” as the simplicity of faith (what is so genuinely intelligent?) in her urges “and also the Gentile.” But there is more. Grace speaks out the whole truth and strengthens its object to bear it, confess it, and delight in it. So here the Lord adds in verse 27, “it is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs.” “And she answered and said unto him, Yea, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs.” She is taught of the Lord to take her true place; but she cleaves with undoubting assurance to the certainty that He will not deny His. She was no better than a dog; but

is not God full of bounty and goodness even to the dogs? “And He said unto her, For this saying go thy way: the devil is gone out of thy daughter.” It was the blessed and holy ministry of grace to desperate need.

The scene that follows illustrates still farther the Savior's grace; only it is in the ordinary domain of His labors. “And again, departing from the coasts of Tire and Sidon, he came unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis. And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in speech; and they beseech him to put his hand upon him.” What a picture of the impotence to which sin has reduced man—inability to hear the Lord's voice, incapacity to tell Him his need! Such are those whom the Savior heals among the despised Galileans, or anywhere else. “And he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit and touched his tongue; and looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened. And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke plain. And he charged them that they should tell no man: but the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it; and were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.” It is still the service of love, the heart and the hand of the only perfect Servant. “He hath done all things well,” was their astonished testimony. May we ever and for all confide in Him! His right hand has not forgotten; His heart is unchanged; He Himself is the “same yesterday, and to-day, and forever.” May we treasure up the look to heaven, the sigh over the earth, the gracious, interested handling of the sufferer, the word of delivering power, the manner and the measure of the cure. Truly, “He hath done all things well.”

Chapter 146

# Remarks on Mark 8:1-21

In the second miracle of the feeding of the multitude we have, of course, a repeated testimony to Christ as the Messiah, the Shepherd of Israel, viewed in the beneficence of His power. It was, indeed, no more than what is predicted of Him: “I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread.” This was a very significant token to Israel.

In the case of other rulers there is a natural necessity in general that their people should contribute to their sustenance and grandeur; but the Messiah would be the source of nourishment to His subjects. This privilege appertained to and was revealed of Him alone. There never has been, never can be any other ruler with such a sign attached to his person and with such a character belonging to his rule as this gracious source of supplies to His people. Elsewhere it was the fruit of rapine, robbing the distant to lavish on those at home. The Messiah will act out of His own almighty power and love to Israel. This is the plain meaning of Psa. 132:16. The force of Scripture has been greatly weakened through the bad habit of spiritualizing it; in point of fact, it is losing the interpretation of Scripture when we limit it to such applications. Undoubtedly, one is entitled to take the spirit of such a word as this, and one may see from it how Christ cares for those who believe in Him, and that He now displays more than ever this characteristic goodness in His loving provision for their need.

But to the great mass of God's children at present on the earth, what idea does the promise of Psa. 132 present? and what meaning except a passing exercise of compassionate power do they find in these miracles? It is evident that the Spirit of God attached great importance to the fact; for the only miracle recorded in all four gospels is the feeding of the multitude, at least the earlier case where the Lord fed the five thousand. This then remains true, that in these miracles the Lord was giving the two-fold witness of His being the Messiah competent and willing to carry out all that was most characteristic of Himself, and what no other prince or king could possibly effect, because even for his own state ordinarily dependent upon revenue derived from his lieges. But the Lord Jesus has this singular source and supply of grace in Him, and His kingdom will be marked by it, so that instead of His burdening Israel or draining the world of its wealth to sustain Him, the Lord Jesus Christ will ever retain the place of the blessed and only Potentate even when the earth owns Him as King. It will be a day when all burdens shall be taken away, and the earth yield her increase. No doubt, men's heart will be opened and “the multitude of camels shall cover Zion, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come; they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall show forth the praises of the Lord. All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto thee, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto thee; they shall come up with acceptance on mine altar, and I will glorify the house of my glory. Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows? Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the Lord thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because he hath glorified thee.... The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious.... For brass I will bring gold,

and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron; I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness." But the great distinguishing feature of the earthly kingdom of the Messiah as compared with all others, will be this affluence of goodness when the divine power undertakes all for man in the great day when the Lord's victory over Satan is made good here below. The millennium will not be man brought into the eternal state, but as yet with a body liable to death. There will still be the possibility of evil in the world; but the peculiar feature will be that, while the evil is not rooted out and sin is still in the nature of man and the power of death may be used in particular cases as a judgment on flagrant sin, yet will the power of good by Christ, the great King, prevail over evil; not the struggle of evil with good, but the supremacy of blessing flowing from Jehovah-Messiah throughout the whole earth. If there were a single spot of the earth apart, a solitary nook of nature unvisited by the stream of blessing in "that day," it would be, so far, the triumph of evil over good. We know from Rev. 20 that, after the millennium, the nations will rebel; no beneficence on the part of the Lord, no feeding His poor with bread will change the heart of fallen man; nay, nor will His displayed glory deter him from mad opposition. The sad proof will be patent that all who are not born of God in the millennium, will furnish fresh fuel for Satan to kindle the last rebellion against the Lord; but fire will come down out of heaven and dispose of them judicially, caught in the very act. How overwhelming the evidence of man's good-for-nothingness when glory dawns on the earth, just as much as the present evil age is proving man's good-for-nothingness in despising or abusing grace! The Lord showed that there was no deficiency in power even while He was here, for the purpose of displaying the power of His kingdom. He that could feed five thousand, could have as easily fed five millions. He was pleased to use the commonest material on the spot: it was the Lord of all taking what was there, and so it will be in the millennium, the Lord making all things new, not absolutely, but in a measure, and the, figure of the complete work which will close all.

The Christians who only think of heaven blot out the testimony of a vast range of Scripture, whereby the future scene is not merely rendered vague, but gravely falsified, and in the weightiest and most momentous traits too. For the age to come will be for the most part unprecedented. The habit of thus making everything bend to the present moment is most injurious to our faith, because it dishonors Scripture. It springs from and feeds the spirit of infidelity, perhaps as much as any other bias.

The next point I would desire to notice is the special teaching of the two miracles. Why are two facts given us so nearly of the same kind? Is there anything to be gleaned from the circumstances that, on one occasion, the Lord feeds five thousand and twelve baskets of fragments were taken up: and on the other, four thousand were fed, and seven baskets were taken up? There are those who are quick to say that such an inquiry is to be too curious, that it is indulging fancy if we attempt to gather a precise meaning; but, I hope, that few of my readers have such low thoughts of the word of God as to suppose that, besides the mere facts, we have not a display of Christ in moral principle or in a dispensational point of view, in what is recorded of Him. We do need to weigh and prize the simplest incidents related: only do not confine Scripture to your horizon or mine. Let us value every fact; but do not let us despise any lesson God may convey thereby. Let us leave room for all He meant to be enjoyed. Little as we may, any of us, know, we know enough to stand for the truth that all Scripture is not only given by inspiration of God, but profitable; and it is the business of the Christian to beware of indulging in his favorite points or doctrines, and to seek spiritual

understanding of all the word and revealed mind of God.

We may inquire then, besides the confirmation of the Messiah's place in earthly glory and His care for His people, what we have to learn from these miracles. Upon the earlier occasion, the Lord gives us the feeding of the multitude first of all, and then His dismissing them and leaving the disciples, as far as His bodily presence is concerned, sending them, under a contrary wind, across a troubled sea, where they tack all night and make little or no progress, while He is upon a mountain in prayer to God. Is not this an evident picture of what has taken place since the Lord dismissed Israel, as it were, for a time, and left the disciples, as far as His bodily presence is concerned? He is above interceding; He has taken a new position altogether; and here are the disciples during His absence on high, exposed to conflicting elements here below. What could more justly portray the actual dispensation—Israel dismissed after His testimony to them, the disciples as now left by our Lord in this stormy world, and Himself ever living to intercede for them? Moreover, when all seems to be vain, the Lord appears unexpectedly, goes on board along with them, and “immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.” What could indicate, as a type, more clearly that, as the effect of the unbelief of Israel, He would leave this world to go on high and take the place, not of king over the earth to supply His people's necessities (for they indeed were not ready for Him), but of priestly advocate in heaven, till He descends and rejoins His tempest-tossed disciples, and brings in healing power and blessing everywhere? (Comp. Mark 6:34-56.) Along with this we see, in the earlier miracle, “twelve baskets.” This, I think, refers to the way in which man becomes prominent. He is made to be the means of carrying out the mind of the Lord. So it will be by and by.

But here in the story before us (chap. viii.) of feeding the multitude, where we have the four thousand men fed and the seven baskets left, there is a notable difference. It has nothing to do with any figure of the Lord's ways dispensationally. We see here the Lord taking care of a certain remnant of His people out of His own pure grace. It is not the testimony to the order of events from His rejection by Israel till His return in power and glory. He is the Messiah, of course; but it is the beneficent goodness of His heart that He is showing, spite of His rejection. The Lord will take up a remnant by and by in the last days, when the mass are apostates, and He will care for them and supply their need. Meanwhile, He turns to us of the Gentiles, in His grace; and what lack we? But whether taken as an earthly or a heavenly remnant, the scene illustrates the fact and certainty of the Lord's tender care of His people, now that He has been rejected. There is no leaving them here; He is with His disciples all through.

“In those days, the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called His disciples unto him.” Now it is not as in the last that the disciples come to Him, anxious about the multitude. It was His own doing out of His own loving thought. He said unto them, “I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days and have nothing to eat; and if I send them away, fasting, to their own houses, they will faint by the way, for divers of them came from far.” One gathers hence that the object of the scene is not to furnish a type of the ways of the Lord when He presented Himself to Israel and Israel would not have Him. Here it is simply His provision for the remnant of His people, for the poor that go after Him. They might have little perception of His glory, yet He cares for them. It is entirely a question of Christ's goodness in this case, watching over them and providing for them, more than enough, though nothing would be lost. It was their wretchedness that appealed to His heart; and the Lord took the whole thing in

hand Himself, though He privileged the disciples to be channels of His bounty.

Accordingly, even when the disciples ask Him “From whence can a man satisfy these men, with bread here, in the wilderness?” He inquires, “How many loaves have ye? and they said, Seven.” The “seven” at the beginning and the end of this case refers, it would seem, not to the question of man's instrumentality (for which “twelve” is the regular symbol in Scripture), but simply to the fullness of provision, scanty in man's eyes, but complete in His eye of grace and power, as well as of that beyond the mere meeting of their present need. It is the Lord's perfect care and compassion for His people. Not only did He satisfy them, but there is completeness stamped upon the whole transaction, to the praise of His goodness and power. “They did eat and were filled, and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets. And they that had eaten were about four thousand, and he sent them away. And straightway he entered into a ship with his disciples, and came into the parts of Dalmanutha.”

This is another point of distinction I wished to notice. On the former occasion He left His disciples and went alone; at this time He accompanies them. It has no reference to what is going on with the present dispensation, nor to His ascension in order to the exercise of priestly functions in heaven. What we here behold is the Lord's perfect care for His people, and then His presence with the disciples, watching over them and guarding them in the midst of the difficulties of a perverse generation, superstitious or skeptical, but equally unbelieving before God. For the Pharisees came forth and began to argue with Him, “seeking of him a sign from heaven.” This is most painful, for the fact of asking for the sign shows that they had no serious thought about, and no heart for, the remarkable miracles that had been wrought by the Lord. Yet they must have produced a deep and wide impression; for it was impossible that first five thousand men, beside women and children, and then four thousand, could be thus fed without the thing being noised abroad throughout the country. The question of the Pharisees, I presume, grew out of the speculation, set afloat by the Lord's having wrought these miracles. At any rate, they wanted a sign from One who had provided the greatest in quantity and quality before their eyes. Could they have given a more awful proof of man's unbelief? A. sign! Why what had all the Lord's ministry been? A sign from heaven! Why the Lord was Himself the bread of God which cometh down from heaven; and He had been showing what He was in the fullness of His love to His people upon the earth. It is the capricious, rebellious heart of man, discontented with all that God gives. If God gives the fullest earthly sign, according to His word, for an earthly people, they want a sign from heaven.

The Lord treats this demand with unwonted sharpness. He says, and “sighed deeply in His spirit” as He says, “Why does this generation seek after a sign? Verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given to this generation. And he left, and entering into the ship again, departed to the other side.” The Lord's refusal is very striking to my own mind. We know that their demand was not from felt sense of need, nor from desire to have that need supplied; the Lord never refused such an appeal. It was not because they were miserable sinners, not because they drew too largely upon Him. They were only changing the form of their unbelief, persistently and ingeniously perverse in refusing all that God's wisdom presented. There was such a multitude and variety of signs as had never before been seen; there was the very substance of every sign in His own person; but there was neither eye to see, nor ear to hear, nor heart to receive what God gives in Christ. He, therefore, abruptly turns from them, enters a ship, and departs to the other side. The truth is, the time for signs was nearly over. There had been abundance given; but it was never the way of God

to multiply signs beyond the occasion for which they are introduced; because, although they may rouse persons at the beginning of a testimony from God, if continued afterward, they would frustrate the moral object He has in view, if they would not lose their very character of signs. A miracle would cease to be a miracle, if continually going on.

But deeper than any such question was this fact—the truth of God had been presented in every possible form, with all possible outward vouchers and tokens and seals to awaken, arrest, and attract the chosen people. There was no lack of signs; it was faith they wanted. Accordingly the Lord, when He goes to the other side, charges the disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod. The omission of the Sadducees is to be noticed in this place. Sadduceeism, no doubt, is a withering evil, but it is not the most dangerous. The leaven of the Pharisees, if not that of Herod also, may have a worse character and be a greater hindrance in the confession of Christ. For what is the leaven of the Pharisees? It is the cleaving to outward religious forms of any kind, which practically hide the Lord and His Christ. It is the effect of traditional influence, and may be orthodox in much; but it is religion—self—that is worshipped, rather than the true and living God known in His Son. The next is the leaven of Herod; that is worldliness, the desire of what will give present reputation or keep up conformity to this world. These are two of the great perils Christians have to watch against. The disciples did not understand the Lord. They thought it was a question of loaves! "'They reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have no bread." Sometimes we wonder at such stupidity in the disciples; but if we reflect on our own history, can we not discern our own dullness in understanding the word of God, our own slowness in following and walking in His will?

Alas! it is too true a picture of our own hitches and difficulties. It all arises from a want of perception of the truth, and grace, and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, and this again is because we walk in such feeble self-judgment. It is our own undiscerned will that makes His mind in Scripture dark to us. If our eve were but single, if we walked in a spirit of lowly dependence, to do anything but follow the Lord, we should find nine-tenths of our difficulties at an end. But we have an old as well as a new nature, which we do well to judge unsparingly. Through the mercy of God we are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit; but the old man seeks to intrude and get the upper hand, and so hinders the believer from following Christ simply and fully. This was at work among the disciples. They thought the Pharisees a respectable sort of people, and they were not prepared for their Master's sweeping condemnation. There is no deliverance from any of these obstacles and snares but in Christ; and there is no possibility of practically walking in the power of Christ unless the flesh is judged. Our Lord rebukes the disciples very decidedly "Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? perceive ye not yet, neither understand? have ye your heart yet hardened?" It was really so. Our Lord all through treats it as an affair of the heart and not as an intellectual mistake. It is important that we should accustom ourselves to judge things from their moral roots. If we pursue a wrong course, let us beware of excusing ourselves: if we do, we never get either profit by the way nor victory in the end. We must discover that which caused the mistake. What was its source? What exposed us to it? Christ was not our only motive. I believe we never do a wrong thing where Christ is the one object before us. It is not that the flesh is not in us; but it is the Holy Ghost, and not the flesh that has power in us where Christ is the single actuating spring of the heart. What is self-indulgence or the world's esteem to a man who is filled with Christ? This is what the apostle so earnestly sought for the Ephesian saints," that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." It was not

that they might merely have Christ as their Savior, nor only even that they might obey Christ as their Lord, but that they might have Him dwelling in their hearts by faith. It is the soul occupied with Christ to the exclusion of other objects—Christ abiding, as the treasure of the heart; and what power to discern and to act according to Christ where this is so? And what is the effect of an unjudged will? Children of light though we be, light now in the Lord, yet the light is only in Him for us, and we see it not, if we think, or speak, or act far from the Lord practically. Thus it is we neither remember His ways nor understand Himself.

Chapter 147

# Remarks on Mark 8:22-38

The cure of the blind man of Bethsaida is not only a striking but a sweetly instructive lesson. Our blessed Lord shows, if I may so say, all possible interest in the case, both before the miracle was wrought and in the mode of cure. “He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the town, and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw aught.” He acts as one would who was deeply concerned, heartily entering into every detail. It is the only instance recorded in Mark of a gradual character; indeed, as far as I know, it is the great standing witness of distinct stages in curing blindness. We have in John 9 an illustrious miracle where sight was given, and not all at once, to the man blind from his birth. But there is a marked peculiarity in the case before us. The fact is that there are two things needful where a person has not seen at all. One is the faculty of seeing, the other is the power of applying that faculty. Supposing a blind man had visual capacity conveyed to him, it does not follow that he could see thereon. He would not be able to measure distances or to judge with accuracy of the various objects before his eyes. In order to estimate aright any such object the habit of seeing, comparing, &c., is indispensable. Not only is this true of other creatures, but of man also. We all acquire this gradually; but, growing up as it does from our infancy, it is apt to be overlooked. So true and important, however, is the practice of seeing, that if a person who had never seen suddenly received his sight, he would not be able at first to discern whether a thing were round or square by barely looking at it; and this, though he might have been accustomed to judge of the very same things by the touch. It is a fact of much interest which seems to me to be intimated in the healing of the blind man of Bethsaida. Though the same conclusion was the deduction of human science scarce two hundred years ago, here you have it quietly assumed in the word of God these eighteen centuries.

First of all the Lord takes the man by the hand, and led him out of the town; next, He applied to His eyes that which came from His own mouth, and put His hands upon him. For here He is all through the true servant. It is not enough that the task is done, but the manner of doing it must be that which should glorify God and win the heart of him who is healed. What consideration! what condescension! what taking of trouble, so to speak! A word had been enough. But the Servant-Son of God enters into the case fully, and asks the patient (though He only, He perfectly well, knew all about it) “if he saw aught.” (Ver. 23.) Even in John 9, where the eyes were anointed with a plaster of clay, and the blind man then went and washed in the pool of Siloam, the full cure followed immediately. In the case before us there was a special reason for dividing not the miraculous remedy so much as the effect. The Lord was showing an exercise of divine power, which at first sight seems to be not so striking as those more commonly healed by a word or a touch. The man looked up and said, he beheld men; for he saw persons walking about, like trees. There is no little difference between a man and a tree, but he could not yet distinguish them (especially if, as I presume, born blind). All was vague before him. He might, and no doubt did, in his blind estate readily discern between a tree and a man by a touch. But he had not yet learned to apply his new-born vision, and the miracle purposely halved the cure. His mind could hardly confound the men who moved with trees, but his faculty of vision only showed that the two things

were somewhat alike: they were as trees walking. It was all as yet confusion to him. There was naturally no aptitude in using with clearness the faculty he had just acquired.

“After that he put his hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up; and he was restored, and saw every man clearly.” “He doeth all things well.” As that is a saying peculiar to Mark, so it is every where a truth illustrated in it; and it is the great point we have brought out here. It was not only that He did what He did with unfailing energy, but the manner in which He wrought was no less admirable. “He doeth all things well.” And never was this more conspicuously shown than in the second application of the Lord's hands to the half-opened eyes, by which the blind man of Bethsaida was made to see all men clearly. “And he sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town.”

Next (ver. 27 and seq.), we have the good confession, not of the Lord before Pontius Pilate, but of Peter before the Lord, against an unbelieving generation. The Lord puts the question to His disciples. “Whom do men say that I am? And they answered, John the Baptist; but some say, Elias; and others, One of the prophets.” All was uncertainty, and that is all that man ever, and in spite of busy and laborious efforts, arrives at. The painful, toilsome searching of the creature into things too high for it only ends in perplexity and bitter disappointment. It leaves a man totally short of, and utterly in the dark about, that which, after all, is the only thing of prime importance. Some say one thing, some another; but who, of all the sons of men, does or can say the right thing?

“And he saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ.” Now we have not here, as in Matthew, the Lord pronouncing, “Blessed art thou Simon-Barjona.” How comes that? Neither have we here, as there, the Lord's remarkable address to Peter: “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church.” Why is all this difference? Because Peter is represented as simply saying here, “Thou art the Christ.” Where it is added that he confessed the Lord to be “the Son of the living God,” there the special notice was also given that he was blessed, “For flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.” A confession so singularly rich drew out the Savior's recognition of His Father's grace to Simon Barjona. Thereon the Lord also exercises His rights, and gives him the new name of “Peter,” and adds, “Upon this rock will I build my church.” He was the Son of the living God. If He had been only the Christ, the Messiah of Israel, it would not have been a sufficient basis for the Church. His Messianic dignity (in which He is also spoken of as Son of God, Psa. 2) might have been a sufficient rock for Israel, as it was their faith and hope; but “the Son of the living God” was a revelation of His glory that went far beyond it. The moment you have the Lord known and confessed in this His highest glory, He for the first time begins to announce His building of His Church. That new edifice, which takes the place of Christ-rejecting Israel, is founded upon Him who is not only the Christ but the Son of the living God. Accordingly death and resurrection follow as that which not only determined Him to be the Son of God with power, but gives the Christian and the Church their proper character. (2 Cor. 5:15-19; Eph. 1; 2) It is upon this rock the Church is builded. What could show more clearly that the Church is an absolutely new thing? The attempt to make out this sense of the Church in the Old Testament times proves that the true nature of God's present temple is unknown. The important thing is to see the points of distinction and contrast. Those who confound Jewish duties, and experience, and hopes with the revelation of our Lord when the people rejected Him, with the fully developed display of Him in the New Testament and the consequently new responsibilities and joys of the Christian, blot out, not all truth, but every

feature that is essentially characteristic of the “one new man” (Eph. 2), and take away what is specially incumbent on the Christian and the Church of God. This, if true, demonstrates the importance for our souls of taking heed to Scripture. There are those who are so steeped in human tradition, and so unversed in the dispensational ways of God, that to tell them the Church was part of the mystery hidden from ages and only revealed since Pentecost, would be to their minds a revival of the monstrous and wicked error of the Mauichees. But the word of God is none the less positive and perfectly plain about it. And Christian men would do well to search the Scriptures, and spare their reproaches, lest haply they be found to fight against God.

Such, then, was the wide scope, answering to Peter's high confession, in Matthew. The Spirit of God in Mark merely records a part of that confession, and as He designedly leaves out the most peculiar portion of it (“the Son of the living God"), so we have only, and with equal design, our Lord's answer in part. His being the Son of the living God, though owned, we have seen, was not, and could not be, set forth freely and fully, until our Lord, by dying and rising again, put the seal, as it were, to this grand truth; and hence the Apostle Paul was the great witness of it. The first testimony that he renders in the synagogue after his conversion is, according to Acts 9:20, that Christ “is (not only made Lord, but) the Son of God.” Accordingly, also, he brings out the calling, and nature, and hopes of the Church of God, in a way beyond all the others.

But I would call your attention to the fact, that though here Peter only says, “Thou art the Christ,” our Lord charges them that they should tell no man this thing. This He does in all the three synoptic gospels. It is a point of instruction much to be heeded. For first He had asked them, “Whom say ye that I am?” Then, after He had heard the confession of His person from Peter, He binds them to tell none about it. How comes this? It was too late. Full proofs had been vouchsafed. The time was past for presenting Him longer as the Jewish Messiah. It had been fully told the people; and whom did they say He was? But now another thing is not before Him alone, but also set before the disciples—His friends. He is going away; He falls, therefore, back upon another glory that belongs to Him. Rejected as “David’s Son,” He is owned by faith as “the Son of the living God;” but He is also “the Son of man.” He was about to be humbled even unto death, and this could only be in His human nature; even He shall once more return to earth, as the Son of man, in His glory. (Compare ver. 31 with 38.) “He charged them that they should tell no man of him. And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.” Thus He drops the title of “Christ,” and insists upon His place as Son of man—as the suffering One first, and this from the heads of Israel. He should be killed, and after three days rise again. “And he spake that saying openly.” He forbids them to make known His being the Messiah: that testimony was closed now; there was no good in talking about it; the Jews had refused Him, and would definitively, as the Messiah. He had given them every possible form and degree of testimony; and the effect was that they rejected Him, more especially their religious leaders, more and more bitterly and unbelievingly. The consequence would be His death, as He shows His disciples openly. As Son of man, He was going to suffer, and, as Son of man, to be raised the third day, the real condition of His glory by and by. Accordingly we shall find, at the end of the chapter, the coming again of the Son of man in glory, with His holy angels, when despisers and all unbelievers shall be made the objects of His shame: just recompense of being ashamed of Him and His words before He thus comes.

But there is another thing of vast moment to notice before we close. We have not only a proof of what man is, in the Jews, the most favored of men; in the elders, and priests, and scribes, who only become the most active in the scorn and refusal of the Son of man; but His disciples relish not His shame. “And Peter took him and began to rebuke him. But when he had turned about, and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan, for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.” What a solemn lesson, that the Lord should find it needful at such a time, when, as Matthew shows, He pronounces Simon blessed and puts special honor on him, to rebuke him thus sternly! How worthless is the fleshly mind even in the chief of the twelve apostles! In rebuking Peter, because of his carnal dislike of the cross of Christ, He could say, “Get thee behind me, Satan,” because it was flesh's unbelief, selfishness, and presumption, and not the less because veiled under a pious form. He never said to a saint, Get thee hence, as He said to the devil when he arrogated the worship due to God. (Comp. Matt. 4:10.) What was it that so roused our Lord? The very snare to which we are all so exposed—the desire of saving self; the preference of an easy path to the cross. is it not true that we naturally like to escape trial, shame, and rejection; that we shrink from the suffering which doing God's will, if in such a world as this, must ever entail; that we prefer to have a quiet, respectable path in the earth—in short, the best of both worlds? How easily one may he ensnared into this! Peter could not understand why the Messiah should go through all this path of sorrow. Had we been there, we might have said or thought yet worse. Peter's remonstrance was not without strong human affection. He heartily loved the Savior too. But, unknown to himself, there was the unjudged spirit of the world. He could not bear that their Master should be so dishonored and so suffer. There was some unbelief of human iniquity: could the elders, chief priests, and scribes be so wicked after all? Moreover, there was a want of understanding that there was no other way to deliver man—that this was the only means of glorifying God about man's sin. (John 13:31.) Suffer the Lord must unto death, and this under God's hand as well as man's; there could be no salvation without it. And God forbid that we should glory save in the cross, whereby the world is crucified to us and we to the world. Let all know this, the people, the crowd, as well as the disciples: so said Jesus: “Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

Chapter 148

# Remarks on Mark 9:1-13

The verse which opens our chapter clearly belongs to the discourse at the end of chapter viii. Our Lord's promise was fulfilled on “the holy mount.” Some of those who stood as He spoke were permitted to see “the kingdom of God come with power.” The reference to the siege and destruction of Jerusalem is arbitrary and incongruous. The special form of the promise is worthy of note. In Matthew it is “the Son of man coming in his kingdom;” in Luke it is simply “the kingdom of God.” In the former, the personal title of the Lord, as the rejected but glorious man, and so coming in His kingdom, is made prominent; in the latter; it is the moral character, as usual, of that display which the chosen witnesses were privileged to behold—the kingdom of God, not of man. Mark, on the other hand, was led to speak of the kingdom of God coming with power. The same substantial truth appears in all; each presents it so as to suit the divine design of the gospels respectively. In our gospel the blessed Lord is ever the administrator in power of God's kingdom, and even here, in giving expression to this promised sample of the kingdom, hides His glory as much as possible, though in truth He could not be hid.

Let us remark, too, that those self-same witnesses He takes (ver. 2) and leads up “into an high mountain apart by themselves,” whom afterward (chap. 14) He takes with Him to Gethsemane. What a change from the glories of the one scene to the exceeding sorrow unto death of the other! Yet was the connection close, and the end of the Lord full of tenderness to His own: even as the mention of His rejection and death leads the way to the transfiguration in the three early gospels. What is there, indeed, so real as His sufferings and His glories? How blessed to know and rest on them both in the midst of the vain show of men!

Again, let it be observed that Mark says less of the personal change, and more as to His raiment, than either Matthew or Luke. “And he was transfigured before them; and his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them.” He is ever the Servant-Son. As profound in His lowliness as He accepts with dignity what comes from above—dignity which manifests its source by a splendor which stains the pride of earthly glory. In Matthew there is no contrast with fuller on earth, but it is added most characteristically, that “His face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light;” a most suited image of supreme glory for the great King. In Luke how wonderfully adapted is the description! “And as be prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistering.” None but he mentions the Lord thus bowing down before His Father at this very moment; even as he directs us to that which was more personal than any other in the mighty change that thereon ensued.

“And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus. And Peter answered and said to Jesus Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. For he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid. And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him. And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves.” Having already treated of

the scene in Matthew, I will not dwell on the astonishing circumstance further than to remark, that the Lord discloses in this type of God's kingdom what popular theologians so dislike—earthly things mingled, though in no wise confounded, with heavenly things. (John 3) There are the glorified, in the persons of Moses and Elias; there are the men in their still unchanged natural bodies, Peter, James, and John; there is the central figure of the Lord, the Head of all things above and below. So it will be when the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ is not any more a testimony of word from those who were eye-witnesses of His majesty, but made good and displayed in the day of the Lord.

It is mere irreverence to deride what will be by and by, or what was then beheld anticipatively, as “a mongrel state of things,” “an abhorred mixture of things totally inconsistent with each other.” If transient glimpses of glory, if passing visits of glorious beings have been vouchsafed from the beginning down to our Savior's days, is it that man can read in these no more than a tale that is told? Is there to them no confirmation from the holy mount of the prophetic word which declares that Jehovah's feet shall stand on Mount Olivet, not to dissolve all things as yet, but to be King over all the earth in that day when He shall come and all His saints with Him? (Comp. Zech. 14.) “And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel. And I will sow her unto me in the earth: and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God.” (Hosea “Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him.” It is in vain to pervert this to the eternal state; it is as distinct from that final condition as from the present ways of God. For as the gathering of the Church is essentially eclectic, and in no sense a gathering of all things in heaven and earth into one, so eternity is after all dispensation (οικονομια), administration, or stewardship, is over. The millennial reign, the kingdom of Christ, is the sole answer to this even as to the other Scriptures. “Thy kingdom come: Thy will be done in earth, as in heaven.”

To resume. In reporting to us the voice that spake from the cloud (ver. 7), Mark, like Luke, was led of the Spirit to omit the middle clause which Matthew gives us, the expression of the Father's complacency in the Son. But this really imparts special emphasis to Christ's title as Son, and the Father's will that they should hear Him; not now Moses and Elias, whom Peter's unintelligent haste had put on a level with Him. The divine utterance, too, is sealed by the sudden disappearance of those who represented the law and the prophets, Jesus only being left with the disciples.

“And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead. And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean.” If they knew the Scriptures and God's power of resurrection, as the Sadducees did not, certainly the rising from among the dead was as new to them as it is little understood yet by many disciples.

Hence the difficulties of learned men perplexed them. And they asked him, saying, Why say the scribes that Elias must first come? And he answered and told them, Elias verily cometh first, and restoreth all things; and how it is written of the Son of man, that he must suffer many things, and

be set at naught. But I say unto you, that Elias is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him." Our Lord does not dispute the truth pressed by the scribes; but as He points out His own approaching shame and suffering before He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels, so He shows a similar application of Elias' case in the person of John the Baptist, while the strict coming of Elias or Elijah awaits its fulfillment in the latter day. To faith the fore-runner is already come, as well as the Lord Himself. Unbelief must feel both by and by.

Chapter 149

# Remarks on Mark 9:14-50

The foot of the mountain presented a far different scene from the transfiguration glimpse of the kingdom, the disciples encircled by a vast multitude, the scribes questioning with them, and the power of Satan in man unremoved. Christ comes down, and all the people in amazement saluted him. Christ challenges the scribes; but what will He answer him who appealed in vain to the disciples for his son with the dumb spirit, his tormentor? “He answereth him and saith, O faithless generation! how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? Bring him unto me.” Blessed Lord Jesus! perfect are Thy ways. No love, no tenderness, no long-suffering like Thine yet didst Thou feel the faithlessness which knew not how by dependence on God and denial of self to draw on that energy which casts out Satan from his strongholds. Yet even in Thy presence, when deliverance is nigh, how dost thou try the faith and patience of those who learn all in Thee! “And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him, and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming.” Not even yet came the rebuke of power. “And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child: and ofttimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him; but if thou canst do anything, have compassion on us and help us. Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out and said with tears, Lord, I believe: help thou mine unbelief.” It was certainly but a feeble confession; yet was it true, and the heart was to Him only. “When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him and enter no more into him. And [the spirit] cried and rent him sore and came out of him, and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead. But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up; and he arose. And when he was come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, Why could not we cast him out? And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing but by prayer and fasting.” It is an admirable picture of the ways of gracious power in the deliverance of man, Israel especially, from the well-nigh fatal possession of the enemy, with a serious intimation to the disciples, wherein lay the secret of their weakness. (Ver. 14-29.)

Alas! it is not lack of power we have to own, but scanty entrance into His mind. The fleshly mind can think and talk of glory here below, but the cross breaks in neither understood nor welcome. “And they departed thence and passed through Galilee; and he would not that any man should know it. For he taught his disciples and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day. But they understood not that saying and were afraid to ask him.” (Ver. 30-32.) The truth is that other thoughts preoccupied them, which hindered the inshining of God's grace displayed in the cross, as well as the terrible evidence it gave to the alienation of man from God. The carnal mind which would so end in man was actively at work in themselves; and He knew it and laid it bare before their eyes. “And he came to Capernaum; and being in the house he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way. But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves who should be the greatest.” And how gracious and faithful the

lesson! “And he sat down and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all and servant of all. And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them; and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them, Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me; and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me.”

Nor is it only the disciples as a whole who need reproof and correction from the Master. As Peter on the mount of glory, at the beginning, so, ere the chapter closes, John betrays the spirit of egoism which shrouds the proper glory of Christ in the very effort of nature to exalt Him. “And John answered him saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbad him, because he followeth not us. But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is on our part.” (Ver. 38-40.)

It is not as in Matt. 12, where Christ is rejected by the power of unbelief under Satan's instigation, which is blind to the testimony of the Spirit of God that it hates and blasphemes. There compromise is impossible, half-heartedness perilous and fatal. “He that is not with me, is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth.” When it is a question between Christ and the darkening, blaspheming power of the devil, the only safety is in being with Christ, the only service is gathering with Him. But where no such question is raised, but on the contrary some one, little known and little knowing it may be, is true to the Lord's name as far as he knows it, let us rejoice to own him and the Lord's evident honor put on him, though “he followeth not us.” He is no enemy but a friend of that name which he owns as best he knows. “He that is not against us,” says the Lord in such a case, “is on our part.” So to honor that name in the least thing shall not be forgotten, as also the slighting it, so as to stumble the least believer, is ruinous to him who is guilty. (Ver. 41, 42.)

This leads the Lord into a warning of searching solemnity. “And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eves to be east into hell fire: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.” (Ver. 43-48.) The thrice-repeated burden, “where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched,” falls on the conscience-stricken like the bell that tolls the felon to his doom. Would that it might kindle our hearts who believe into an unwonted earnestness on behalf of perishing souls! (Comp. 2 Cor. 5:10, 11.)

But there is direct profit for the disciples also. For if “every one shall be salted with fire,” it is also true that “every sacrifice shall be salted with salt;” the former statement, in my opinion, being as large toward man as such, as the latter emphatically and exclusively regards the saints set apart to God. “Salt is good,” concludes our Lord, “but if the salt have lost its saltness, wherewith shall ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.” How precious and practical the exhortation! The first requisite is this holy preservative energy in our own souls; and then for one with another a spirit of peace. “The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make

peace," adds the Apostle James.

Chapter 150

# Remarks on Mark 10:1-16

Our Lord now starts on His last journey, leaving Galilee for the borders of Judea, by the other side of the Jordan. When crowds resort to Him, He, as He was wont, again taught. And full of moral value and divine light His teaching is. May our souls weigh it well! We are apt to be one-sided. If we seize the special manifestation of God's grace, we are apt to overlook, neglect, or enfeeble the great and unchanging principles of good and evil; if we keep bold of that which abides from first to last, the danger is that we leave not adequate room for His sovereign action at particular times. In Christ, the truth, this was never so. All the ways of Gad had their place; no one thing was sacrificed to another, yet this too without a leveling sameness; for even in God, while all is perfect and all harmonious, each attribute has not equal place, but there is that which is pre-eminent. Jesus, the Son and Servant of God, maintains on every side the truth of God in the face of sin and confusion.

First, He vindicates, according to the unstained light and tender goodness of God, the marriage relation. It is the most momentous step of human life, and the pillar of the social fabric. How thankful should we be to have the Lord of glory pronouncing on it in His passage through this world! The need was great. For even in the holy land, and among those who stood high for their sanctity, with the law of God before their eyes and its precepts, rightly or wrongly interpreted, continually on their tongues, how low and loose was the theory, how basely selfish the practice! He was here on His errand of love with its eternal issues; yet would He stop in His course and cause the light of heaven to shine even across the path of dark designing men, recalling them to hear how God made man to live, as well as removing the veil which hindered disciples from seeing how He who was God would die.

“And the Pharisees came to him, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? tempting him. And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you? And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away. And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.” (Ver. 2-9.) It is only the facts recorded by historians or the researches of men of learning into the Rabbinical remains which betray the excessive levity of the Jews as to marriage. The true obligations of the tie were unknown; and a wife's place had no more stability than a servant's, if so much indeed. He asks what Moses commanded; they answer what Moses allowed; whereas our Lord shows how evidently it was in respect of their hardheartedness he so wrote. In truth the law made nothing perfect. Not the gospel only, but the beginning of creation bore its witness to the true thought of God, who made them male and female. How admirably the Lord applies, not only the fact of Gen. 1, but the words of Gen. 2:24! All other obligations of nature, even the filial, must give place, as their own Pentateuch proved in principle as well as history; and the new relationship from the first was abstractedly indissoluble. They were no longer two, but one flesh, even if not kindred in spirit.

This was not merely Adam's language, but God's deed; and if He united, let not man put asunder. Such was the Lord's bright and beautiful unfolding of the law to those who took advantage of what was permitted for a season. Grace and truth ever adorn what the legal spirit perverts to self-righteousness on the one hand, or self-indulgence on the other.

To the disciples (in the house, as Mark only here tells us) the Lord gives the stringent reply that, “Whosoever shall put away his wife and marry another, committeth adultery against her; and if a woman shall put away her husband and marry another, she committeth adultery.” (Ver. 10-12.) Here is the dark converse of sin in this relationship: no license of man can consecrate the annulling that tie while in the flesh.

The next incident is equally full of moral loveliness and divine grace—full of instruction too, as here we have not Pharisees but disciples in painful collision with the mind of the Master. “And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And be took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them and blessed them.” (Ver. 13-16.) Our evangelist specially marks the deep displeasure of the Lord. And no wonder. Indeed it was part of His perfectness. For it was not only that they betrayed their own Rabbi-like self-importance, which makes much of ceremony, much also of knowledge, and overlooks the power of grace and the manifestation of divine affections; but besides, they took His place, falsified Him and the God of all grace that sent Him and the essential character of that kingdom which He was about to establish. Suffer not little children, babes, to come to Him! hinder them! Why, not only of such is the kingdom of God, but whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a babe shall not enter therein. Such is the Lord's solemn sentence. To be nothing for Jesus to receive is just the condition of entrance. May we too have faith to put our babes with ourselves before Him and count on His sure blessing!

Chapter 151

# Remarks on Mark 10:17-31

The Lord had vindicated marriage according to its beginning from God against the Pharisees. He had blessed babes in spite of rebuking but now rebuked disciples. We have Him next eagerly sought out by the rich young ruler. “And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?” There was no lack of moral integrity here, no failure in reverence to one who was instinctively felt to be superior, no indolence that avoided trouble; but earnestness was there, honest respect for that righteous man, and a sincere desire to learn a new lesson and take a fresh step in well-doing. It was nature doing its best, yet fundamentally at fault; for his question assumed that man was good and could do good—man as he is. His very salutation of honor to Jesus proved that His person was unknown, and therefore the truth unknown both as to God and man. Had the young ruler believed Him to be the Son of the living God, he would not have accosted Him with “Good Master” —a style suitable enough to a respected and honored teacher, but both needless and improper in addressing One who was equal with God and was God. But the evil of man he had never realized, the total, hopeless sin and ruin of the heart in God's sight. Hence the need of such an One as Jesus was unfelt, of One who, God and man, came down to the depths of sin in divine love and is raised up to the throne of God in divine righteousness, who suffered all on earth from God on behalf of guilty man, that He might have man redeemed, reconciled, justified, glorified, by and with Himself in heaven, and in both, as in all things, God glorified through Jesus Christ.

Our blessed Lord therefore refuses the honor which ignored the only just foundation for it, jealous for the truth as well as for God's glory, as indeed it is the only real love to man. If not God, Christ was not good; if good, He is God. “And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honor thy father and mother. And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. Then Jesus beholding him loved him.” (Ver. 18-21.) It is striking to observe these two things following—the comparative severity of our Lord's answer and the express assertion that He looked upon him and loved him. The one showed how He dealt with amiable nature, intruding into what it knows not; the other, how no curtness of rebuke for spiritual kindness, no consciousness that the young man was faithless and would depart sorrowful at His word, hindered the Savior's love for that which was sweet and attractive in burrow nature. Our Lord gave its full value to his honoring of the commandments, which He does not contradict; but He meets him on the ground he had chosen, not of a broken-hearted convicted sinner asking what he must do to be saved, but of a blameless man who was conscious of nothing wrong in his life, but who felt desires after a more excellent way from One so pre-eminently excellent in his eyes as Jesus, who accordingly “said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up thy cross and follow me.” Jesus had done infinitely more; for though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty

might be rich. But this ruler knew not the grace of our Lord, though he could not but see His ineffable moral beauty; he knew not His grace, for His glory was unknown to him. Little did he think even when he kneeled to Jesus, that there stood before him One who, subsisting in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be on equality with God, but emptied Himself and took upon Him the form of a bondman and was made in the likeness of men, and having been found in fashion as a man, humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. It was not then that He who repudiated all good save in One, save God, shrank from that test which He represented to the good-seeking ruler: yet the one thing the young and ardent Jew lacked was oh! how incomparably short of the path of Jesus both in life and death. Still it was far too great a demand on the loveliest sample of humanity which, as far as we read, crossed the path of the Lord; and it made plain in his sad departing footsteps to others, if it did not discover to his own conscience, the covetousness of his heart, the value he set upon his possessions, the trust he had in riches, the little heart he had for treasure in heaven, care for himself rather than for others, even for the poor, of whom the Lord ever thought much, and above all, that so taking up the cross and following Christ was harder measure than he was prepared for. What is man? wherein is he to be accounted of? Well may we worship God in the spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. “There is none good but one, that is, God.” How true, and how blessed for us that so it is! “Verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity.' Jesus had but disclosed the shadow, and not the very image, of divine goodness in Himself; yet did the beauty of the amiable devotee consume away like a moth. “And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.” (Ver. 17-22.) Surely every man is vanity.

The great prophet, the perfect minister of grace and truth, turns the incident to the good of His own. “And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto His disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!' Even the disciples understood not, but were astonished at His words. They too knew not there is no good thing in man, or in the advantages of the world, for the kingdom of God. “But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved? And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.” Thus Jesus softens in no respect the rigor of the truth. The very blessings, as men speak, of the flesh and of the world turn out hindrances in divine things. With men, then, salvation is impossible. It is a question here too of God; but blessed be His name, all things are possible with Him. (Ver. 23-27.)

What hearts are ours that even the solemn circumstance of the ruler, and the still more solemn sentence of the Lord which fell upon the amazed ears of the disciples, drew forth a self-complacent inquiry from him who seemed to be somewhat, yea a pillar among those nearest to Jesus! “Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo we have left all, and have followed thee. And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life. But many that are first shall be last; and the last first.” (Ver. 28-31.) It is much to be noted that the Lord speaks but of abandoning nature for His own sake (and the gospel's, as is added most appropriately in this

gospel only), even as Peter speaks of their leaving all and following Him. To leave for the reward would be worthless, and moreover never stands. Christ is the only efficacious attraction, the motive that governs a renewed heart. There is pasture for the sheep, there is the flock also; but the sheep follow Christ, for they know His voice. Rewards will follow by and by, but saints follow not the rewards but the Lord. As our evangelist speaks of the gospel's sake, so he shows that the faithful sufferer receives an hundredfold now in this time for what he has left, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life. But, says the Lord, (and if it was a significant word to Peter, is it not for us all?) many first shall be last, and the last first. Righteous judgment will in the long run reverse many a thought founded on that which meets the eye. It is the end of the race that tells, not the start, though God is unrighteous to no person and to no act. It is well therefore here, as before, to trust in God and His grace. “There is none good but one, that is, God.”

Chapter 152

# Remarks on Mark 10:32-45

That were now on the road to Jerusalem, where the disciples well knew enmity to their Master was most deadly. Hence when Jesus went before them, “they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid.” They were not more astonished at His calm facing the danger than they shrank from their own exposure to it. They were still attached to earthly life, though they would have liked to have spent it under Messiah's reign, sitting every man under his vine and under his fig-tree, with none to make them afraid. But to follow the path which led through persecution to death was far as yet from being a privilege and honor in their eyes. Even Christ they knew after the flesh: the glory of His death and resurrection was wholly unfelt as yet. Hence the Lord Jesus “took again the twelve and began to tell them what things should happen unto him, saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death and shall deliver him to the Gentiles: and they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him: and the third day be shall rise again.” (Ver. 33, 34.) Thus the fullest testimony was given, not indiscriminately, but to chosen witnesses, though complete for the purposes of God among men. Matthew alone singles out, as was suitable, that form of death, the cross, which stumbled the natural mind of the Jew, while Luke (chap. 18:31, 34), as his manner is, draws attention to the accomplishment of the Scriptures, not in specific detail like Matthew, but as a whole, adding to it the non-intelligence of the disciples.

Then come the sons of Zebedee, “James and John (with their mother, as we know from Matthew), saying, Master, we would that thou shouldst do for us whatsoever we shall desire. And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you? They said unto him, Grant us that we may sit, one on thy right hand and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory.” (Ver. 35-37.) How often the carnal mind betrays itself in the faithful even in the domain of faith! How weak as yet were those destined to be pillars! How the Master shines in presence even of the most blessed among His servants! They knew not what they asked. This was no question for the suffering Son of man on His way to the cross; but rather could they drink of what it was His to drink? could they be baptized with the baptism that was before Him? Alas! ambition even in the things of the kingdom is soon followed by confidence in self: “We are able.” What an answer! Need we wonder that these two also forsook Jesus and fled in the hour of the cross? Nevertheless, the Lord seals their answer with His promise of His own bitter portion, inward and outward; but lets them know that those high places around Himself in glory were not His to give, but for those for whom it is prepared. He refuses to depart from that morally highest place in such a world as this—God's servant among men. But if the two sons of Zebedee thus betrayed their ignorance of Christ's moral glory, how did the rest carry themselves? Not with sorrow of heart for their brethren. “When the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John.” How often our fleshly resentment at the pride of another makes manifest the pride which dwells in our own hearts and breaks out in an indignation as unseemly as the evil which provokes it! “But Jesus called them unto him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but

whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." (Ver. 42-45.)

This is love which serves, not flesh which seeks to be served. It is the animating motive and spirit, and not a question of position, ecclesiastic or ministerial; for I doubt not be who was not a whit behind the very chiefest of the apostles was the one who was most of all imbued with the mind which was in Christ Jesus, and this not only in his own soul but also in his service. Paul was bondsman of all. "His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain, but I labored more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." "Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?" (2 Cor. 11:23-29.) It was for the Son of man alone not only to minister but to give His life a ransom for many.

# Matthew 17:24-27

The tribute-money in the fish's mouth is one of the most beautiful and perfect of the New-Testament incidents. Christ had just been opening to His disciples the closing of His career of ministry among the Jews, had forbidden them to speak of His being the Christ to them, for He was going to suffer as Son of man; they must suffer with Him. Then, to three who were to be pillars, He shows His glory as Son of man, to encourage their faith in seeing Him rejected by Israel and all the religious authorities, and in taking up their cross. Just after this, Peter is questioned in a way which amounted to asking whether Jesus was really a good Jew. When he enters, Christ anticipates him by showing His divine knowledge of what passed; but while assuming the place of the Son of Jehovah of the temple, so as to be free from the tribute, which kings did not take of their own children, He, with infinite grace, puts Peter, and in him all of us in principle, in the same place as Himself, (just what He has done by redemption, when rejected as Messiah.) “Then are the children free; nevertheless that we offend not.” And this He does, just when He had shown his divine knowledge of Peter's thoughts, and what had passed. He then shows, in a way particularly intelligible to Peter from his occupation, that far from being a mere Jew, debtor to the temple, He disposes of creation, though subject in grace to men. And having shown divine power and title over creation, as previously divine knowledge, He again associates His poor disciple with Him, saying, “That give for me and for thee.”

Besides the touching grace of this communication to Peter, see what is brought out: His real character relative to the temple, the setting aside thereby though submitting to the relation in which as a Jew He stood to it—the divine glory of His person in wisdom and power—and yet the power of the redemption He was just going to accomplish to be such (and this was, as we have seen, precisely the topic in hand) that, viewed as Son of the Lord of the temple, He would set His disciples in the same relationship with God as Himself. What a touching, tender, and yet glorious way, of rebuking the unbelief of Peter, and what a mass of truth is brought out exactly on the point treated of in this part of the Gospels, the transition from the old things to the new! It may be clearly seen in Matthew where the establishment of the church and the kingdom are connected with His being Son of the living God, and then His glory as Son of man brought out. Then, about to leave the faithless and perverse nation, He opens out, in the passage objected to, the full new relationship into which He was bringing them that trusted in Him through the glory of His person and work. There is not a more beautiful and striking passage in every way than this, which is here caviled at. It affords the reader an example of the capacity of infidelity to judge of the bearing and importance of Scripture facts, and the moral proofs which a believer has which infidelity cannot touch, and which prove that it is ignorant of the elements of judgment.

Chapter 154

# Fragment: Matthew 5:17

I do not believe the law or the law's authority is destroyed. Those who have sinned under it will be judged by it. It will be written in the heart of Judah and Israel hereafter under the new covenant, the substance of which we have in spirit though not in the letter. It will never pass till all be fulfilled. But Christ is the end of it—the τ■λος, the completion and end of it—for righteousness to every one that believes. It is a false deduction that Christ came to call on Christians to be under it. The law is not abrogated; but we are not under it

Chapter 155

# Scripture Query and Answer: May Bread and Wine Be Called Emblems?

2

Q. 1 Cor. 11:23-28.—Is it justifiable to use the word “emblems” of the bread and wine, or to withdraw from fellowship because it is so used? J. M.

A. I see nothing in the expression to stumble a soul. No more, probably, was meant than the symbolic character of these material elements, which the Lord was pleased to constitute the representatives of His body broken and His blood shed for us. On the other hand, it appears to me weakness, not to say self-will, to make the use of such a word by another in the assembly a motive for abstaining from the Lord's supper. The intention may have been upright; but the act of retiring on such a ground as this reveals a morbid spirit of criticism and a decided preference of one's own thoughts and feelings to the precious words of Christ, “Do this in remembrance of me.” Whoever has yielded to it, ought to judge himself, with humiliation before the Lord and his brethren, “and so let him eat.”

Chapter 156

# Remarks on Dr. Brown's Millennium: Part 1

As regards the state of the Millennium, Dr. Brown (on the Second Advent, Part II.,) has no apprehension of the great leading truths as to it at all; he loses himself in details, finding differences in teachers cannot, as it is said, see the wood for the trees. Nor does he see the force of the argument as to the subsistence of evil up to the time of Christ's coming, and the distinctness of the character of the Millennium. He looks at it as a question of how many tares and the like (pp. 310 and following, fourth edition). It is one of God's relationship with men, and His ways of government with them.

Up to the death of Christ, man was under probation in every form—innocent, without law, (promises being given to Abraham,) under law, the priesthood given, royalty in Israel, imperial power among the Gentiles, prophets, and at last God's Son. As to all, man failed wholly and irremediably. The mind of the flesh was found to be enmity against God. This was one great scene—the display of the relationship of God with man, when man was tried and found wanting, tried in every way, and by all God could win him by, saying, “I have yet one Son; it may be they will reverence my Son.” Not only proved failure, when innocent and departing from God; but when God sought him, in perfect grace, when he had failed and where he was, irreclaimable: man was lost, and had rejected, as far as his act went, Him who had come to save him. Before, then, God set up His glory publicly in the Second Adam, in whom every one of the failing forms of relationship are fully and perfectly established, He calls a people to be joint-heirs with this Second Adam—to be in a special place of association with Him, His bride, His body, the Church— composed of children of God, conscious, through the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, of their relationship of sons with the Father. These are heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ. Their union in one body, with Christ Head over all things, was a mystery hidden from ages and generations, and only now, that Christ was gone up, revealed to the sons of men. God's purpose is to gather together in one all things in heaven and earth under Christ. Called to be in the same relationship to God and the Father as Christ Himself, who is gone to His Father and our Father, His God and our God, we are joint-heirs with Him of this inheritance of all things. (Compare Rom. 8, Eph. 1:11, Col. 1) When the gathering of these is complete, Christ receives them to Himself; and then, setting aside by power the power and reign of evil, establishes peace and order on the earth, and reduces everything into subjection, all things having been put under Him as man by the Father; and when all is subjected, He delivers up the kingdom to the Father. The mediatorial kingdom of man ceases, though surely not the personal glory of Christ.

All this divine scheme is set aside by Dr. Brown's Millennium, and by his confounding the fact of efficient grace and salvation with the ways of God on the earth for the revelation of Himself and the instruction of men. From Adam to the end of time no one was or will be saved but by redemption and the work of the Spirit. But this does not make promise law, nor law gospel, nor any of them God's government of the world. Thus, promise apart, before Christ, God's way of dealing with men, (after His leaving them to themselves, though not without testimony, had closed,) was that of definite responsibility by a law, and man's bearing the consequences. “This do, and thou shalt

live.” “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all that is written in the book of the law.” After redemption was accomplished, it was the revelation of sovereign grace saving the lost, Jew and Gentile, the middle wall of partition being broken down. In the age to come, (for that there is one is declared in Scripture,) God's power in the government of the world will be displayed, setting aside the power of evil, according to the clearest prophecies. Now, by grace and the power of the Holy Ghost, saints make their way in patience against the prevailing power of the god and prince of this world. Then, the power of Christ will have set aside and bound down the power of evil. In all, people are saved in the same way. But the destruction of Babylon, and the marriage of the Lamb, the Church being complete, are not small things in their nature, though they are not individual salvation. And it is beyond controversy, that this and the destruction of the Beast by Christ's coming and, note, the saints' coming with Him, precede the Millennium; while on the setting up of the great white throne and the judgment of the dead, Christ does not come at all.

To make the workings of grace and the execution of judgment and wrath on a whole system, like Babylon, the same, as Dr. Brown does, (p. 336,) is really monstrous. And to call the public destruction of Christ's enemies by power, contrasted with gracious influence, carnal, is as irreverent as it is unsound. “Let favor be shown to the wicked, yet will be not learn righteousness; yea, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see; but they shall see and be ashamed for their envy at the people; yea, the fire of their enemies shall devour them.” Thus grace and judgment are definitely contrasted; and it is stated that it is not by grace but, by judgments that righteousness will be introduced into the world.

Whatever Joseph Mede's version, (p. 316,) one thing is simply certain: that the stone (Dan. 2) never grew at all, nor exercised the smallest influence on any part of the image till it destroyed it utterly. Judgment was its first act. The “Regnum Lapidis” is a pure invention not a trace of it in the vision or the interpretation. The first act of the stone is to smite the image in the very last divided state of it, and then it becomes a mountain which fills the whole earth. No statement could more distinctly show that the proper kingdom of Christ does not yet exist. The language is as remarkable, as Mede's is inconsistent with its tenor. Daniel sees the image on to the toes of iron and clay. He then sees till a stone is cut out without hands, which smites the image on the toes. Of course, it is in the days of these kings that God sets up a kingdom; for it destroys them all in order to its setting up. They were there together, for the one destroyed the others. But the statement is distinct, that the whole image, toes and all, was there before the stone, and that the first act of the stone was the destruction of the image by smiting the toes; and there was no growth of the stone till afterward, no action or influence before. It could not, therefore, be Christianity; for this had taken possession of imperial power before the toes existed at all. The toes destroyed its then existing power. To such straits is Dr. Brown reduced here, that he declares “as kingdoms simply—as a mere succession of civil monarchies—the vision has nothing to do with them, (!) and the kingdom of Christ has no quarrel with them.” “The mission of the Church is not to supplant, but to impregnate and pervade it [civil government] with a religious character, and to render it subservient to the glory of God.” (pp. 319, 320.) The former Christianity had done before the toes existed; whether the latter, some may question. But let the reader Only consult Dan. 2 and see if it is possible more definitely to contradict what is said. They were “broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floor, and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them.” This is impregnating them and leaving them to subsist! If this last be

Christianity, it is clear Daniel does not describe it. I do not see how the infatuation of tradition could go farther.

As to Dan. 7, Dr. Brown tells us it means substantially the same. (p. 322.) Quite true. Taking and possessing the kingdom is the same, he says, as the stone smiting the image. It is rather the effect; but I admit it is the same epoch practically. But we are told by Dr. Brown, the second (the latter of these chapters) has the additional character of a judicial assize; (p. 325;) yet solemn as all the imagery is, nothing more is meant than “to intimate to us how righteous will be the destruction of that wicked interest.” (p. 327.) Let us, after seeing the kind of comment Dr. Brown gives us, (which needs none to be made on it,) remark the real character of this scene, which is analogous to that of chapter ii. The judgment sits, and the Beast is destroyed and given to the burning flame, and then the kingdom is given to the Son of man. That is, the Son of man does not get His kingdom in possession till the judgment is executed. His power is exercised in the destruction of the enemy: to use the language of the Revelation, “In righteousness he doth judge and make war.” Thus the adversary is destroyed and the kingdom set up. It is urged that the Son of man comes to receive the kingdom from the Ancient of days. The remark is just; but it has been overlooked that the horn made war with the saints, and prevailed, till the Ancient of days came. For Christ who comes is Jehovah; as He who is shown by the only Potentate, is King of kings and Lord of lords Himself. I do not know why Dr. Brown (pp. 322, 823) leaves out a part of the passage: “He shall think to change times and laws.” (Dan. 7:25.) This it is precedes the words, “And they shall be delivered into his hands.” It is not the saints, long as it has been so interpreted, who are delivered into his bands, but the times and laws—the regular words for the Jews' periodical ordinances. God may allow His saints to suffer; but He never delivers them into Satan's hands. As to Dr. Brown's interpretation of its being ecclesiastical Rome, &c., whatever analogies there may have been, I deny wholly the application of it to Pagan or Papal Rome. Bad and horrible as this last, this Babylon, may be, she is not the Beast which she rides. The horns and the Beast subsist together, which has not taken place yet; and Babylon is yet another thing.

As regards Dr. Brown's views of Satan's power, I can see nothing but the same ignorance of Scripture truths as to what the character of that power is. He thinks if unregenerate and regenerate still continue, the doctrine which supposes a cessation of Satan's influence must be erroneous. All this is a mistake, and, besides that, leaves the true question untouched. When Adam was innocent, there was no distinction of regenerate or unregenerate; he was neither, but Satan's influence was shown. When the Lord was tempted by the devil, when his power returned to try Him after having left Him for a season, it had nothing to do with regenerate and unregenerate. Christ bound the strong man and spoiled his goods even in this world. Dr. Brown confounds the state of a soul with Satan's action. When the Lord prospectively, as he says, saw Satan fall from heaven, it had nothing to do with “the whole conquests of His people,” (p. 393,) but with casting out devils, the powers (miracles) of the world to come when he will be wholly cast out. I have already said that the binding of the strong man was first between Satan and Christ in person. When he had failed in tempting the Lord, the Lord removed here below the whole power of the enemy as manifested wherever He met it: diseases, want, possession, death; but he had departed from Him only “for a season,” because another difficulty, the carnal mind, enmity against God when He is displayed in goodness, had to be met. Hence he returns at the end: “The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me.” Still it was Satan's hour and the power of darkness; yet that

the Lord might triumph over him, accomplishing the work of redemption. All this is not merely a conflict of interests on earth. (p. 394.) It is a change in the whole condition of the world, and the relationship in which it stands with God, the world's condition. Satan was not yet cast down from heaven by power and victory in conflict carried on there. The promised Messiah present in person had been rejected, and with wicked hands crucified and slain. Was this simply a battle against “Christ's truth and the devil's lies in the persons of their respective adherents among men?” (p. 384.) That battle there was, and Christ's adherents fled, and then God's purposes were accomplished, surely, in the deepest personal humiliation, self-humiliation, of Christ. Blessed be God! it was so; but in which an event, to which none is parallel, took place by the public power of Satan—we can thank God—to the destruction of his power in a total change of everything. And He who was humbled will be glorified; and the head of him who bruised the Lord's heel will be itself bruised.

I will now go through the passages Dr. Brown refers to, to show how monstrous his glosses are; because once this setting aside of Satan's power by power, contrasted with overcoming his temptations by grace, is made clear, the whole question is settled between us. In the passages referred to we shall find the proof of that judicial destruction of the public power of Satan, which Dr. Brown, by fatal mistake, confounds with the victory of the heart over him by grace, when his power subsists. For this reason I do not insist on the proofs of that destruction now: the discussion of the passages will provide it.

Dr. B. first refers to Rev. 20:7, 1-3. His first objection is that it is found nowhere else; but this is a mistake. He must be aware, or ought to be, that with the exception of Job and Zechariah, Satan is not mentioned by name in the Old Testament., save in Chron. xxi. 1. (Satan provoked David to number Israel,) and Psa. 109 in both as an adversary. In Job we see Satan as an accuser, raising a storm to destroy Job's sons, smiting Job with diseases. He is only seen to excite lusts in urging Chaldeans and Sabeans to plunder; and in no case of lies and truth in any persons. In Zechariah be is seen in a vision resisting the high priest as an accuser. So in Psa. 109:6, it is a judgment on a wicked man to have Satan at his right hand. The truth is, till the true light came, neither the opposition of flesh and Spirit, nor the deceitful working of Satan, formed part of the public teaching or experience of the saints. But where the coming of the Lord in the judgment of this world is spoken of, (Isa. 24,) introducing the millennial state, even as Dr. B. admits, then we are told He shall punish the host of the high ones which were on high and the kings of the earth upon the earth (Compare 32:1).” I do not doubt that the flesh was at work, nor that the devil tempted and deceived them; but it is not the subject of Old Testament teaching, nor the acting of Satan's power in the world, nor is its destruction. Satan is never recognized as prince of this world till he was able to lead the world, Jew and Gentile, against Christ. He could not, while Jehovah ruled in His personal presence in Israel; and till Messiah came, God kept up that system more or less. The rejection of Christ marked out Satan as the prince of this world, yet the rejected One was to bruise his head. This was not by Christianity nor by individuals overcoming while Satan held his power. We wrestle against spiritual wickedness in heavenly places— there where our promises are; as Israel against flesh and blood where their promises were.

The possession of the Holy Ghost and the true light has shown us the spring and power of evil—the Devil and Satan; and we see the Father opposed to the world, the Son to Satan, and the Spirit to the flesh. We have seen a distinct reference to the casting down of these powers on high

at the renewal of the world, in Isaiah; in the New Testament, his falling from heaven, this being his place of power; his being cast out of heaven, on which ensues a total change of governmental order, while to heaven he never returns. It is declared he shall be bruised under our feet shortly. That is, Scripture clearly contemplates the closing of the exercise of his power. The order of the setting aside of his power is stated. “There was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought, and the devil fought and his angels; and the place of these last was no more found in heaven.” According to Dr. B., this is Constantine. Let us see how this hangs together. “The Accuser of the brethren is cast down.” Did this cease in Constantine's time? If so, the whole condition of the Christian was changed. But no: this only means “he lost his party” at court! (p. 381.) And the court, I suppose, was to rejoice, and on the earth (the lower orders, says Dr. B.) woe (those who wished to be pagans: who can tell why?) He has great rage, knowing his time to be short, just 1260 days. But rage against whom? On this, or on what the woman is, total and convenient silence. The woman flees into the wilderness. I suppose we must hop over to Popery here. But that won't do, because those who follow this system say, that commenced two or three hundred years later; and, at any rate, if all is joy by the triumph of Christianity, how comes the same epoch to be the time of the woman's flight? Was there ever a lamer interpretation, or one more calculated to bring Scripture interpretation into contempt?

Is it not evident that here a display of divine power in heavenly places has cast down Satan from the place where we, it is expressly said, have to wrestle with him? While he was there, he accused the brethren. While he did, they overcame by the blood of the Lamb and their testimony. This accusation had ceased. Satan could no more enter heaven, as in Job, to do it. The dwellers in heaven could rejoice; their trial in this way was over. The rage of Satan was now to vent itself on earth. The woman, the Jewish people as God's people, became his object. Satan could be no longer an accuser. That salvation, strength, the kingdom of our God and the power of His Christ was come, meant, we are told, that it had taken a glorious start—that it is “the progress of what had been for centuries finding it hard, in the heat of continual persecution, to keep its ground.” (p. 381.) Yet strange to say, the chapter tells us that the change was to the great rage of Satan and persecution, so that the woman had to flee entirely out of the scene. Only Christianity was well at court! His being cast out to the earth is his seeking to create a party among the people! (p. 382) which, note, he had before. Dr. B. says the expulsion was brought about by the Christians overcoming by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony. But the chapter states that they overcame him in this way, while he was the accuser and in heaven. His overthrow was by the exercise of power in Michael and the angelic host. In every case it is not a victory of faithfulness, but a judicial destruction of power, which brought about a new state of things. It was not adherents to Christ's cause victorious over the influence of Satan's lies, but a judicial action of God overthrowing Satan's royal power in their favor. It is not a battle “between Christ's truth and the devil's lies in the persons of their respective adherents amongst men” (p. 384); or (pp. seq.) “just the Christians, or Christ in them, believing men sprinkled with the blood of the Lamb, undaunted in witnessing for Jesus, as became pardoned men, and ready to go as sheep to the slaughter for his name's sake.” • • • • “Thus is the devil represented as cast out of the Pagan world by the instrumentality of believing men.” This is Michael and his angels fighting in heaven, and Satan and his angels cast out, so that he accused the brethren no more there, but persecuted them with relentless rage on the earth; the christianizing of the empire, that is. (p. 380.) Afterward, when the 1260 days are finished, during which the blaspheming beast had his power, (the precise

period of Satan being on the earth when cast out of heaven, but which is the christianizing the empire, if we are to believe Dr. B.,) then the beast makes war against the Lamb; the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet having gathered the kings of the earth for the final struggle. The beast is taken, and then Satan, who had raged the three years and a half, is bound in the bottomless pit. Such is the progress of the exercise of the Lord's power against Satan, not of the saints' overcoming.

But there is a statement of this book just alluded to, which shows the more than absurdity of this whole system of interpretation. The coming of the kingdom and salvation of God, and the power of His Christ is Constantine's accession to the throne, we are told. Thereupon, says the passage, the three years and a half begins of Satan's great rage and the persecution of the woman; but this three years and a half is the time of the reign of the blasphemous beast out of the bottomless pit; so that the coming of salvation, power, and the kingdom is, according to Dr. B's system, the setting up of the power of the blasphemous beast, who is worshipped, and has every one killed he can, that does not do so! Can absurdity of a system go farther? Now take the chapter simply. The woman is the Jewish system. Satan, the prince of the power of the air, is really cast out from his place of heavenly power, where the Church had to contend with him when he was the accuser of the brethren. He is victoriously expelled thence by angelic power. But he thereupon comes down to earth, raging at his defeat and casting down, to remain yet three years and a half on earth. He thereon persecutes the woman—the Jewish people, faithful to God, but they are preserved by God—setting up the last blasphemous state of the Roman empire. At the end of this period, (the same as that stated in Dan. 12, to which the Lord refers in connection with Jerusalem,) the Lord comes as King of kings, and Lord of lords, the persecuting beast or blasphemous empire is destroyed, and Satan bound, so as not to deceive the nations till a thousand years are over. It is not grace given to overcome his wiles, as is expressly said to be the Christian position, (end that in its most advanced state, as in the Epistle to the Ephesians,) but Satan not allowed to exercise his wiles. Power external to man, divine power, figuratively represented by an angel with a great chain, binds the adversary and hinders his attempts to deceive the nations. It is evident that grace given to overcome is different from the putting down the power, so that it is not there to be overcome. God has taken to Him great power, and reigns, (Rev. 11,) and the worldly kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ come. It was not come before, as God's taking to Him His power and reigning. The saints were in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ. Christ is now expecting till His enemies be made His footstool. Then He will trample on them. But He has not them now to trample on: He is sitting on the right hand of the Father, expecting that time. Nothing, it seems to me, can be simpler, and proved by, or rather stated from, concurrent passages from various parts of the Scripture.

The difference of interpretation arises from this: Dr. B. judges of what must be from his own notions of what ought to be. The statement I have made is taken from Scripture itself. He says, (p. 386,) speaking of the binding of Satan: “Has the Church, in all time before, come to the help of the Lord against the mighty? and has the Lord, reversing all His former methods, come now to the help of the Church against the mighty? I think not; It is Christ's doing, doubtless; but it is His doing in and by His Church.” He then refers to Rev. 19:20, and says the Church will do both. (p. 386.) I believe the Church will have been caught up to meet the Lord in the air; but let that pass. The Lord does reverse His former methods. Up to this, Christ was expecting till His enemies were made His

footstool. Now they are made such, and the Lord takes to Him His great power, and reigns. Satan, heretofore an accuser in heaven, is now cast down; the salvation and kingdom of God is come, and the power of His Christ; and Satan is bound who before was not bound, and no longer allowed to deceive the nations which hitherto he had done. This is a total change in the state of things. “I think not,” is no answer to scriptural statement such as this.

Chapter 157

# Remarks on Dr. Brown's Millennium: Part 2

(Concluded from page 60.)

The other passages quoted by Dr. Brown, hardly need a comment. He quotes 1 John 3:8-10, and pretends that no one can sin unless actuated by Satan in all the sin which he cherishes and commits. (p. 399.) Now that this is the case I do not deny, though most clearly lust exists, and therefore sin without the present action of Satan. That is fundamental truth. But the apostle has given altogether another explanation of what he says (not what Dr. B. says). The reasoning plainly is, “for the devil sinneth from the beginning.” The sinner has the same character; consequently by the universal Hebrew idiom they are called his children. There is not a word of being actuated by him in the passage. The reason given as to good is not that God actuates the saint, true as that is, but that he is born of Him—has His nature. The great subject of John, in his epistle, is life and nature, not the power of the Holy Ghost, which he only refers to as a proof of dwelling in God. There is no ground for what Dr. B. says at all, important as the subject is in its place, and far too much forgotten.

The next is Heb. 2:14, 15. To this I have nothing to say. Death is the last enemy to be destroyed. What then? It is not destroyed till death and Hades give up their prey. But how does that hinder Satan, who has the immediate power of it, being bound for a thousand years? Christ can surely, if He see fit, cut off the wicked out of the land. He has the keys of Hades and death, and this, Scripture speaks of, not of the saint dying at all. These He would not cut off. Psa. 101, Is. 65.—He quotes Rom. 16:20, alluding surely to the old promise. But it is a fatal mistake, (which spewed itself in a previous passage less closely) to suppose that Satan being set aside “is equivalent to the complete destruction of all that stand in the way of our salvation.” It is a fatal lie against the truth. There is our own sinful nature besides. How it acts when temptation is not there, men may have foolishly speculated on. But Dr. B. is utterly and fundamentally wrong. It is even false to say he actuates us in hell. There is no scripture for it at all. He is the most grievously punished there—has no power. All this argument is a total failure. That sin cannot exist without Satan's presence and tribulation, he has no ground for whatever. That they go together constantly now in us is true, not necessarily always. But there is temptation without sin being yet there, as in Adam, who fell under it, and Christ, who did not. There is temptation and sin, as in our case, and there may be a sinful nature without temptation, for it certainly subsists now without it and before it. It is there already when temptation is applied to it. Dr. B. sees only a moral internal state in Satan's power, not external power, of which scripture largely speaks. “Behold I give you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means harm you.” So the cases of possession, and Job's history to which I have referred. He refers further to Rev. 2—Satan's throne being in Pergamos—and says it “certainly refers to the powerful party which Satan had in the place!” Why? A throne is not a party, and no way of expressing it, but the contrary. Satan is the prince and god of this world, the prince of the power of the air, the ruler of the darkness of this world. He has the throne. His having a party is a miserably false gloss.

I have only now to notice Dr. B.'s description of the Millennium, which requires little remark, because he applies the same passages to it I should, and our controversy is as to how it is brought in, i. e., whether by Christ's coming again or not, which he does not here speak of, and we have considered it already. But I must object to this constant tendency to set aside Christ's personal glory and its display. Thus Dr. B.'s view of the Millennium is founded on 1 Peter 1:11, “the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow. Here he takes glories for no personal glories of Christ at all, but “the glorious results of the suffering.” (424.) Now that tells the tale of the system. It is one which excludes Christ's person and personal glory, to substitute results in man for them. I love the view I have, just because it brings in Christ personally. He quotes Isa. 11:9. (425.) It is diffusion of revealed truth! Isaiah says “the knowledge of Jehovah,” as elsewhere the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah, which is not revealed truth as known by the revelation of the Father in the Son, the Holy Ghost declaring it. Otherwise, of course, we expect the earth to be full of the knowledge of Jehovah. In Isa. 25:7, he speaks of progress of fulfillment; the passage of destroying a covering at a particular time—the rod of Christ's strength out of Zion—is assumed to be the Gospel. Why so? We have already seen it is the time of the resurrection of the saints, if Paul is to be believed. The serpent's power is to be destroyed: judgment executed on the earth. Let the reader only read Isa. 24-27, and see if it be the gospel.

But a few words more precisely as to the quotation: “The rod of thy power out of Zion.” It is from Psa. 110, where the time of Christ's sitting on God's right hand, (that is, the present time of the gospel,) is explicitly contrasted with the time of the rod of Christ's power. He is to sit there till God snakes His enemies His footstool, and then rule in their midst in the day of His power, the rod being sent out of Zion, which had rejected Him, smiting through kings on the day of His wrath. Is that the gospel? It is easy to quote passages to which theological tradition has given an interpretation. Reading the passages always dispels these.

Again, Dr. Brown quotes Psa. 2:7, but what follows was too plain, and he omits it. It is this, “Thou shalt rule them with a rod of iron, and break them in pieces like a potter's vessel.” Is this the gospel too? Let the reader consult the promise to Thyatira, in Rev. 2, and he will see that this promise is reserved for the overcomer's also, when Christ comes. Till then, Christ sits at God's right hand, and His saints go to heaven. In Isa. 2, also quoted, He judges among the nations, arises to shake terribly the earth; the day of the Lord of Hosts is on everything exalted, for judgment, so that they would hide themselves in caves of the earth. How ridiculous it is to quote this for the gospel! In Isa. 66 the Lord comes with fire to render His anger with fury, and His rebukes with flames of fire, and pleads with all flesh, judging and destroying the wicked. This, for Dr. B., is the gospel. He is bold enough to quote Zech. 14:9, where the Lord gathers all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, goes forth and destroys them, and His feet stand on the Mount of Olives, and then the Lord is King over all the earth. To quote this for the spread of the gospel is infatuation. A person may say, I do not understand it; but to quote it for the gospel is presuming on carelessness or folly in the reader. The examination of the other passages would show rather that they had nothing to do with the matter, or that they prove the contrary.

A time of peace (428) it will be. But Israel will be definitely owned as God's people, (Isa. 11,) which cannot be while the gospel endures; a fact which, of itself, suffices to overthrow Dr. Brown's system. Isa. 2. I have examined. Micah 4 equally refers to Israel in the most explicit way, and judgment and vengeance on the heathen “such as they have not heard,” and Christ's presence in

Israel after Israel had been given up for rejecting Him. Its application to the last days is as plain as language can make it. Dr. B. says, the Millennium will be distinguished by much spiritual power and glory (431), and to prove it, quotes the revival in Northampton under President Edwards. He afterward quotes Isa. 56 and 60, both referring exclusively and expressly to Jerusalem and the Jews: the former insisting on the judgment of the Gentiles, the latter, as we have seen, of all flesh. To quote Rom. 11:26-29 is more than boldness. It is adduced as a description of the Millennium, as it surely is, and declares that then there shall come out of Zion the deliverer to turn away ungodliness from Jacob. Nor is that all. It is explicitly contrasted with the gospel, “as concerning the gospel they are enemies for your sakes.” So far from Israel being brought in by the gospel, they were enemies as regards that, yet as a nation (as which they cannot possibly come into the church where there is neither Jew nor Gentile) they are beloved for the fathers' sake; a principle which can have no place in the gospel as we possess it at all. And in quoting Zechariah Dr. B. is obliged to add “by faith;” “they look (by faith) on Him.” What right has he to change the express text of scripture? “Thomas, because thou hast seen, thou hast believed; blessed are they who have not seen who have believed.” Hence there are those who believe not having seen, and those who believe when they see. And in Revelation we find “behold He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they who pierced Him.” And in the passage itself, the next preceding verse, the Lord destroys the nations which come against Jerusalem: all the people of the earth being gathered together against it. It is the day of the Lord, we further read, and His feet stand on Mount Olivet. Is it not as clear as daylight in all these passages that it is a time of judgment and display of the Lord's power, as different from the gospel as one thing can be from another. The last character is the ascendancy of truth and righteousness on the earth. (437.) Why not of Christ? No, that must not be. What is the proof given of this ascendancy? “I saw one like unto the Son of man.” When the judgment of the Ancient of days was set, and the beast destroyed, and his body given to the burning flame— “and He was brought near before Him. And there was given to Him dominion, glory, and a kingdom.” Why is Christ carefully excluded by Dr. B. from the fulfillment of this, and the thought changed into the ascendancy of truth? Christ's personal glory they will not have. Are not all things in heaven and earth to be brought under Him as man? Is it; not the special purpose of God to put all things under man's feet, as man? to reconcile things to Himself in heaven and earth, (not the infernal things, comp. Phil. 2) and that contrasted with the reconciliation of the church? (Col. 1) Not only so, but in Dan. 7 the Ancient of days comes. Temporal prosperity there will be: I need not insist on it. Only, if it be the life of faith still, it is only a great danger, not a blessing.

All own this happy state will end in a final rebellion when Satan is let loose. I believe there will be a decline, as I have said, but this is not Satan's being let loose. He did not deceive the nations then; he is let loose, and does it afterward. Dr. B. tells us it cannot be an immediate change from piety to impiety. From the hypocritical form of piety to impiety it is, so as to form a complete and definitive separation of the good and the evil. They are deceived and gathered together to battle, and the saints crowded into their own camp. There is no description of a decay of love, nor cry of saints, nor failure of faith, as to the Son of man's coming. He does not come at all. There is not a hint of it, but a plain description of His coming a thousand years before, after the marriage of the Lamb, which Dr. B. says is not His coming. Now, fire comes down from heaven and destroys them; and then, without any coming, the great white throne is set up, and the dead judged.

I have done. If scripture is to be believed, Dr. B.'s system cannot stand. It is founded on tradition, not on the word. Difficulties of detail there may be; we may expect them. Human additions of theologians, Dr. B. may array in antagonism one to another; but no one can read the scripture with intelligence, and not see the difference between the gospel, gathering the saints as Christ's joint-heirs and bride, while He is sitting on the right hand of God, and His judging this world (οἰκουμενην) when He takes to Him His power; God having put His enemies under His feet. These, Dr. B. everywhere confounds, mixing up too the judgment of the quick with that of the dead, and making the redemption of the church uncertain, by bringing it into the same judgment as the wicked; while the plainest statements and language of scripture are explained away, so as to leave the personal glory of Christ out of the scene, where the word of God says it will be displayed.

As much excitement has been caused by the question, as to whether Louis Napoleon is the Antichrist or not, I add, that I have not the smallest doubt that he is the great agent of the formation of the Latin or ten horned beast at present, and that his operations distinctly mark the rapid approach of the final scenes. Blessed be God! But first, I do not think that beast to be the Antichrist, but that a false Christ in Judaea, who, will minister to his power, and deceive the nations, will be. Secondly, the saints will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air before Antichrist is revealed. And, thirdly, the computation of dates is all unfounded. There are general analogies, I have no doubt; as there have been many Antichrists who were not the Antichrist. But the precise computation of time begins again with Daniel's last week, or, more accurately, half-week, when the abomination of desolation is placed in the holy place; and then the computation is by literal days, God's short work on the earth. In a word, exact computations are by literal days, though general statements and analogies may be by years. It is to be feared England will be dragged into the vortex of the ten kingdoms: God knows. At any rate, for the Christian, his place and country, his citizenship, is in heaven always. There evils will not come, nor Satan's power—even out of the created heavens he will be cast for the power of evil to begin on earth. We justly mourn over the progress of his delusions on earth, and how the wise men of this world are deceived by him. But he cannot touch our portion; and his progress only brings us nearer to it. “Now is your salvation nearer than when ye believed.” May we have our hearts delivered from this present evil world! I think Louis Napoleon a sign of prophetical progress towards the close; but I earnestly desire that the hearts of the saints may be in heaven, where evil or its signs cannot come. I may add, that though events have made progress, the view of the position of Louis Napoleon falls in entirely with Faber's view of the first Napoleon, that he was the seventh head of the beast who was to continue for a short time. Indeed, it was that of others too.

Chapter 158

# Reflection on Mixed Marriages

[THE following remarks were made on a particularly solemn instance, where a young sister (converted in 1853) fell into the snare of accepting an offer of marriage made by a worldly man. This she had contrived to conceal from the assembly of Christians where she lived; but a delay, which arose out of seemingly accidental circumstances, gave occasion to a brother's discovering her intentions, and warning her solemnly. She owned the wrong but persisted; left for a relative's where she sickened of a violent fever, which from the first she owned to be the chastening of the Lord, and died after three days, His word having penetrated and brought her not only to entire self-judgment but to fullness of joy. The details, for various reasons, are omitted.]

The preceding history relates, in all Christian simplicity, facts which show how God can interfere in judgment to deliver His children from the sad spiritual consequences which flow from a want of faithfulness. A young Christian allowed herself to be drawn into accepting an offer of marriage with an unconverted man. Her conscience plainly showed her that she was acting against the will of God. But she did not know how to stop at the first step, and not having at once rejected, as unfaithfulness and sin, the thought of that which was offered to her, she had not afterward the strength to give it up; and God was forced to take her away from this world to keep her from a sin which she did not desire to commit, but which she had not the strength to resist. Oh, how difficult it is to stop when once we have set out in such a road!

Any one who has closely observed the walk of Christians, and who has cared for souls with a heart in any little measure zealous for the glory of the Lord and desirous of the spiritual welfare of the dear children of God, will not have failed to perceive the fatal influence that the world exercises over them when it gains entrance into their hearts. God only knows, and the one who has suffered from it, by what subtle means, and under what an amiable guise the world often invades the heart of the Christian. But the manifestation of Christ to the soul and the power of His presence, are never ways by which the world insinuates itself into the heart. Those, therefore, who are found, by grace, near Christ, are shielded from the influence of such feelings, and can judge them and everything which tends to make a way for the world within the heart, or for desires which are connected with the world.

Here we are in warfare with the enemy. He seeks to surprise us when we are not upon our guard; and in order to accomplish this, he knows even how to transform himself into an angel of light. If we are not near to Christ, and are not clothed with the whole armor of God, it is impossible to resist his devices. To resist the power of Satan is not the principal difficulty, for Christ has conquered for us this terrible enemy, but it is to discover the snares which he lays for us, and, above all, to discern that it is himself who is at work. In our combats with the enemy, it becomes a question of knowing the state of our own hearts. The single eye, (that is to say, the heart filled with Christ,) discerns the wile, and the soul has recourse to the Savior for deliverance; or even its affections being fixed upon Christ, the heart presents no prize for the efforts of the enemy. A heart that is simple and occupied with the Lord escapes many things which trouble the peace of those who are

not near Him. Thanks be to God, the troubled and tormented soul finds a resource and complete restoration in the grace of the One whom it has so foolishly forgotten; but it enjoys the fruits of grace through many sorrows and exercises of heart. Yet let it take courage. He knows how to deliver as well as to have compassion.

Now these are the two principles which regulate the ways of God with regard to us. On the one hand, God keeps the heart to cause it to discern His own purpose, and on the other, Christ intercedes for us with respect to all that may be called infirmity. There are real difficulties along the way, and there is weakness in us, and, alas! a will which does not like to be bridled, and which betrays itself in a thousand forms of thought and deed. Our weaknesses, like our will, tend to hinder us from reaching the end of our journey; but there is a great difference in the way in which God acts with regard to our weaknesses, and with regard to our will and the thoughts which flow from it. “The word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” God judges our thoughts and our intentions by His word. Nothing escapes Him; He is faithful towards us. His word is in the heart like an eye, from which nothing is concealed; all is naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. Do you hear that, foolish soul that would desire to feed upon the illusions that you love? Nothing is hidden; not one of your thoughts or intentions is hidden from the eyes of Him with whom you have to do. Nor is that all. His word is simple, plain, and clear; it speaks in your conscience: do you hear it? Do you know that when God speaks, you have to do with Him who speaks, as well as with what He says? Will you resist Him who speaks and provoke Him to jealousy? You cannot escape from Him: He has already hold over your conscience, and He will never give it up.

Will you kick against the pricks? But think rather of the end that God has in view. He might have left you to yourself; might have left you to fall into things which, if His grace interfere not, may render the whole of the wilderness journey sad and humiliating for you. He might have said to you what He said to His beloved Israel: “Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone.” (Hos. 4:17.) Terrible punishment! Harder than the most severe outward chastening! But our God will not deprive us of the light of His countenance and the sweetness of His communion. For God does not chasten willingly; it is a strange work for Him, as He says. (Isa. 28:21.) But sin is always sin in His eyes, and He cannot allow it.

How, then, does God work in our poor hearts? He reaches them by His word, in order that our conscience may see everything as He sees it Himself. His eye is upon us, upon our heart, and the eye of our conscience is enlightened as to what is passing in the heart by that word which reveals God to it. Is that which you find in your heart the thought of a pilgrim, the thought of one who loves God? Is it a thought in accordance with the will of God? A thought suitable to one whom Christ has so loved as to humble Himself even to death for him? Stop, poor soul, and ask yourself if you are allowing the thought which occupies you because it is agreeable to Christ, to the Christ who gave Himself for you, to save you? He has your salvation at heart; He loves you; He knows what tends to ruin you, to make you fall in the wilderness. He will govern by no principles except His own—those of holiness—those which are the delight of the new man—those which belong to the divine nature. He cannot deny Himself. (2 Tim. 2:13.) He desires that you should not incur the terrible discipline which awaits the soul that has wandered. He desires that you should not suffer the loss into which your folly will drag you, if you allow yourself to follow your own will. He desires

that you should not lose the enjoyment of His communion, and that the proofs of His love towards you should not be suspended or weakened in your heart. He speaks to you in His word, He judges the thoughts and the intentions of your heart. Would you rather hear Him judge you, than ask Him to deliver you from what is too mighty for you? Or will you say, like Israel, “I have loved strangers and after them will I go?” (Jer. 2:25.) You know that this thought does not come from Christ; you have not consulted Him, although you may perhaps have dared to ask Him to bless your intentions and to direct you. You know that the word judges what you are still keeping in your heart and what has power over you: you are the slave and not the master of your thought. No, that thought is not from Christ, and while you allow it, you are neglecting God and His word. Well, you are bringing upon you the chastening of God. God is full of mercy and has compassion on us and on our weaknesses. He is tender and pitiful in His ways, but if we are determined to follow our own will, He knows how to break it. He governs everything, and He governs His children in particular. He is not mocked, and what a man sows he will reap later on. (Gal. 6:7.) The worst of all chastenings is that He should leave us to follow our own ways.

The second point that I wish to lead you to remark is the government that God exercises with regard to His children. He warns them by His word, and if they do not listen, He interferes in His power to stop them, in order that He may be able to bless them. (See Job 36:5-14; min. 14, 30.) In the dealings of God, salvation is not brought into question. He looks upon His children, and chastens those whom He loves. The persons of whom the Holy Ghost is speaking in Job are called “the just.” God does not withdraw His eyes from them, and He says also to Israel by the prophet Amos, “You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.” (Amos 3:2.)

In the Epistle to the Corinthians we see that when the Christians turned the Lord's supper into a scene of dissoluteness, God laid His hand upon them. Some of them were sick and others had even fallen asleep; i.e., had died; and the apostle in calling attention to it adds, “If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.” Solemn thought! We are under the hand of the Lord who punishes sin wherever He finds it. He is a consuming fire, and when the moment is come, judgment begins at His house. What a difference between such relations with God and the joy of His love and communion when one has not grieved His Spirit, and when one is walking under His eye and in the light of His countenance! I do not doubt that a large part of the sicknesses and trials of Christians are chastenings sent by God on account of things that are evil in His sight, which the conscience ought to have paid heed to, but which it neglected. God has been forced to produce in us the effect which self judgment ought to have produced before Him. It would, however, be untrue to suppose that all afflictions are chastenings; though they are so sometimes, they are not always sent because of sin. There are things in the soul connected with the natural character, and which need to be corrected in order that we may live more in communion with God and glorify Him in all the details of life. What we do not know how to do with regard to these things, God does for us; but there are many children of God who commit faults which their conscience ought to feel, and that they would discover, if their soul were in the presence of God. Jacob had to fight all his life against himself, because God had known his ways; and in order to bless him, God must wrestle with him too, and on this account also He was not pleased to reveal His name to him. It is totally different in the history of Abraham. A thorn in the flesh was given to Paul to hinder evil; for in his case the

danger did not arise from his carelessness, but from the abundance of the revelations which he had bad.

Where there is a real affection which acknowledges God and all the relations in which He has placed us with Himself, it is absolutely impossible that a Christian should allow himself to marry a worldly person, without violating all his obligations towards God and towards Christ. If a child of God allies himself with an unbeliever, it is evident that he leaves Christ out of the question, and that be does so voluntarily in the most important event of his life. It is just at such a moment that be ought to have the most intimate communion of thought, affection, and interest with Christ; and He is totally excluded! The believer is yoked with an unbeliever. He has chosen to live without Christ: be has deliberately preferred to do his own will and to exclude Christ rather than give up his will in order to enjoy Christ and His approbation. He has given his heart to another, abandoning Christ and refusing to listen to Him. The more affection there is, the more the heart is attached, the more openly has something been preferred to Christ. What a fearful decision! to settle to spend one's life thus, choosing for a companion an enemy of the Lord's. The influence of such an union is necessarily to draw the Christian back into the world. He has already chosen to accept that which is of the world as the most beloved object of his heart; and only things of the world please those who are of the world, although their fruit is death. (Rom. 6:21-23.) “The world passeth away and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.” What a dreadful position! Either to fail in faithfulness to Christ or to have constantly to resist just where the tenderest affection ought to have established perfect unity. The fact is, that unless the sovereign grace of God comes in, the Christian man or woman always yields and enters little by little upon a worldly walk. Nothing is more natural. The worldly man has only his worldly desires: the Christian, besides his Christianity, has the flesh; and further, he has already abandoned his Christian principles in order to please his flesh, by uniting himself to one who does not know the Lord. The result of such an alliance is that he has not a thought in common on the subject which ought to be the most precious to his heart, with the person dearest to him in the world, and who is like a part of himself. They will have nothing but quarrels; as it is written, “How can two walk together except they be agreed?” (Amos 3:3.) If not, they must first yield to worldliness and then take pleasure in it; but this sad result is lost sight of when they first place themselves in the position which renders it inevitable. The Christian is drawn away little by little; he is not in communion with his Savior, and he can find pleasure in the society of a person who is agreeable to him without thinking of Jesus. When he is alone, he does not think of praying; and when he is with the one whom he loves, though his conscience or his Christian friends may warn him, he has no strength, and Christ has not sufficient power over his heart, to lead him to turn from his way and give up an affection which he knows to be disapproved of by the Lord. He binds himself more or less by other motives, such as a feeling of honor, sometimes, alas! by more detestable motives, such as pecuniary interest, and he sacrifices his conscience, his Savior, his own soul, as far as it depends upon him, and, at all events, the glory of God. That which at first was nothing more than a fancy has become unrestrained will.

There is another remark which the history of this young person leads me to make. The first start of a converted soul, however sincere it may be, produces anything but the judgment of self and the flesh, which, by unveiling to us our weakness, causes us to lay down our burden at the feet of Jesus. We then seek for strength only in Him, and we confide in Him alone. The confidence which

a soul that knows and distrusts itself has in Jesus, is what gives it a lasting and solid peace, when it has understood, not only as a doctrine, but by the acceptance of the heart, that He alone is our righteousness. But we only arrive at this when we have been in the presence of God and have there made the discovery that we are only sin, that Christ is perfect righteousness, and God perfect love. From that time we distrust ourselves, we fight against ourselves, and the flesh and the enemy have no longer the same power to deceive us.

I do not think that the young person of whom these pages speak had been stripped of self. There are many Christians in this condition, and although we may all be exposed to the same dangers, yet such have more particularly to dread the wiles of the enemy, because they have not learned how far the flesh deceives us, and do not know with how terrible a traitor we have to do. When we have come to a knowledge of this, although there may be a lack of watchfulness, yet Christ has a larger place in the heart, and there is more calm and lees of self.

Observe how deceitful the heart is, and how it loses all self-command when it departs from God. That poor young girl, (when she was getting farther and farther into the slough, on the borders of which she had been trifling, to use her own expressions,) asked her mother's friend to do all she could to remove every obstacle; and she, who was a woman of some piety, was surprised that A. should be disposed to unite herself to a worldly man.

How wily and deceitful is our heart! What slaves does an idol make of us! For although we may endeavor to escape the danger, yet we take means to secure the accomplishment of the thing that we desire, even while we flee from it. What a terrible thing it is to get away from God! This young person, before she was entangled through this affection, would have shrunk with horror from the idea of such an action. When the heart has abandoned God, it dreads man more even than God. The God who loved A., and who was really beloved by her, must needs take her away from this world where she had not the courage to return to the right path. God took her to Himself. She died in peace, and through pure grace she triumphed. The Christian, whilst enjoying peace in his last moments, should always feel that it is God whose hand is there. What a solemn lesson for those who wish to depart from God and from His holy word, in order to satisfy an inclination which it would have been easy to overcome at first, but which, when cherished in the heart, becomes tyrannical and fatal!

May God grant to the reader of these lines, and to all His children, to seek His presence day by day.

# Moses

(Ex. 33:12 - 34)

The intelligence and decision of Moses' soul in Ex. 33 is much to be observed. There was a good deal to solicit his confidence, had he not been fully persuaded that nothing but “sovereign grace” would reach his need.

Not to mention the terms of the Law from Sinai (for he had already refused them (see chap. 20), fearing and quaking before them), he was solicited by the offer of the angel, who would either bless or punish according to Israel's desert. (See chap. 23, 32)

And still more. Moses had, been taken beyond the region of the fiery law, and beyond the place where he had heard the promise of this angel of the covenant, the conditional covenant, and had been introduced to “the shadows of good things to come,” to “ordinances of divine service and a worldly sanctuary.” (See chap. 25 - 31)

This last was a great attraction, such as the religious mind of man has constantly yielded to. The Galatians were beguiled by this attraction. They returned to ordinances, “beggarly elements.” There was the like tendency at Colosse. So among the Hebrews. But Moses stood this attraction as well as the other. And after all this, his conscience is still uneasy; he has got nothing which his heart can rest in, and he says to the Lord, “Show me now thy way.” (Chap. 33:13)

In answer to this the Lord promises His presence. (Ver. 14-17). But, however desirable and mindful that was, Moses desires more, and be further says, “I beseech thee, Show me thy glory.” (Ver. 18)

Now all this was the way of a soul that had learned, its great necessity as a sinner; for neither the law, nor conditional covenants, nor shadows and ordinances, nor mere promises of high order, will meet a sinner's case; it demands “sovereign grace.” And the Lord delights in such faith. He at once answers the demand it made, promising to deal with Israel, whom Moses represented and pleaded for, in sovereign and boundless grace. “I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee, and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will shew mercy.” (Ver. 19) In Rom. 9:15, where these words are quoted as the expression of sovereign electing grace, what satisfied Moses, Paul preaches as God's gospel for sinners.

Moses is then satisfied. He asks no more. This will do, though nothing less would. All that now remains is, that he gets what has now been promised. And, accordingly, on the next day he goes to the appointed place, and there the name is proclaimed, the name of Him who would deal in sovereign grace with him; and Moses bows and worships.

This is a beautiful path of faith. There is the urgency of a soul that knows its necessity, and there is the delight of the Lord in answering it. The urgency of Moses on this occasion may remind us of Abraham's demand in Gen. 15:8, and also of the Shunamite in 2 Kings 4, who would not be

satisfied with the servant and the staff but must have the prophet himself.

“The glory of the Lord” passes before Moses. He reaches “the end of the law” and gazes with “unveiled face.” (2 Cor. 3) He gets a sight of Christ, and an audience of the gospel. The light of the glorious gospel of Christ who is the image of God shines into him. He sees the glory of God in the face of Jesus. (2 Cor. 4) And no danger can possibly reach him; for the Lord shelters him with His own hand, while all that might or rather would have injured passes by.

This is very blessed. It is like the Lord shutting in Noah, when the waters were arising. It is like the Lord appointing the blood, while the sword of judgment went through the land. In the shadow of the divine hand Moses is hid, till “the back parts” were to be seen. The face in this passage, I believe, means the law or the dispensation that went before; the back parts mean the gospel or the dispensation that comes after.

Nothing can surpass such a picture of the abounding grace of God and the security of him who took refuge in it. And how does Moses entertain it? He is “changed into the same image from glory to glory.” He gazes and listens while the glory passes, and the name is published. His spirit drinks in the revelation. It was a cheering light, it was not an overwhelming but a gladdening brightness. The spirit of the believer lives in it. Moses worships—and all the request he has on his lips bespeaks his present satisfaction” let my Lord, I pray thee, go among us.” It is no longer a request for further revelations and discoveries of the Lord, but a request for the company of Him now reached and discovered.

Thus was he changed into the same image from glory to glory, (2 Cor. 3:18.) Christ is filled to give assurance and liberty and joy, to end one's searchings and uneasiness as a sinner. And Moses experienced this. He was changed into the same image.

Chapter 160

# Names of God: Sovereign Ruler

This name, which has been rendered “Sovereign Ruler,” Master, Lord, is applied to the Lord, as God the Savior, I apprehend, in four passages of the word of God, in a peculiarly solemn way in connection with judgment—the irresistible judgment which the Lord will bring. The writer would just notice the passages, in the hope that something further of truth may be elicited regarding them, from the editor or other source.

Two of the passages in which this word occurs (Acts 4 and Rev. 6) bring out, in a remarkably vivid manner, the difference between the former and the present dispensation; the striking contrast indeed in knowledge and walk, and divine experience between the Church as under grace and a people under law. I would first refer the reader to Jude and 2 Peter for the use of this title, and the connection in which it is found. In Jude (ver. 4) we read, “For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, (judgment or sentence,) ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying our only Master (δεσπ■την) and Lord Jesus Christ.” Jude, in a peculiarly energetic way, treats of apostasy up to its judgment. In 2 Peter 2:1 we find a similar prophetic strain of apostasy and judgment with this name: “There shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord (δεσπ■την) that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.” It may be well to note here, not “bought” in the sense of redemption, not a redeemed people; but a price has been paid, a full price. They refuse to own or obey the Master.

Let us refer to Rev. 6:9-11. Those who cry “with a loud voice” represent a martyred company (the first martyred remnant in the book) “that were slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held.” Their souls seen under the altar evidently figurative, they had laid down, or offered, their bodies. They cried, “How long, O Sovereign Ruler (■■σποτα) holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?” They cry in the same spirit and words as the remnant of Israel whom we find in the Psalms; these people in their tribulation looking for One who will come forth as Deliverer to shed the blood of their enemies. A reference to Psa. 79:6-12 will show the cry and expectation; also Psa. 58:9-11, and 68:23.

The Lord is seen here as a God of judgment. It is not grace. They are not the children of the heavenly Father. We do not find the Church here. These cry for vengeance on their enemies, and the Lord will hear and answer them. Isa. 63:1-6, reveals Jehovah Messiah “traveling in the greatness of his strength” in the day of vengeance, because “the year of my redeemed is come;” while Rev. 19 speaks of that hour in fuller terms.

We will now see how the Church at Jerusalem appeal to the Lord under this solemn name of δεσπ■της. Peter and John are in persecution in their service and testimony, and the rulers threatening them, when Peter “filled with the Holy Ghost” utters the bold testimony. (Acts 4:8-12.) On being commanded “not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus,” Peter speaks that simple word, “we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.” What a definition of real testimony! God must be hearkened to; and out “of the abundance of the heart the mouth

speaketh;" reminding of John's definition of Christianity, "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us;" (1 John 4:16;) not our experiences and convictions which man, as man, loves to dwell on, but the love of God we have known. On further threatening "being let go, they went to their own company." (Ver. 23.) In testimony to and before the world—in boldness, in persecution, they seek the presence of God with a separated people, bloodwashed worshippers who, in the liberty and presence of the Holy Ghost, can "lift up their voice to God with one accord," (a prayer-meeting indeed!) and said, "Lord, (δ■σποτα), thou art God which hast made heaven and earth, and the sea and all that in them is." The Creator of all things. It seems to me to be extremely beautiful that these, in the intelligence and power of the Spirit of the Lord, quote enough of Psa. 2 to mark what was said of the opposition of kings and rulers; yet they do not look on to the judgment, the wrath of which the psalm speaks, much less do they seek to shelter themselves from persecution or call on that name for vengeance on their enemies. They call for blessing, as verse 29 shows "And now, Lord, behold their threatenings, and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word." Healing, signs, and wonders to be done by the name of the holy child Jesus—the full answer we have in the sequel. What a marked difference between a people in the enjoyment of heavenly grace—suffering, serving, and praying while waiting for the Son of God from heaven, (a truth, however, with the full blessing of the Church, more fully revealed by Paul,)—and a people who cry to Him to shed the blood of their enemies, a cry which He will answer in righteousness, which brings judgment!

The reader will observe that in Acts 4 the title δεσπ■της is applied to God as such, the Creator, and contradistinguished from His "holy servant (πα■ς) Jesus." I doubt not that this, and other scriptures so used, do but bring out distinctly the glorious divinity of the Lord Jesus, "who created all things." For instance, in John's writings God and Christ are used as one and the same. In chapter 1 of the Apocalypse we see the Lord spoken of as the Jehovah of the Old Testament—the Lord God Almighty, as the Ancient of Days, yet as the Son of man. So in Dan. 7, the Son of man comes to the Ancient of Days (contradistinguished as in Acts 4); but it is seen in the same chapter of Daniel that it is the Ancient of Days Himself who comes. In Rev. 1, Jehovah Jesus, the Ancient of Days, the coming One, the Living One; a Man victorious over death, and has "the keys of hades and of death." (Ver. 18.) I apprehend that in the passages considered, the ΔΕΣΠΟΤΗΣ is to be regarded as our God and Savior the Lord Jesus Christ, "who is over all God blessed forever. Amen."

One might well say that the Holy Ghost has "the pen of a ready writer." With what names and titles does He invest the Lord Jesus! How He puts crown upon crown upon His head, who is "crowned with glory and honor!" Whether it be the Lord's divine, essential glory, as God; His living official glory, or His moral glory; the heart and ways and sympathies of the Son of man, (so attractive and so binding the soul to Him as really known;) whether it be a name setting forth His love and grace, who came to seek and to save the lost; or one denoting His rights and sovereign rule and power in judgment—all is perfect, because all divine.

May our hearts be bowed in worship. Amen.

Chapter 161

# Names of God: 3 Names

That God, in the revelation of Himself, employs different names for the purposes of that revelation, which bring out some particular character in which He is pleased to act in the display of Himself, every one who has paid the least attention to Scripture is perfectly aware of.

There are three names especially which constitute so many grounds and bases of relationship with Him. He always was what is revealed in each one; but He was it not formally in relationship with man, until revealed for that purpose.

God is the general name of the Being—Elohim.

Almighty was the name He took as the special protector of Abraham—Shadda■.

Jehovah, as in relationship with Israel, the abiding One, “who was, and is, and is to come,” who will accomplish in power what He has promised and undertaken in grace (see Ex. 6:3). As this was the name He thus formally took with Israel, to whom these oracles were given, He is careful to show, from the outset, that Jehovah their God was the Elohim Shaddai (“God Almighty") of creation and of Abraham. And hence the name of Jehovah is introduced from the beginning of any relationship of God with His creatures, though it was not the name of formal revelation and relationship. (Comp. Gen. 2)

3. The third name is Father. This is with Christians. Hence it is said in 2 Cor. 6:17, 18, “Come out from among them and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you and will be a Father to you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” That is, the living God (see verse 16), Jehovah Shadda■ makes Himself Father with those who come out and believe.

As soon as God begins to unfold His ways with His creation, to be in relationship with it as a subsisting thing, and the ground on which this is based, and manner in which it has been formed, is developed, He reveals Himself as being that very Jehovah whom the Jews knew as their God. When it was the mere fact of creation in power, the great thing was to show that God, as such, did it. Elohim created, Elohim made; but when God is teaching what He was for this creation, and how He took such a place, He takes a name of relationship in which those to whom the revelation was addressed knew Him as their God. He is called not simply Jehovah, but Jehovah-Elohim, so as to connect the two thoughts, and show the Jehovah their God as Elohim the Creator, the supreme source of all things. And this was of the very last importance. Germans and infidels, who are entirely ignorant really of the whole scope and purport of Scripture, naturally find some reason within the scope of their infidelity (which cannot reach beyond a question of documents), for what is really altogether a perfection, and a pretty evident one for such as are at all attentive to Scripture.

Chapter 162

# No Contradiction in God's Ways Now and of Old

Of old God, in patient grace, did deal with man on lower grounds than the gospel—put them under the schoolmaster up to Christ. But there was no contradiction in it. It took the ground of man's responsibility to God; and God dealt in partial temporal judgments, and even in cutting off the people, as showing the true result of being on this ground, which the gospel fully confirms, though this way of dealing be not the gospel. The former history was promise or law; the gospel is neither, but perfectly consistent with both, while putting man on another ground, and that is, redemption, where the true light on fully shine, where grace and heavenly blessing can reign through righteousness. God's way of meeting man under promise, and, still more, his way of meeting man under law, must be different from his relationship with them under redemption. But promise told that the redemption would come; and law made the need of the redemption felt, by putting mail on the ground of responsibility to god, so as to make redemption a far clearer and more felt thing, and God's goodness far more distinct and intelligible. But the unbeliever, who judges of all as one system by his own thoughts and views, insists on the variance, as if it were a contradiction, and hence all could not be divine. It is about as much sense as if I should insist on the contradiction of a mall's bringing seed, and putting it into a field, and then reaping it, and taking it all out

# Note

At the time we speak of, we find that in that day a fountain shall be opened for all sin and uncleanness for this “House of David,” so long noted for its unfaithfulness, which had been the chief cause of the ruin of the nation. (Comp. Zech. 13:1.)

# Notice

Dialogs on the Essays and Reviews, by one who values Christianity for its own sake, and believes in it as a revelation from God. London: W. H. Broom, 34, Paternoster Row.

We strongly recommend this work to such as have to do with the rationalists of the day. (and who has not?)

Notice

Justification and Acceptance with God; or, an Inquiry into the relative value of the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Christ, and of the Law. By a Student of Scripture. London: G. Morrish, 24, Warwick Lane, Paternoster Row, Ex.

The reader will do well to procure and circulate this treatise, which discusses with calmness the subject of divine righteousness, in its various bearings, within eight chapters and less than 170 pages. Extracts are given in the Introduction, which indicate clearly the Puritanical source of that modern divinity which attributes pardon to the blood, and justification and heaven to the law fulfilling of Christ; and this in contrast with the larger and truer thoughts of the Reformers. It is plain, however, that God has been graciously pleased to clear away yet more of error and to bring out the truth of Scripture on this grave theme with increasing light in our own day. Puritanism, as to God's testimony, was no movement in advance.

Chapter 165

# Original Sin and Christianity

The history of the Bible is the history of original sin; the doctrine of the Bible is the doctrine of God's putting it away forever. Does not the history of our races (I do not say our creation) begin with the declaration that Adam, fallen and driven out from God, begat a son in his image, after his likeness, the fruit being shown in sin against his brother, as Adam's sin had been against God, and so death actually in the world—the death of the pious marking the predominance of evil. That is the early history of sin attached to our origin, and so in our nature. Further, when the flood had swept away the insupportable violence and corruption of the world, (and of the world begun again in Noah, in whom rest was given concerning the work of man's hands, and the curse taken so far off the ground,) did he not turn the blessing into drunkenness, he to whom government had been entrusted? and did not shame and a son's wickedness inaugurate the new career of man? Did not man then sink into idolatry, of which there is no appearance before, having built a tower to establish his own will? The form of the world, in nations and peoples, is founded on it; God then called out Abraham from the midst of this idolatry, and, after a lapse of some 400 years, so that a people should be formed, brings them out of Egypt with a high hand, leads them to Sinai to give them His law—the rule of life for a child of Adam. But they made the golden calf before they had time to get it graven on stone, though they had heard the voice of God out of the midst of the fire.

Such, then, is man according to the history of the Bible: and so you will find it throughout. Before the consecration of Aaron and his sons was over, Nadab and Abdul had offered strange fire and were slain; and Israel, responsible under the priesthood, closed its history by the Ark's being taken, and judgment coming on the priesthood itself in Eli: so that the whole system was closed, for without the Ark there was no regular association with God at all. God interfered by a prophet, but that was sovereign grace. When the royalty was established Solomon fell into idolatry; and at last Lo-ammi (not my people) was written on the chosen people of God, where He had set His name that it might be owned in the midst of the universal corruption and idolatry of the world, and where grace and warning had dealt “till there was no remedy.” When God set up a head of Gentile power in Nebuchadnezzar, he sets up an idol and persecutes the saints, and the whole series of these monarchies takes the character of unintelligent ravenous beasts. But chief and last of all, (save special mercy on His intercession,) when God declared, “I have yet one Son: it may be they will reverence my Son when they see him;” they said, when they saw Him, “This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours.” They had then no cloak for their sin. They had seen and hated both Him and His Father. There was a reprieve through His intercession on the cross, and the Holy Ghost announced a glorified Christ, and the open door of repentance; but they would not go in. They closed the history of man with this word of judgment: “Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye.” A judged world, a broken law, persecuted prophets, the slain just One, the resisted Spirit, sum up the history of man, the history of original sin. Man must be born again.

It is a sad and solemn picture, and ought to be brought home to one's own heart, in which it is all morally true. But it brings this comfort with it, that it shows the new blessing brought in by the Last

Adam to be itself entirely apart from the corrupt first Adam, though moral intelligence be brought out by their conflict and the need of God's grace be surely found in it. But Christianity has its basis in resurrection, after the work of redemption; that is, a passage into a wholly new state after God's perfect goodness, and His righteousness, too, had been proved as to the old.

Paul sums up the great truth in saying, “we were by nature the children of wrath, even as others;” and then, “but God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together.... created in Christ Jesus.” And this makes death and resurrection the great topic of the epistles. “Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, and alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” So Peter, though less fully and elaborately: “we are begotten again to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead;” and, “as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind.” Am I not right in saying, that the history of the Bible is the history of original sin—of, one who had to confess, if he knew himself, “Behold, I was shapen in wickedness, and in sin did my mother conceive me?” It was accompanied by marvelous longsuffering and gracious dealings, which only brought out this sin, till, the tree having been digged about and dunged, it was proved no care could make a bad tree bring forth good fruit; and the Lord says, “Now is the judgment of this world.” “The world seeth me no more.” But this was only to bring in redemption and set man on a wholly new footing, beyond evil and in the glory of God; so that it should be said, “when we were in the flesh;” “but ye are not in the flesh.” And this true and divine dealing with our nature, according to the revelation of God, is what is fully brought out in Romans; and hence, deserved condemnation, atonement, death, and resurrection. Indeed, in doctrine the epistle goes no farther—not on to ascension; because it is laying the great moral ground of sin, and putting it away, in guilt and power alike; and man's acceptance with God on a new footing: it only once just states the result of ascension as a final fact in the chain. But the same truth is insisted once and again, as in the passages already quoted. So, in experience, “I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.” The flesh “is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” It “lusts against the Spirit.” “They that are in the flesh cannot please God.” “I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me.”

God has not said in vain, “Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually;” and this said, too, in grace, “I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth.” It was not merely the previous wickedness of the antediluvians. They were gone. It was His motive for dealing with the race no, more in that way. So the Lord, “Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.” Did you ever see it stated in Scripture that good things come out of his heart naturally? God has tried it in every way. It was lawless, broke the law, killed His Son, resisted His Spirit. The dealings of God, in patient mercy, which we find in Scripture, only wrought this out, so that we might have a Scriptural delineation, a history, which proved that sin which, after all, is the history of our own hearts. For self-will, law-breaking, slighting Christ, and resisting the appeals of God's Spirit, are not confined to antediluvians or Jews. The Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that all might come on the ground of pure mercy. And you will see that, (developed only in promise in Adam's time, then by prophecy, in figures under the law, in accomplishment in Christ, in testimony to His glory by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven,) the putting of sin away is the great doctrine of Scripture. “Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin (not the sins, as

often falsely cited) of the world." It is changing the whole principle on which the world, as such, stood. So, again, "But now once in the end of the world," i.e., the consummation of the ages—these times of testing responsible man from Adam to Christ, "he hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." That is morally founded, as to the glory of God, on the death of Christ, and man after Him is introduced by resurrection into the new condition, beyond sin, consequent on that glorifying of God. At the same time there is the bearing of sins for the redeemed; but this is not our subject now. Thus a depth is given to Christ's sacrifice which mere salvation, precious as it is, could not give, though we come into it so. "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him."

Hence, while we must come in as sinners by the cross, or there is no truth in the inward parts, and sin is not judged in ourselves, without which there is no moral deliverance, and by which we morally side with God against ourselves as sinners and against sin; yet, when we have entered by this new and living way, it is not a standing without, in the hope that, by the blessed One's bearing our sins on the cross, we may be safe; but (where that has been fully realized by us as the needed and only way) we have now passed within, by the new and living way, and contemplate the cross in peace, so to speak, from the divine side, and see all the absolute beauty of it. And there is nothing like it—nothing in which God is thus morally glorified. "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again." He does not even say, "for the sheep:" it is the thing itself which is so excellent. And this makes me so often feel mere evangelical teaching so poor, even where true, as I thankfully say it is, as far as it goes. It leaves the Christian outside, hoping for and thinking only of, himself, instead of the deep conviction that there is no good thing in himself, bringing him in by an accomplished work, and then, as within, looking that he should display the character suited to it. They are right to dread Antinomianism and to distrust themselves. But I suspect that the true secret of putting Christians under the law (which Christianity does not) is, that, having nothing of the discipline of the primitive church, they are obliged to modify the gospel, and make the law a schoolmaster after Christ, to keep men in order. Then all fall naturally into it; because man has the keeping of it. If he has a tender conscience, it tortures him, as we often see; if not, he thinks of himself, takes for granted some failure is to be there, judges it perhaps pretty easily—will really sorrow over it, if the new nature be there—but, in any case, he can think of himself, and that the heart likes. A man likes thinking badly of himself, ay, and saying so, better than not thinking of himself at all, and simply displaying Christ's gracious life by thinking on Himself only. We have to judge ourselves; but our right state is thinking of the Lord alone. Is not having done with self the really difficult thing? Is it not the aim of Christianity, settling first, in a divine way, the question of sin righteously with God by atonement? And is not power there to deliver from self or flesh, and give us the victory, though we may fail? It is a humbling thought that we are such. But it is better to know ourselves; and the largest supplies of grace, and divine objects, are there to take us out of ourselves. In the Philippians we have the pattern of it in one of like passions with ourselves. There, in the picture of the Christian normal state, the flesh (save having no confidence in it) and sin are not mentioned. Yet the writer had a thorn in the flesh to keep it down. If we were perfectly humble, we should not need humbling; but we do, all of us, even Paul, as we see in this ease.

Christ, then, has been manifested to put away sin out of God's sight, out of man's heart, and out of the world: the great work which does it is accomplished; the results are not all accomplished in power. He who has not judged original sin, has not the estimate of the new nature animated by the Spirit of God, which is on God's side against sin. I judge the individual in no way: he may hate what he sees in himself of actual sin. I speak of abstract, moral truth. He who does not see the principle, and nature, and guilt of sin, as it stands in man's self-will, has not the estimate which the knowledge of a holy nature in reconciliation to God gives.

Chapter 166

# The Path in Days of Difficulty

Our present path is a very simple one. There may be all sorts of evil here and there, and even God's people are so mixed up with it that we may not be able to say who are His and who are not. “Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His.” But we have also a word to act upon the conscience: “Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.” If you say, I know what I am in is unscriptural, and I am constantly involved in what is wrong; but I see nothing better; I answer that you must not go on with that: “depart from iniquity.” We are told to purge ourselves from vessels to dishonor—that he who does, “shall be a vessel unto honor,” sanctified and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work.” Then, it may be urged, you will have to go alone, or lead in some new thing. But not so; I have to “follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” In these days, however, a great deal of patience also may be needed, as, indeed, Paul proceeds to remind Timothy in his day. Jeremiah was indignant at the state of things he saw around him; but he received the word, “If thou shalt take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth.” (chap. 15.) So, at present, one might be provoked to abstain from having anything to do with persons in the sects, &c.; but we have to remember that there are true saints of God in these associations whose good we are to seek for the Lord's sake, and deliverance from all that is offensive to Him. If it be argued that, in this case, we ought to go with them, the answer is, “let them return unto thee; but return not thou unto them.” J. N. D.

Chapter 167

# Fragment: Writings of Paul and of John

The writings of Paul bring out the doctrines of Christ; those of John, the person of the Lord. God is light and God is love.

Chapter 168

# Paul at Miletus

Acts 20

We have, in the progress of scripture, several instances of dying saints and servants of God taking leave of the scene here, and of their ministry in it. Jacob does so, and so Moses, and Joshua, and David. And among them Samuel also, in a very affecting scene recorded in 1 Sam. 12.

In this chapter, the apostle Paul is in the like conditions. He is taking leave of his ministry on the shore at Miletus, in the presence of the Ephesian elders.

Paul's story, in the book of the Acts, consists of two parts his service and his sufferings. In the one we see Paul, the servant of Jesus; in the other, Paul the prisoner.

The first part ends with this twentieth chapter, having begun, I may say, with chapter 13:1. The second ends with the book itself having begun with chapter 21.

That, however, which attracts me at this time, is Paul, in chapter 20., in contrast with the Lord Jesus in like conditions, in John 13-17. For there the Lord is taking leave of His ministry in the presence of the twelve, as here the apostle is doing the same in the presence of the bishops of the church in Ephesus.

There are points of contrast very vividly presented to us, and the human, in its vast conditions, stands beside that which was divine as well as human, and the distinctions are finally maintained and expressed.

But this is only what we would have reckoned upon. We are instinctively conscious that Paul, the brightest, highest sample of a vessel of God anointed and filled by the Spirit, stands before the affections and recollections of the heart very differently from the Lord. Our love to him is that which we give to a fellow creature, and that only; the love which we give to the Lord Jesus is a worshipping love. This we feel instinctively; we need not to be taught. We know it, and thus we carry, in the sensibilities of our renewed mind, the witness of that which Scripture tells us, that Jesus was God as well as man, and that the most gifted vessel in God's house, though he be also the most self-surrendering saint, is still but a fellow-creature.

The contrast which these scriptures afford, (the Lord in a parting hour, and Paul in a parting hour,) gives us a sample and illustration of all this, and reseals the conclusions of our souls already reached and rested in, as I have said, instinctively.

The points of contrast may be thus noticed:-

1. The apostle submits his ministry to the judgment of his brethren. He tells them of the humility and tears with which he had conducted it; and then of his diligence in it, how he had taught them publicly and from house to house; and in his preaching how he had embraced both Jew and Gentile. And all this is sweet in him and well becomes him.

He treats them as fellows in the service of God, and submits his own peculiar measure and manner of service to them; as they might do with him.

But, I ask, is this the style of the Lord Jesus? Does He, after this manner, submit His work to the approval of man? In the chapter I have referred to, we do not see Him doing this even with His Father. He is then rather delivering up His ministry as now accomplished. “I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do,” is His language, while his eyes are toward heaven, and his voice is addressed to the Father there. He delivers up an accomplished work, a work which He knew Himself was all perfect. This was His glory, as a minister, His glory in His ministry. In the stead of submitting it to the approval of His apostles, He rather, as I have said, delivers it up to His Father, as that which had been accomplished to perfection.

Paul tells the Ephesian elders, that he was going on his way, bound in spirit, to Jerusalem, but that he did not know what was to happen to him, beyond what the Holy Ghost had witnessed, that bonds and imprisonment awaited him.

Was this the Lord, again, I ask? The very opposite shows itself in Him. When He was taking leave of His ministry and of His servants, He lets them know that He knew all things, things near and things afar off, things in heaven and things on earth. The story of the world's enmity, and of the sufferings of the righteous in it, and the story of eternity itself; for He tells them also, that He will return to take His people home with Him to be in the Father's house, there to abide forever. Surely this is the glory of the Lord again; and bearing witness of the One with whom we are conversing, in John 13-17

Again the apostle tells his companions that, however largely and intimately he may have been with them hitherto, he was now about to leave them, and that they would see him no more.

But what says the Lord in contrast with this? Paul could say nothing more, I grant. He, as a man, a fellow-creature, about speedily to close his career, and his service here by death, had but to say, “You will see my face no more.” But again, I ask, does the Lord say this? Quite the contrary. He lets His servants know, that He would never cease to see them, and they should never cease to see Him. “Because I live, ye shall live also,” He says to them. “The world seeth me no more, but ye see me,” and so should it be forever. He would return to them and for them. They should see Him in spirit till that time came, and then in glory, as with Him in the Father's house forever.

What outshining is here Paul could not speak in loftier language than he did the Lord could not speak in lower strain than He did. It is the creature and God: it is the sweet, attractive, loving form of human companionship—it is the irradiation of personal, divine glory.

Then, again, we listen to the apostle caring not for prison or for death; and fine this is. It may humble us to find such a self-sacrificing faith in another. Paul laid his life on the altar, and was ready to have it offered up. But when we listen, in His turn, to the Lord Jesus, we hear the language of One who was going, as He knew, back to the Father in glory, because He had now glorified God and the Father on earth. Paul would blessedly brace himself for that which remained of the conflict and the journey; but the Lord was at the end of it in the conscious perfection of One who had so glorified God in the world here, as gave Him His place and His title of being glorified with God in the heavens.

And we further find the apostle giving counsel to his brethren; and seasonable and right counsel it was. It could not be more just and fit, we may say. It was this—to serve God in His Church, and to look to themselves, for dangers were at hand.

But what do we find in Christ corresponding to this? He counsels His apostles too, and various are His words to them. But among them, He tells them that they shall bear witness to Him. And He tells them that the Holy Ghost, who is about to come from heaven, shall also bear witness to Him, and serve the glory of His name by taking of His things and showing them to them.

What infinite and yet due distance is there here? Could Paul tell the Ephesian elders anything like this? Could he, would he, dare he, make himself their object, or the subject of their ministry, as soon as he had left them? He tells them, and rightly so, to serve God and look to themselves. But without robbery, Jesus puts Himself in company with God, making Himself together with the Father the object of the Holy Ghost's testimony and of the apostle's ministry.

Surely in each and every feature of this contrast, the glory of One who was infinitely above the first of the mere children of men, shines out. It all confirms the instructive impressions of our own souls, telling us that with Jesus, but with Jesus alone, of all the sons of men, we are in conscious converse with the living God Himself, with One whom we worship as well as love.

6. Still, however, there is more of this. Paul commits his brethren and companions to God and to the word of His grace. What more could he do? But what does the Lord do, in like conditions, leaving behind Him His apostles and saints, as Paul was leaving behind him his companions and brethren? Variously, and all-gloriously, does He act indeed. He leaves His peace with them; He washes their feet, so that they might appear before God “clean every whit.” He promises them the Spirit to be their light and comfort, and He commits them to the Father, that the Father might continue to do for them in His absence, what He Himself had been doing for them while He was with them. What out breakings of divine glory! And He undertakes to give them His care and thought and service, till He have perfected their condition, and that forever, in the house of the Father.

If Paul, as a man, could do nothing more than he did, Jesus is here doing what none less than Jehovah's fellow could have done, or dared to have attempted.

7. And, once more, in tracing this wondrous subject: Paul submits his conduct to the judgment of his brethren. “I have coveted no man's silver or gold or apparel; yea, ye yourselves know that these hands have ministered to my necessities, and to them that were with me.” He stands before them in the testimony of a good conscience. I do not blame him, or seek to depreciate him for this, though on another occasion he could say, it was a very small thing with him to be judged of man's judgment, (1 Cor. 4:3,) and would own that he was a fool in glorying. (2 Cor. 11; 12) But, again, I say, I do not blame or depreciate him for this. But I ask, Is this the Lord Jesus? Does He submit His conduct to the judgment of men any more than His ministry? No, indeed. He rather asserts three grand and glorious moral facts connected with Himself, and His way and life and behavior in the world. He tells His apostles that He had glorified God in the earth; He tells the Father that He had glorified Him in His ministry to the elect; and He says of Himself, “the prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me.”

What conscious moral elevation expresses itself here! It is moral glory of a quality necessarily, essentially divine. This was a life and conduct that God manifest in flesh alone could exhibit. We dare not seek the like of it anywhere but in Jesus. It is our joy to know that it could not be found elsewhere in heaven or on earth, among angels or men; that none but the Son of the bosom, who was also the Son of man, could have rendered such a living sacrifice of pure incense and sweet savor; a sacrifice more acceptable to the blessed God than the obedience of a whole creation could have been.

Thus have we looked at the glory that excelleth. Sweet moral beauty there was in Paul indeed. We may be humbled in ourselves as we look at or think of such a man. But our own souls tell themselves, and the histories tell us in like manner, that it is all of another kind and quality, differing in material and in temperament altogether from that which shows itself to us in the Lord Jesus. In Him it was divinely moral beauty. It was the gold wire worked in the ephod. (Ex. 39:3.) And let me just further ask, Is there not the expression of humanity in the scene, as it closes, which we could not get in the kindred scene between the Lord and His apostles? “Paul kneeled down and prayed with them all; and they all wept sore and fell on his neck and kissed him.” Precious to the heart this is. We long to have more of it and to see more of it. We are straitened and cold. The heart has but little capacity to let itself out after this manner. But could this have been the way between the Lord Jesus and His apostles? What say our renewed instinct; our apprehensions and sensibilities in the new creature? And what says the history? Jesus prayed as Paul did—but it “was not with them all,” as Paul prayed. It was turning His eyes to heaven and addressing His Father on the ground and title of His accomplished obedience, and then uttering His will and, desire touching His saints. The disciples were sorrowful, as Paul's companions were; very sorrowful. Sorrow had filled their hearts because they were about to lose Him, as they judged. But they well knew that He was more and other to them than Paul was to his brethren. They would hardly, in human, affectionate, warm-hearted intimacy, fall on the neck of One who had so lately, in divine grace, washed their feet, giving them title to appear before God their Father without a spot upon them.

Surely these distinctions are full of meaning, and perfect in beauty. And, again, I say, for it is a happy thought to me, our instincts as saints would have suggested these very contrasts which we here find in these two sacred histories.

Chapter 169

# Peace—My Peace

(John 14:27.)

Two things are brought before us here. The first is the fact of peace. It may not be earthly blessing and prosperity, like the Jews, but trouble outwardly. The second is that which characterizes the peace. “My peace” is what He has Himself, and the extent of it. Its being thus characterized implies that they had not it while He was with them. They lacked nothing; they had purse, and scrip, &c. He could speak peace in the forgiveness of sins, but this peace, His peace, was not before given to the disciples.

Peace shuts out trouble, as to the realization of it. It is not peace of conscience with God here; but it is what could not be disturbed by the knowledge of God. It is not peace without God, and it is independent of all circumstances. So much trouble as there is in circumstances, the peace could not be secure, if it could be altered by them.

This peace is the possession of such quiet as to be undisturbed about other things. It is peace with God in the sight of His righteousness and His holiness; and it is an absorbing thing. Suppose I am at peace with some one I do not care much about, I may be troubled enough about other things. The peace does not absorb my affections. When we have the peace itself, we may acquaint ourselves with God. The soul, so satisfied with its own peace, desires nothing else. It knows God, and finds nothing to disturb it in God or out of God.

This peace will keep God between the trouble and us, instead of the trouble coming between us and God. Such is our danger, and such the remedy.

Mark the extent of the peace— “My peace;” and how thoroughly well He knew what He had, that He could give it them! He had been tried, rejected, suffered, “had not where to lay His head;” “hunted like a partridge on the mountains;” the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and yet He knew so well the blessedness He had that He could speak of it to leave it to them. There was an unclouded rest in God, and God an unclouded source of blessing to Him, in all His path of sorrow and trouble, so unlike that which any one else ever had. But “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee,” &c., was known experimentally by Him; and was there ever uncertainty as to whether His Father heard Him? No; there was unclouded certainty. Nothing could bring it into question. He need not put it to the test by throwing Himself down from the temple. This were tempting God.

The two expressions in the verse explain each other; “My peace,” &c., and “Let not your heart be troubled.” I am giving you my own “peace.” What we have, we know to be His: not the knowledge of what we are with God, but what He is to God. We cannot have peace if we have the thought, When I come to know God, what will He think of me? I must know God in order to have peace.

If the Lord came this moment, would you have peace and be able to say, “This is our God, we have waited for him?” If you have the consciousness of liking anything that God does not like, you

cannot be at peace. Even if you have found peace of conscience about your sins, through the blood of the cross, it will destroy your communion and peace of heart, if you are liking anything that God does not like. If there is anything not given up in the will, there cannot be peace. If you have peace, then if God came in, your peace would stay.

Peace is never imperfect: there can be no flaw in it. If anything comes in and produces uncertainty, it cannot be peace. Water in a dirty pool may look clear at the surface, but if it is stirred up, the dirt comes to the surface; and so with the heart.

Christ gives us His peace; and can wrath disturb it? Did He not know the wrath due to our sin? He bore the wrath. Did He not know the sin? “He was made sin,” &c. Did He not know God? He came forth from Him.

How can we have peace? Because He has made it “by the blood of His cross.” He has expiated sin. The question that agitates your heart, He settled between Himself and God, not on His own account, but for us. He was the Son of God. In the presence of wrath He settled it; in the presence of holiness, too, He made His soul an offering for sin. God spent His Son for us; and can He fail to claim us as the objects of His love? He has bought us at an unspeakable price.

He has seen the sin, judged the sin, put the sin away in Christ. Peace is made, peace is given, peace is known by the “blood of the cross.” Is it a thought of mine about my getting this peace? No. He says, “My peace I leave with you.” He knows what God's wrath is; what God's righteousness is; what God's holiness is; what all His requirements are; and we have got the assurance of His peace from His own mouth. Have I earned it? No; He has earned it. Can He deceive me? What is my warrant for expecting the favor of God? If you have believed what wrath is, you will value the favor of Christ. Christ would rather give up His life than God's favor for us.

If Christ is your peace, He is as sinless for you as He was in Himself. He is “made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”

Chapter 170

# Notes on Philippians 1:1-2

Let us seek, with the blessing of God, to develop a little the special features of this epistle on which we now enter. For the better understanding of what comes before us, we may also compare its character with that of others, features of which may be gathered from the very first verse. The apostle introduces himself in the simplest possible manner: “Paul and Timotheus the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons; grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.” Elsewhere, even if he presents himself as a servant, he does not fail also to add his apostolic title, or some other distinction by which God had separated him from the rest of his brethren. But here it is not so. He is led of the Holy Ghost to present himself upon the broadest ground to the children of God in Philippi; on this he could fully associate Timotheus with himself. Thus we may gather from the very start of the epistle that we are not to look for the wonderful unfoldings of Christian and Church truth, such as we have in Romans, Corinthians, or Ephesians, where the apostleship of Paul is most carefully stated.

“Paul a servant of Jesus Christ called to be an apostle.” (Rom. 1) He was not an apostle by birth, but by the call of God; he adds further, that they were saints by the very same divine call whereby he was an apostle— “called to be saints,” both through the sovereign grace of God. There was nothing in either that could have been an inherent claim upon God. There was deadly sin in both, but the grace of God that had called them to be saints, had called him to be not a saint only but an apostle. As such he addresses them in the full consciousness of the place that Christ had given him and them, unfolding the truth from the very first foundation on which the gospel rests, the grace of God, and the ruin of man. Hence in that epistle you have something that more approaches to a doctrinal treatise than in any other portion of the New Testament. God took care that no apostle ever visited Rome, till there were many saints already there, and then He wrote by the Apostle Paul. The proud imperial city cannot boast of an apostolic foundation; yet, spite of that, man has put in the claim and pressed it with fire and sword. Paul, however, wrote in the fullness of his own apostleship and brings out the truth of God to them most carefully, so that the very ignorance of the Roman saints was the occasion for the Holy Ghost to give us the most elaborate statement of Christian truth which the word of God contains. By Christian truth I mean the individual instruction which the soul wants in order to the consciousness of its solid standing before God and the duties which flow from it. There the apostle writes expressly as an, apostle. It could not be understood as a human composition. There must be the authority of God, claimed by the apostle; and while he strengthens them in their position of saints, by the very same he makes room for that development of Christian truth, for which the epistle is remarkable.

In the Corinthians he addresses them, not merely as saints, as individual Christians, but as an assembly; and there also be asserts his apostleship. Does not this serve to illustrate the truth that there is not a word inserted or omitted in Scripture, but what is full of instruction for our souls if we are willing to be instructed? To the Corinthians he does not add as in Romans “a servant of Jesus Christ,” but simply “called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ, through the will of God.” There he

carefully puts Sosthenes, upon his own proper ground, as a brother, while he distinguishes his own apostleship. The reason is obvious. The Corinthians were in a turbulent state, going so far as even to gainsay the apostleship of Paul. But God never lowers what He has given, because men do not like it. It was a part, not more of God's grace to Paul, than of his humble obedience before God, to act and speak as an apostle; if he had not, he would have failed in his duty; he would not have done that which was essential for the glory of God and the good of the saints. Everything is in its proper place. So if the Corinthians were questioning what God had wrought in and by the Apostle Paul and the place He had given in His wisdom, the apostle asserts it with dignity; or rather the Holy Ghost represents him only as an apostle to them, speaks of others but not as apostles, and addresses the Corinthians as “the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.” None but one who knew what God is to His saints, and how He holds to the power of His own grace, would have addressed such as the Corinthians, in such terms as these; none but a heart that understood God's love to His own, and alas! to what lengths they may be drawn aside where the flesh gains advantage; none but one admirably, divinely acquainted with his own heart and with God could ever have addressed them in the language with which that epistle opens. But it was God who was writing through His apostle. And as the conduct of the Church on earth is the thesis of the Epistle to the Corinthians, He shows us there the principle of putting away and of receiving again, the administration of the Lord's supper, and its moral meaning; the working of the various gifts in the Church, &c. All these things as being the functions of the Church or of members of the Church are found in the Epistles to the Corinthians. But even in the exercise of gifts, it is gifts in the assembly. Therefore, there is no reference to evangelizing in Corinthians, because the evangelist's gift does not of course, find its exercise within the Church. He goes, properly speaking, outside the Church, in order to exercise that gift. You have prophets, teachers, &c. All these were gifts of a still higher order and regularly exercised in the assembly of God.

Here also we shall see how appropriately the preface falls in with the object of the Holy Ghost throughout: “Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons; grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” Now this is the only church where we have the “bishops and deacons” addressed as well as the saints. The reason may have been that it was, more or less, a transition state. We have three things in the Church of the New Testament. The first is—apostles, acting in the full power of their gift and office. Then, besides deacons, bishops or elders, (for these mean the same officials, only called by a different name,) apostolically appointed to the charge which the Lord had given them; the bishops having to do with that which is internal, the deacons with that which is external, but both of them local offices, while the apostle had his authority from the Lord everywhere. The Holy Ghost shows us thus the full regimen in the churches: that is to say, the apostles acting in their high place who were called to establish the foundations of the Church practically, and to govern it upon a large scale throughout the whole breadth of the Church of God upon earth; and beside them, these local guides, the bishops and deacons.

Thirdly, The apostle was now separated from the Church, and hence no longer able to watch over the saints personally. He writes accordingly to these who had no longer his apostolic care, not only where they had not; but, in this case, where they had bishops and deacons. Yet in the latest

epistles, where the apostle is filled with the sense of his speedy departure, there is not the slightest allusion to any provision for perpetuating these officers—not even when writing confidentially to one whom he had called on to ordain elders in Crete.

Thus this epistle brings us to a sort of transition. It supposes the assembly in ecclesiastical order. But the apostle's absence in person seems to be intended of God to prepare the Church for the absence of apostles entirely. Thus God graciously gave the Church a kind of preparation for their removal from the scene practically. Even while Paul was on the earth he was shut out from them, and gone from the scene, as far as regarded apostolic vigilance. The time was coming when there would be no longer apostolically appointed bishops and deacons. The Spirit of God was, it would appear, thereby accustoming the Church to find in God the only stable means of support when apostles would be no longer within reach of those who used to look to them and to claim their wisdom in their difficulties. But though the apostle was not there, they had the “bishops and deacons,” not a bishop and several deacons, and still less bishops and presbyters (or, priests) and deacons, but several of the higher spiritual guides as well as of the lower. In those days a bishopric was not a great worldly prize, but a serious spiritual care, which, however excellent an employment, was no object of ambition or means of lucre. “If any man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work;” but it called for such self-denial, such constant trial by night and day, deeper even in the Church than from the world without, that it was by no means a thing for the best qualified in the Spirit to rush into, but to take up with the utmost gravity, as that to which he was called of God. For this among other reasons the Church never pretended to choose or constitute a bishop. It was invariably by apostolic authority. One or more apostles acted in this—not necessarily Paul only or the twelve. It might be a Barnabas; at least we find in certain cases Paul and Barnabas acting together in choosing elders or bishops. But this may show what a delicate task it was. The Lord never gives it to any person except an apostle or an apostolic man; that is, a man sent out by an apostle to do that work for him, such as Titus and perhaps Timothy. But there the scripture account closes; and while we have provision for the Church going on and the certainty of gifts supplied to the end, there is no means laid down for perpetuating these elders and bishops.

Was there then forgetfulness of ordinary need on the apostle's, nay, on God's, part? For this is really what the matter comes to, and he who supposes that anything of the kind was omitted in Scripture thus carelessly, in effect, impeaches the faithful wisdom of God. Who wrote Scripture? Either you resort to the wretched notion that God was indifferent or the apostles forgot; or, acknowledging that Scripture flows from the highest source, you have no escape from the conclusion that God was intentionally silent as to the future supply of elders or bishops. But the God who knew and ordered everything from the beginning forgot nothing; on the contrary, He expressly, and in His own wisdom, left no means, in the foreseen ruin of Christendom, for continuing the appointment of elders and deacons. Was it not then desirable, if not necessary, for churches to have such? Surely if we reason thus, apostles were as loudly called for as the lower officials. The fact is most evident that the same God who has seen fit to withhold a continuous line of apostles, has not been pleased to give the means for a scriptural continuance of bishops and deacons. How is it then that we have no such officers now? Most simple is the answer; because we have no apostles to appoint them. Will you tell me if any body else has got them? Let us at least be willing to acknowledge our real lack in this respect; it is our duty to God, because it is the

truth; and the owning it keeps one from much presumption. For in general Christendom is doing without apostles what is only lawful to be done by or with them. The appointment of elders and deacons goes upon the notion that there is an adequate power still resident in men or the Church. But the only scriptural ordaining power is an apostle acting directly or indirectly. Titus or Timothy could not go and ordain elders except as and where authorized by the apostles. Hence when Titus had done this work, he was to come back to the apostle. He was not in anywise one who had invested in him a certain fund to apply at all times where and how he pleased. Scripture represents that he was acting under apostolic guidance. But after the apostles were gone, not a word about the power acting through these or other delegates of the apostle. God forbid that we should pretend either to make an apostle or to make light of his absence! It is more humble to say, We are thankful to use what God has given and whatever God may continue to give, without pretending to more. Is there not faith, and lowliness, and obedience in the position that acknowledges the present want in the Church and that simply acts according to the power that remains, which is all-sufficient for every need and danger? The true way to glorify God is not to assume an apostolic authority that we do not possess, but to act confiding in the power and presence of the Holy Ghost, who does remain. It was distinctly the Lord Himself, who, working by the Holy Ghost, acted upon all the saints and who put each of them in that particular place in the body that He saw fit. It is not a question of our drawing inferences from a man's gifts that he is an apostle. To be an apostle required the express, personal call of the Lord in a remarkable way; and without this there never was adequate, ordaining power, personally or by deputy.

As this may help to meet a question that often arises in the minds of Christians, and suggested by a verse such as we have before us, I have thought it well to meet the difficulty, trusting to the word and Spirit of God.

The apostle, then, introduces himself and Timothy as “the servants of Jesus Christ to all the saints in Christ Jesus.” It is not exactly “to the Church,” as in writing to the Corinthians or the Thessalonians, but to “all the saints.” We may gather from this that he is about to speak of what is individual rather than of what belonged to them as a public assembly, but it is not, as in Romans, on the basis of redemption. He was going to enlarge on their walk with God, saluting them as usual with the words, “grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Chapter 171

# Notes on Philippians 1:3-11

Before he opens the epistle, the apostle breaks forth in thanksgiving to God. “I thank my God,” an expression often used in this epistle. It also is individual, knowing now the God in whom he trusted, besides being the expression of affection and of nearness. First, says the apostle, “I thank any God upon my whole remembrance of you,” (for such is the true force,) “always in every prayer of mine for you all, making request with joy.” This leads me to make the observation, that nearness to God is always accompanied by the heart overflowing with the joy which His realized presence necessarily produces, as well as by a spirit of intercession for the objects of God's love on earth. There may be at the same time the deepest exercise of spirit, and not without the keenest pain; because in the presence of God every sin, sorrow, and shame, is more truly and fully felt. What God is, is known, and therefore perfect peace; what man is, and therefore the failure is realized and the dishonor brought on Christ is entered into by the Spirit. But here joy is the prevalent and abiding feeling, the great characteristic effect of the presence of God imprinted on the soul, where the conscience is void of offense toward God and man. Not that even Paul could thus speak of every assembly, or every saint of God—far from it. His whole remembrance of the Philippian saints opened the sluices of thanksgiving to God. Yet, from the beginning, there was need of prayer; and he was continually supplicating for them all, and this with joy “for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now.” What a wonderful thing that a man, though he were the great apostle of the Gentiles, could so feel, and that there were here below saints of whom he could so write! Alas! in these selfish days we little know what we have lost, and whence we are fallen. He never prayed for these Philippians but with joy, and yet he was constantly bearing them before God. Had the apostle been here, could he have thought so of us? Yet, wonderful as it was, it was the simple truth; and it is wholesome for our souls to judge ourselves by such a standard.

Another feature of the Epistle to the Philippians is, that the practical condition of the soul is here developed more fully than anywhere else; and this not so much doctrinally as in action and experience. The apostle lays bare his own motives as well as walk; and even Christ's also. Hence it is peculiarly in this epistle that we find displayed the exercise of individual Christian life. Here we have the power of the Spirit of God acting in the soul of the believer, enabling him to realize Christ in the heart and path here below. But what gave rise to this character of instruction? What circumstances brought it out? The absence of the apostle from the Philippians, and from his ordinary ministry, while he was imprisoned at Rome. It was not, as at Corinth, that his absence brought out their ostentatious vanity, and party spirit, and worldly laxity, and quarrellings. It led the Philippians to feel the necessity of living increasingly with, and for, and to Christ. There was nothing for it but each one looking and helping his brother to look, to the Lord Himself. This being the effect produced, the apostle was full of joy in thinking of them. He had been several years away, and externally in the most dismal circumstances himself, but his joy was not dimmed one whit. On the contrary, there is not another epistle so full of actually tasted happiness; and yet there never was an epistle written when all on earth seemed more clouded and filled with sorrow. So thoroughly is Christ the one circumstance that rules all others to the believer. When moving about

and seeing both the devotedness of the saints, and sinners everywhere brought to God, one can understand the apostle's continual joy and praise. But think of him in prison for years, chained between two soldiers, debarred from the work that he loved, and others taking advantage of his absence to grieve him, preaching the very gospel out of contention and strife! And yet his heart was so running over with joy that he was filling others with it. Such is the character of the Epistle to the Philippians. If there be a witness of the power of the Spirit of God working through human affections, through the heart of a saint on earth, in the midst of all weakness and trial, it is found here. It is not the picture of a man down under trying circumstances, for under them he never is, but consciously more than conqueror. Not that he never knew what it was to be cast down. He who wrote the Second Epistle to the Corinthians fully experienced all that which God in His grace made to be a kind of moral preparation for bringing out the comfort that was needed by the saints then and at all times. But this epistle shows us that there is not a single symptom of weariness any more than of perturbation of spirit. You could not tell from it that there was any flesh at all, though he was one who fully took the flesh into account elsewhere, as in Romans and Corinthians, where you have a fearful picture of what may be the condition of the Christian and of the Church.

Not only in Philippians is there no trace of this, but neither is there the dwelling upon our privileges and blessings, as in Eph. 1. What we have is the enjoyed power of the Spirit of God, that lifts a man day by day above the earth, even when he is walking upon it; and this by making Christ everything to the soul, so that the trials are but occasions of deeper enjoyment, let them be ever so many and grave. This is what we specially want as Christians in order to glorify God; and this is what the Holy Ghost urges on us when we have entered into our proper Christian birthright, individually, as in Romans, and our membership of the Church, as in Corinthians, and our blessing in heavenly places in Christ as in Ephesians. Then comes the question, How am I enjoying and carrying out these wondrous privileges, as a saint of God upon earth? To suppose that this is a hard question, and gendering bondage, would be to impeach the perfect goodness of God, as well as to fall into a snare of the devil. What God desires is that we should be blest yet more than we are. He would thus make us more happy. The Epistle to the Philippians is one to fill the heart with joy, if there be an eye for Christ. He thanks his God for them for their “fellowship with the gospel from the first day until now.” What going out of heart, and sustained vigor! It is not now “the fellowship of His Son,” as in 1 Corinthians, which indeed would be true of a Christian under any circumstances. So that, if Satan had contrived to turn a saint again to folly and sin, the Holy Ghost could remind him that God is faithful by whom he was called unto the fellowship of His Son. And can He have fellowship with unfruitful works of darkness? This is the reason why we should cry to God that if He has called any to the fellowship of His Son He would not allow the enemy to drag them into the dirt, but rouse their conscience to their grievous inconsistency.

But there is more. Here it is their fellowship with the gospel, not merely as a blessed message they had received themselves, but in its progress, conflicts, dangers, difficulties, &c. It does not necessarily mean preaching it, but what was as good, or in itself even better—their hearts thoroughly in and with it. Need I hesitate to say that whatever may be tire honor put upon those called to spread the gospel, to have a heart in unison with the gospel is a portion superior to any services as such? Most simply and heartily were the Philippians' affections thus bound up with the gospel: they identified themselves first and last with its career. This was really fellowship with God in the spread of His own glad tidings through the world. The apostle valued such hearts especially.

Nothing less than the sustaining power of the Spirit of God had so wrought in these dear Philippians. The way in which the gospel had reached them we hear in the Acts. It began with Paul in prison, when his feet were in the stocks, yet withal, in the midst of shame and pain, he and his companion singing praises to God at midnight! And here we have him, if alone, again a prisoner, and the praises of God are again heard—unwontedly in the great city of Rome. The Philippians were far away; but he could hear them, as it were none the less, singing praises to God, even as he was singing praises to God for them. It was the same blessed fellowship with the gospel that had characterized not him only, but them too, from the very first day until now.

But he goes further, and says, “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will complete it against the day of Jesus Christ.” Remark the ground of his confidence. In Corinthians it is because God was faithful. In Galatians, where there was a still more serious trial, the apostle says he was in doubt of them, till he thinks of the Lord; and then he has his heart lit up with a comforting hope that they were Christians after all. People that were practically slighting (little as they thought or intended it, yet virtually slighting) Christ for worldly elements—he could hardly understand how such could be Christians. To turn from a crucified and risen Christ to the rites of an earthly religion, is worse than bare earthliness, destructive as this is. Here it is another thing. His confidence is grounded not merely on what God is in character and counsel, but on what he saw of Christ, by the Holy Ghost, in them. Thinking of what they had been and were then, could he hesitate to recognize the evident handiwork of God through His Son? He saw such an unequivocal enjoyment of Christ, and such an identification of interests with Him upon earth, that his confidence was not only in a general way that he would see them with Christ by and by, but in the solidity of the work of God in them all the way through. He who had begun in them a good work, he was sure, would complete it unto (or, against) the day of Jesus Christ.

“Even as it is meet” (or,” just") “for me to think thus of you all, because ye have me in your heart.” Such is the version given in the margin, which here presents the right force of the verse. It was due to them, he means, not merely because he loved them, but he felt and had proof that they had him in their hearts. A blessed bond for hearts at all times, is the name of Christ, and His gospel. How continually, too, one finds the state of the saints very often measured, and set in evidence by the state of their affections toward any one that is identified with the work of God on the earth. There will be the strongest possible attempt of Satan to bring in alienation of feeling and a turning of the saints against all such, whether absent or present. It was so in the days of the Apostle Paul: those who were simply cleaving to the Lord slave to him also. It was the very reverse of a mere fleshly feeling, which was sought by his adversaries, who, flattering others, were flattered in turn. Paul was perfectly sensible that the more abundantly he loved, the less he was loved, and what a handle this gave to Satan to turn away the saints from the truth. False teachers and men who may be really converted, but whose flesh is little judged, and whose worldliness is great, always seek to win persons as a party round themselves, by sparing the flesh and humoring the natural character, so as at last to have their own way without question. (2 Cor. 11:19, 20.) The apostle's object was to win to Christ. But faithfulness called him often to tread on what was painful to one and another. As long as love flows freely and Christ is looked to, it is well; but when mortified feeling wrought, because they did not mortify their members on the earth, the tendency was constantly toward making parties, divisions, offenses, the forerunners of yet worse evil. But if the apostle was one who scorned such a thought A gathering a party round himself, these saints had him in their

hearts.

He valued this love. How was it shown? “Inasmuch as both in my bonds and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, ye are all partakers of my grace.” They were casting themselves, heart and soul, into the activities and sufferings of the grace of God in the apostle. Did his bonds make them ashamed or suspicious? To have a friend in jail never was of good report. Did they begin to say in themselves, he must have been doing something wrong because he was a prisoner? On the contrary, seeing that the Apostle Paul had come into the deepest suffering, they looked upon it as the highest honor. If he had gone up to Jerusalem, it was not to spare himself; and though this visit may have been a mistake, certainly it was one of which no person ought to speak lightly. It was a thorough self-sacrifice every step of the way. The apostle, though he was now, as a consequence, a prisoner in Rome, never yields to a spirit of regret, still less of repining, but regards all in the good hand of God as furthering the cause of Christ. Did not, for example, his own bonds turn to the praise of God? There he was perfectly happy, perhaps never so happy as thus bound. The Philippian saints understood what it was to draw from the Divine spring; and consequently their hearts were with him in joy as well as sympathy. Did it weaken the apostle's love for them personally? “God is my record how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.” Happiness as the Lord's prisoner dulled none of his warmest feelings of love toward them.

But besides all this, his love for them made him intensely solicitous about their real wants, and he turns to the Lord for them accordingly. “And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more, in knowledge and all judgment.” He wished that they should love (not less, but) with a fuller knowledge and an exercised intelligence. Love, or charity, is the basis, else there would be no building up: this being laid and abounding, full knowledge, instead of puffing up, guides and guards. The more the intelligence is, if it be real and spiritual, the greater the desire to grow in it. Those who do not see anything in Scripture as an object for constant search, and growth, and desire after more, are those, it is to be feared, who see scarce anything in it that is divine. Directly it is discerned that there is infinite light in it, desire to know more and more is a necessary consequence. But it is for practice. And this Epistle shows us spiritual progress in the apostle and in the saints more fully than any other, while it is the Epistle that shows us the strongest desire after going on. This is what we know from experience. Whenever we begin to be satisfied with what we have got, there is an end of progress; but when we make a little real advance, we want to make more. Such was the case with these saints, who are prayed for therefore, “That ye may approve things that are excellent,” &c. They needed to grow in intelligence, in order that they might be able to judge of things, and so lay hold of what was more excellent.

“That ye may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ.” Wonderful thought! The apostle actually prays for these believers as if he conceived it possible that, growing in love and intelligence, they might walk the path of faith till the day of Christ without a single false step: Paul's marvel, perhaps, would have been that we should count it wonderful. Alas! we know we fail day by day, because we are unspiritual. Why do we let out a vain word or show a wrong feeling? Because we are not realizing the presence and the grace of God. No progress in the things of God will ever keep a person—nothing but actual nearness to Him and dependence on Him. What is a Christian, and what the condition and experience which Scripture recognizes for him here below? He is by grace brought, in virtue of Christ's blood, into the presence of God; who has a power within him, the Holy Ghost, and a power without him to lean upon, even the Lord Jesus Christ, and this

uninterruptedly and always. Such is the theory: but what is the practice? As far as it is realized, the path is without a single stumble. And let us remember that such is the only sanctioned path for all saints. It belongs not of right to some advanced souls. It is what every Christian has to desire. We can, therefore, readily understand how souls, hearing such thoughts as these, should embrace the idea of a state of perfection. But though the scheme is erroneous and utterly short of our true standard in the second Man, the last Adam, a Christian ought never contentedly to settle down in the thought that he must fail and sin day by day. What is this but calm acquiescence with dishonoring Christ? If we do fail, let us, at least, always say, It was our own fault, our own unwatchfulness, through not making use of the grace and strength we have in Christ. The treasure there is open for us, and we have only to draw upon it, and the effect is a staid, calm, spiritual progress, the flesh judged, the heart overflowing with happiness in Christ, the path without a stumble till the day of Christ.

More than this, let it be remarked, he prays that they might be filled with the fruit of righteousness, not merely such and such righteous acts in detail, but the blessed product of righteousness by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God. There is no thought of, nor room for, imposing the law here, which is rather shut out from being the proper standard for the Christian. There is another, who is both our new object and our rule, even Christ Himself, the image of God, the life and power of fruit-bearing for the believer. What a rule for our practical, every-day walk!

Chapter 172

# Notes on Philippians 1:12-20

From the introduction, which bears ample witness of the apostle's love in the Spirit to the Philippian saints, of his confidence in them and his earnest desire for them, we enter on the first great topic on which he writes—his own condition at Rome. He felt that it was needful to lay it before them in the light of the Lord, not merely because of their affectionate solicitude, not only again because of evil workers, who would gladly make it a handle against himself and his ministry; but chiefly with the holy and loving end of turning it to their profit and even their establishment in the truth and diligence in the work and singleness of purpose in cleaving to the Lord.

Indeed the apostle had every ground to expect a blessing through that which Satan was perverting to injure souls. It had already issued in good fruit as regarded the work of the gospel; and he looks for just as good fruit as to all that concerned himself either in the present or in the future, whether by life or by death. Such is the confidence and joy of faith. It overcomes the world; it realizes Christ's victory over the enemy. What can man, what can Satan, do with one who is careful about nothing, but in everything gives thanks? What can either avail to disconcert one whose comfort is in God and who interprets all circumstances by His love, with unshaken reliance on His wisdom and goodness?

Such an one was the apostle, who now proceeds to turn for the salvation of the saints at Philippi, so tenderly loved, what the malice of Satan and of his instruments would be sure to catch at greedily as a means of alarming some and stumbling others, as if God, too, cared not for His Church or His servant. It is experience we have unfolded rather than doctrine; it is the rich, and mellow, and mature fruit of the Spirit in the apostle's own heart as he expounds to them the facts of his own daily life according to God. What a privilege to hear! and how sweet to know that it was not written merely nor so much to inform us of him as to conform the saints practically to Christ thereby! Blessedly as the lesson was learned in the bonds that lay upon the Apostle Paul, for our sakes, no doubt, it has been written.

Therefore was the apostle inspired. “But I wish you to know, brethren, that my condition (literally what concerns me) has turned out rather (i.e., rather than otherwise) unto the furtherance of the gospel; so that my bonds have become manifest in Christ in the whole Pretorium and to all the rest” (ver. 12, 13). The devil had hoped to merge the apostle in the common crowd of criminals; but God, ever watchful for good, made it plain that His servant was a prisoner for no moral offense, but because of Christ. Thus the enemy's cunning device had ended in a testimony for the Savior, and the gospel penetrated where before it was wholly unknown. His bonds were manifestly in Christ's cause. The grace of Christ was made known, and His servant was vindicated.

But this was not all. For as the apostle tells them further, “Most of the brethren in the Lord, having confidence in my bonds, dare more abundantly to speak the word without fear” (ver. 14). Here was another step in the blessing, and of rich promise too. How unexpected of the enemy! He, however, was on the alert, and if he could not silence the tongues that bore their testimony to the Savior, would not fail to bring in mixed motives and tempt some to an unhallowed spirit and aim, even in a

work so holy. It was not undiscerned of the apostle; neither did it disturb in the least his triumphant assurance that all things were working together for good, not only to them that love God but to the advance of the glad tidings of His grace; so that this too he does not hide in sorrow or shame but cheerfully explains. “Some indeed also on account of envy and strife, but some also on account of goodwill, preach the Christ; these indeed out of, love, knowing that I am set for the defense of the gospel; but those out of contention, proclaim the Christ, not purely, supposing to stir up tribulation for my bonds” (ver. 15-17).

The truth is that the apostle was then and there in the happiest enjoyment of that truth, which not so long before he had held before the saints at Rome. He was glorying in tribulations by the way as well as in the hope of God's glory at the end; and not only so, but glorying in God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:1, 2, 11). His bonds but proved how entirely the liberty of grace is independent of all that man or Satan can rage against him who stands fast in it and has Him before his heart by whom alone it came and could be given. There was no blindness to the feelings of some whose zeal in no way concealed their malevolent desires; but nothing weakened the spring of his joy in God nor his thankful perception that, whatever man meant, the testimony of grace going out widely and energetically, and Christ was held up and exalted more and more. For it was no question here of doctrine; there is no ground to think that even contentious men did not preach soundly. It was the good God intended that occupied Paul's thoughts, whatever might be in theirs. Hence he breaks forth in that blessed expression of an unselfish, full heart, “What then? Notwithstanding in every way, whether in pretext or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in this I rejoice, yea and will rejoice” (ver. 18). How happy is the simplicity, how deep the wisdom of faith, which thus sees in everything, even where flesh intrudes into the Lord's work, the defeat of Satan. What a present blessing to his soul who, thus delivered from self-confidence on the one hand and from anxiety on the other, sees the sure, steady, onward working of God for the glory of Christ, even as by and by when Christ is displayed in His kingdom, all will be ordered to the glory of God the Father (chap. 2). Hence in the consciousness of the progress of gospel testimony and his own blessing through all that to which his imprisonment had given occasion, the apostle can say, “I know that this will turn to my salvation through your supplication and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ; according to my earnest expectation, and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but, in all boldness, as always, now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death” (ver. 19, 20). Imprisoned, he could not separate himself from the mighty conflict which was on foot in the world; he knew victory assured, however hotly the enemy might contest. Salvation here means the final defeat of the enemy, and so it is throughout our epistle, never a past thing as in Eph. 2 and 2 Tim. 1:9, but always future, as in chapters manifestly. In Philippians, as in Hebrews, &c. it is the full deliverance at the close. Both views are true, and each has its own importance.

Chapter 173

# Notes on Philippians 1:21-30

We have seen the expectation and hope of the apostle that in nothing he should be ashamed but in all boldness, as always, now also Christ should be magnified in his body whether by life or by death. His eye was thus on Christ, not for the beginning and the end only, but all the way. In the next verse, 21, he proceeds to vindicate the confidence of his heart. For, says he, “to me to live is Christ and to die is gain.” To be spiritually-minded, the apostle tells us elsewhere, is life and peace. Here speaking of his own daily practice he shows he had but one aim, motive, object and business—Christ. And this was said, not at the start of his career, in the overwhelming sense of the Savior's grace to His proud and self-righteous persecutor, but after long years of unequaled toil, peril, affliction without and sorrows within the Church. “To me to live is Christ.” No doubt, the principle was true from the beginning of his eventful life as a Christian. Still as little do I doubt that it was emphatically and more than ever verified at the very time he was writing, a prisoner in the imperial city.

It is remarkable to what debates and difficulties the verse has given occasion, though the language is plain, the construction unambiguous, and the sense as weighty as it is clear. “Interpreters (says a famous man) have hitherto, in my opinion, given a wrong rendering and exposition to this passage; for they make this distinction, that Christ was life to Paul and death was gain.” Certainly this is not the meaning of the Holy Ghost who gave the apostle to say that to him to live (i.e., here below) is Christ and to die gain. That Christ was his life is most true, and the doctrine of Galatians and Colossians in passages full of beauty and interest. (See Gal. 2, Col. 3) But here it is no question of doctrine, standing, or life in Christ. The whole matter is the character of his living day by day, and this he declares is “Christ,” even as the ceasing to live or to die, he says, would be “gain.” And what does this writer substitute? “I, on the other hand, make Christ the subject of discourse in both clauses, so that He is declared to be gain to him both in life and in death; for it is customary with the Greeks to leave the word πρ■ς to be understood. Besides that this meaning is less forted, it also corresponds better with the foregoing statement, and contains more complete doctrine. He declares that it is indifferent to him whether he lives or dies, because, having Christ, he reckons both to be gain.” So Calvin, followed by Beza, who adds that “Christ” is the subject of both members and “gain” the predicate, and that the ellipse of κατ■ is not only tolerable but an Atticism! The reader may rest assured that a more vicious and violent rendering has rarely been offered. The truth is that “to live” is the subject, “Christ” the predicate of the first proposition, “to die” is the subject, “gain” the predicate of the second, as in the authorized version. The real force is lost by this strange dislocation of the French reformers, and the true connection is broken.

“For me to live is Christ and to die gain; but if to live in flesh [is before me], this to me is worth while; and what I shall choose, I know not, but I am pressed by the two, having the desire for departing and being with Christ, for it is very far better, but to continue in the flesh is more needful for you. And having confidence of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in your faith, that your boast may abound in Christ Jesus through me by my presence again with you.” (Ver. 21-26.) Thus the apostle compares his continuance in life with

dying; the former were to him worth while, and what to choose he could not say. Thus there was perplexity from the two things; for he certainly had the desire to slip all that anchored him here and to be with Christ; whereas, on the other hand, he felt that his abiding here would be more necessary on account of the saints. This is no sooner fairly before him than all is clear. There is no more pressure from two sides. He is confident; he knows he will remain and stay with them all for their progress and joy in their faith. How sweet and disinterested is the love which the Holy Ghost gives to the heart that is centered on Christ! Their spiritual interest turns the scale, whatever his personal desire.

Sure I am that we have most of us lost much by failing to realize that to us too this path is open, and that it is the will of our God concerning us. Too little are any of us conscious of the weakening, darkening, deadening effect on our spiritual experience of allowing any object or desire but Christ. How often, for instance, it seems to be taken for granted that a brief season after conversion is not only the due time for first love, but the only time when it is to be expected? In what bright contrast with all such thoughts stands the record we have read of the blessed apostle's experience! Was it not meant for the Philippians? Is it not also for us? God never intimates in His word that the saint roust droop after conversion; that love, zeal, simplicity of faith must become increasingly poorer and weaker. There are dangers no doubt; but early days have theirs as well as later; and much passes muster at first through lack of spirituality. Where there is full purpose of heart in cleaving to the Lord, He gives, on the contrary, a deepening acquaintance with Himself. It is not, To me to live is for the gospel or even the Church, but, “To me to live is Christ.” To have Him as the one-absorbing, governing motive of the life, day by day, is the strength, as well as test, of all that is of God; it gives, as nothing else can give, everything its divine place and proportion. “To me to live is Christ” seems to me much more than to say, “To die is gain.” For this is true of many a saint's experience, who could hardly say that. Yet there is not a clause more characteristic; it is the very pith of our epistle. Christian experience is the point. In Philippians, above all others, it is the development of the great problem, how we are to live Christ. As for Paul, it was the one thing he did; and so death, which naturally threatens the loss of this and that and all things, he, on the contrary, realized to be gain. This is the truth, and he enjoyed it.

For years the apostle, a prisoner, had death before him as a not improbable contingency. Yet assuredly his eye is only the brighter, his strength not abated, but grown, his exercised acquaintance with God, His will and ways, larger than ever. Hence, instead of his thinking it was a question for the emperor to determine, he sees, feels, and speaks as if God had put it all into his own hands: just as in another chapter he says, “I can do all things through Christ (or Him) who strengthens me.” Here you have him sitting in judgment on the point whether he is to live or die. He drops Cesar altogether and views it as if God were asking His servant whether he was going to live or die? His answer is that it would be much better for himself to die, but that for the sake of the Church it would be expedient for him to live somewhat longer. Thus the decision of the question is eminently Christ-like, against his own strong desire, because his eye was single and he sacrificed self for the good of the Church. Accordingly he concludes, with wonderful faith and unselfishness, that he is going to live. “I am in a strait between the two, having the desire for departing and being with Christ, which is very far better: nevertheless to continue in the flesh is more needful for you.” Inasmuch as in his heart Christ thus predominated, He certainly was not balancing questions about His own gain, but other people's good—so Paul, therefore, thinks of and in His mind and

says, “Having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith: that your boast may be more abundant in Jesus Christ through me by my presence with you again.” I do not know a more astonishing and instructive proof of the power of the Spirit of God, in giving a man fellowship practically with God. The flesh being broken and judged in him, he could enter into the mind and feelings of God, and Christ's heart about the Church. Was it really desirable for the Church that Paul should abide? Then, without hesitation and without fleshly feeling, he can say, Paul will abide. Thus he settles the matter and speaks calmly and confidently of seeing them again. Yet is it a man in prison, exposed to the most reckless of Roman emperors, who thinks, decides, says all this!

At the same time he adds, “Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ; that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for (or rather with) the faith of the gospel.” His heart's desire, when he came and saw them again, was to see them all unitedly happy, and not only this flowing in of Christ, but such a flowing out of Him that their hearts should be free to spread the knowledge of the gospel everywhere.

Next, he wished to hear that they were frightened in nothing by the adversaries, which is to them a proof of destruction, but “of your salvation, and this from God, because unto you it is given, in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.” From this Scripture it is evidently of great moment spiritually that we should keep up in our souls good courage in face of the foe and confidence in God, not only for our own sake but for others. There is no testimony more gracious, nor more solemn to our adversaries. But how blessed to know that the day comes when, if we are walking with God, every opposer, no matter how proud, will disappear; when all the malice, and wiles, and power that can be brought to put the saints down will only elicit the power of God in their favor! Faith knows all the power of God is its own before that day comes. It is of the greatest importance that we should cherish calm, and lowly; and patient confidence in God, and that the heart should rest in His love; but this can never be, unless there be present subjection to Christ and enjoyment of what He is towards our souls. To their adversaries this boldness was a demonstration of perdition, as well as of their own final triumph over all that Satan could aim at their hurt. God intended this; because it was given them in behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake. Paul, who was suffering for Christ's sake at that very moment, was thoroughly happy in it, and commends the place to them. It was a good gift of grace: he could say, “The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places,” though he was a prisoner. They had the same conflict as they saw in him when a prisoner at Philippi and now heard of in Rome. May our own souls prize this blessed place, if the Lord vouchsafe it in any measure to us!

Chapter 174

# Notes on Philippians 2:1-4

We saw, in chapter 1, how refreshing to the apostle was the state of the Philippians, looked at as a whole; for, undoubtedly, there was that which needed correction in particular cases. Still their practical condition, and more especially as shown in the fellowship of the gospel, drew out powerfully his affections to them, as indeed their own were drawn out. Now this very fellowship bore witness to the healthful and fervent state of their souls towards the Lord, His workmen and His work. For fellowship with the gospel is a great deal more than merely helping on the conversion of souls. Babes that are just born to God, souls that have made ever so little progress in the truth, are capable of feeling strong sympathy with the calling in of the lost, with the glad tidings flowing out to souls, with the joy of newly quickened and pardoned souls brought to the knowledge of Christ. But there was much more implied in the Philippians' “fellowship with the gospel.” It is plain that the bent and strength of their whole life was that of persons who thoroughly identified themselves with its conflicts and sorrows as well as its joys. There was nothing in them so to arrest and occupy the Spirit of God, that they could not be in the very same current with Himself, in the magnifying of Christ and the blessing of souls.

And thus it was that they were privileged to have fellowship with the apostle himself. “If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfill ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.” All these things had been in action, and the apostle viewed each little offering to him, while he was in prison for the gospel's sake, in the light of Christ's holy, spiritual affections which had dictated it. In the case of the Philippians, it would appear that it was not merely the way in which the grace of God values the service of the saints. He interpreted it, not according to the thoughts of the saints, but according to His own, seeing, therefore, far deeper value in it than the human spirit had which had been led of the Holy Ghost in the service.

Take, for instance, Mary in the gospels, and the way in which the blessed Savior viewed her act of devotedness in spending upon His person the box of precious ointment which she had reserved for that time. Where there is singleness of eye, there is One guiding the saints though they may not know it distinctly. There is no ground to suppose Mary distinctly apprehended that she was anointing the Lord for His burial; but His divine grace gave it that value. The love that was in her heart felt instinctively that some awful danger threatened Him; that a heavy dark cloud was gathering over Him, which others feebly, if at all, entered into. In truth, God was in this intuition of divine affection. But you may see something, perhaps, analogous in the providential care which God by times exercises; and there is even more than providence in the care of a Christian parent with a child. There is a feeling of undefined but real uneasiness—the Spirit of God giving a certain consciousness of peril—and this often calls forth the affection of the parents to the child in such sort as to avert the imminent danger or alleviate the suffering in the highest degree. In a still higher sense this was true in the dealings of God with Mary. Alas! little indeed were the disciples in the secret, though they ought to have known what was impending more than any others, had it been a question of familiar intercourse and knowledge. Certainly they had larger opportunities than ever

Mary enjoyed; but it is far from being such knowledge that gives the deepest insight—far from being earthly circumstances that account for the insight of love. There is a cause which lies deeper still—the power of the Spirit of God acting in a simple, upright, loving heart, that feels intensely for the object of its reverence, for Christ Himself. If our eye is to our Lord, we may be sure that He will work with and in us as well as for us. He will not fail to give us the opportunity for serving Him in the most fitting manner and at the right moment. Mary had this box we know not how long; but there was One who loved Mary, and who wished to vouchsafe her the desired privilege of showing her love to His Son. He it was who led Mary (despised as indifferent by her believing but bustling sister) at this very time to bring out her love. Thus, besides ordinary intelligent guidance, there may be guidance under the skilful hands of Him who cares for us, and now acts yet more intimately by His Spirit dwelling in us.

In the case of the Philippians there was the conscious fellowship of the Spirit; there was remarkable devotedness and spirituality among them, so that God could put particular honor upon them. In this respect they are in striking contrast not only with the Galatians but the Corinthians also. Not but these too were born of God; there was no difference in this. We are expressly told the Corinthians were called into the fellowship of the Son of God; such they were as truly as the Philippians were. It is of them that the Holy Ghost says, “God is faithful by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.” But there was a mighty difference here. There was not the same fellowship with the gospel among the Corinthians, and therefore it may be that the apostle desires that they might have “the communion of the Holy Ghost.” (2 Cor. 13:14.) Assuredly till then it had been enjoyed by them scantily. (Comp. 1 Cor. 3; 4, &c.) But in looking at the Philippians he could say, “If there be therefore any consolation [or rather encouragement] in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit,” &c. There was all this practical display of Christ so fully at work among them; such tenderness in their Spirit, such entering into the mind of God touching the mighty conflict in which the apostle was engaged, that they identified themselves heart and soul with the apostle. He says, therefore, If there be all this (which he doubted not but assumed), “fulfill ye my joy that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.” Here was their failure: they were not sufficiently of one mind; nor were they cherishing, as they should, the same love. Hence there was a measure of dissension among them at this time. True, it may seem to have been about the work of the Lord, in which they were truly zealous. Sorrowful as this was in itself, still this was not so low and unworthy as mere squabbling with one another, such as we hear of among the Corinthians. Not that it was to be treated lightly, but even the very failure and the cause of it proved that they were in a more spiritual state than the Corinthians.

In the same way you may find among the children of God now that which answers to the trial of an Abraham or of a Lot. Just Lot, dwelling among the wicked in the cities of the plain, was vexed from day to day with their unrighteous and ungodly deeds. What unbridled wickedness filled the scene which first attracted his too covetous eyes! Strange that a saint could find his home there for a season! Abraham failed, no doubt; but what a contrast even between the failure of an Abraham and of a Lot! When the latter, through unwatchfulness, fell into a sin which led the way to worse, it was not only a painful blot, but the consequences of it remained for ages to be adversaries to the people of God. Out of the miserable circumstances which closed his life, we see a shameful result and a constant affliction. Indeed the Israel of God will prove it yet in the latter days. On the other

hand, Abraham had his trials and failures, and surely the Lord did notice and rebuke them in His righteous government. But though this shows that there is nothing worthy of God in man, that no good thing dwells in the natural man even of a saint, that the flesh is fleshly, let it be in whom it may; yet, for all that, the character of Abraham's very slips and unfaithfulness tells us that he was in a spiritual condition wholly different from his nephew Lot.

Just so it was, in measure, with the Corinthians and the Philippians. In the latter there was a want of unity, of judgment, and mind, but they were filled with fervor of Spirit; they were carried out in earnest wishes for the gospel and the good of God's people. Thus, even where you find the service of the Lord the prominent thought, there is always room for the flesh to act. There is nothing like having Christ Himself for our object. This was what Paul knew and lived in, and wished them to know better. Service brings in room for the human mind and feelings and energy. We are in danger of being occupied unduly with that which we do or what we suffer. Behind it lurks also the danger of comparison, and so of envy, self-seeking, and strife. How blessedly the apostle in chapter 1 laid before them his feeling in presence of a far deeper, wider, and more painful experience, we have seen already. It appears there was something of this kind at work among the Philippians. Accordingly he here intimates to them that there was something necessary to complete his joy. He would see them of the same mind, and this by having not the same notions but the same love, with union of soul minding one thing. His own spirit was enjoying Christ increasingly. The earth, and man upon it, was a very little thing before his eyes; the thoughts of heaven were everything to him, so that he could say, “To me to live is Christ.” This made his heart sensitive on their account, because there was something short of Christ, some objects besides Him in them. He desires fullness of joy in them. The Spirit of God gives hearts, purified by faith, a common object, even Christ. What he had known in them made him the more alive to that which was defective in these saints. He therefore makes a great deal of what he might have withheld if writing to others. In an assembly where there was much that dishonored God, it would be useless to notice every detail. Wisdom would apply the grace of Christ to the overwhelming evils that met one's eye: lesser things would remain to be disposed of afterward by the same power. But in writing to saints in a comparatively good state, even a little speck assumes importance in the mind of the Spirit. There was something they might do or remedy to fill the cup of the apostle's joy. How gladly he would hear that they shone in unity of spirit! He owned and felt their love: would that they cultivated the same mutually! How could they be more likeminded? If the mind were set upon one thing, they would all have the same mind. God has one object for His saints and that object is Christ. With Paul every aim, every duty was subordinate to Him; as it is said in the next chapter, “this one thing I do:” so here he wished to produce this one, common mind in the Philippian saints.

He then touches on that which they had to watch against. “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory.” It is humbling, but too true, that the principle of the grossest evil outside works even among the saints of God. The traces might be so faint that none but an apostle's eye could perceive them. But God enabled His servant to discern in them what was not of Christ. Hence he sets before them the dangers alike of opposing one another and of exalting self-strife and vain-glory. Oh! how apt they are to creep in and sully the service of God! The chapter before had shown some elsewhere taking advantage of the apostle's bonds to preach Christ of envy and strife. And there he had triumphed by faith and could rejoice that, any how, Christ was preached. Now he warns the beloved Philippians against something similar in their midst. The principle was

there, and he does not fail to lay it upon their heart.

How is the spirit of opposition and self-exaltation to be overcome? “In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.” What a blessed thought! and how evidently divine! How could strife or vain-glory exist along with it? When one thinks of self, God would have one to feel our own amazing shortcomings. To have such sweet and heavenly privileges in Christ, to be loved by Him, and yet to make such paltry returns as even our hearts know to be altogether unworthy of Him, is our bitter experience as to ourselves. Whereas when we look at another, we can readily feel not only how blessedly Christ is for him, and how faithful is His goodness, but love leads us to cover failings, to see and keep before us that which is lovely and of good report in the saints— “if there any virtue and if there any praise, to think on these things.” This appears to lie at the root of the exhortation, and it is evident that it thus becomes a simple and happy duty. “In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.” In short, it is made good, on the one hand, by the consciousness of our own blessing through grace in presence of our miserable answer to it in heart and way; and on the other hand, by the thankful discernment of another beheld as the object of the Lord's tender love and all its fruits, without the thought of drawbacks. Of their evil the Lord would not have us to think, but of what Christ is to and in them. For here there is no question of discipline, but of the ordinary, happy state of God's children. Certainly the Philippian assembly consisted of men who were full of simple-hearted earnestness in pushing out the frontiers of Christ's kingdom and whose hearts were rejoicing in Him. But toward one another there was the need of greater tenderness.

Besides, if one, more than others, was abused everywhere, it was the Apostle Paul. He was pre-eminently treated as the off-scouring of all things. All Asia was turned away from him. Where was there a man to identify himself with his cause? Evidently this was the result of a faithful, self-denying holy course in the gospel, which from time to time offended hundreds even of the children of God. He could not but touch the worldliness of one, the flesh of another. Above all, he roused the Judaisers on one hand, and on the other all schismatics, heretics, &c. All this makes a man dreaded and disliked; and none ever knew more of this bitter trial than the Apostle Paul. But in the case of the Philippians there was the contrary effect. Their hearts slave to him so much the more in the hour of his imprisonment at Rome, when there was this far sorer sorrow of an amazing alienation on the part of many who had been blessed through his means. This faithful love of the Philippians could not but rejoice the apostle's heart. It is one thing to indulge a fleshly dependence upon an instrument of God, quite another to have the same interests with him, so as to be knit more closely than ever in the time of sorrow. This was fellowship indeed, as far as it went, and it went far, but not so fir as the apostle desired for them. He thought of their things, not of his merely; and accordingly, he now gives them another word: “Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.” If they loved him so much, why not love each other more than they did? Why so occupied with their own thoughts?

This egotism was another fertile source of evil. We all know that we are apt to value qualities which we possess ourselves and to slight those of others. This is unjudged nature, for, where there is power of love, it works in a direction quite the contrary. There would be the consciousness of how weak and unworthy we are, and the little use we make of what God gives us; there would be the valuing what we see in another, that we have not got ourselves. How good for the Church to have all this and far more!

There he brings in what is the great secret, of deliverance from all these strivings of potsherd nature— “the mind that was in Christ Jesus.” (Ver. 5.) In this chapter you will observe it is Christ as He was; in the next it is Christ as He is. Here it is Christ coming down, though of course He is thereon exalted. The point pressed is that we should look at the mind of Christ that was displayed in Him while here below. In chapter 3 it is not so much the mind or moral purpose that was in Him, as it is His person as an object, a glorious attractive, object now in heaven, the prize for which he was running, Christ Himself above, the kernel of all his joy. Here (chap. 2) it is the unselfish mind of love that seeks nothing of its own, but the good of others at all costs: this is the mind that was in Christ.

Chapter 175

# Notes on Philippians 2:5-11

The apostle proceeds to enforce lowliness in love, by setting the way of the Lord Himself before their eyes. This is the true “rule of life” for the believer since His manifestation; not even all the written word alone, but that word seen livingly in Christ, who is made a spring of power by the Holy Ghost to his soul that is occupied with Him. “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus: who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal [on equality] with God; but made himself of no reputation [emptied himself]” &c.

What an illustrious testimony to the true, proper, intrinsic deity of Christ! It is all the stronger, because, like many more, it is indirect. Who but a person consciously God in the highest sense could adopt, not merely the unhesitating assumption of such language as “Before Abraham was, I am,” or “I and my Father are one,” but the no less real, though hidden, claim to Godhead which lies under the very words which unbelief so eagerly seizes against Him? Where would be the sense of any other man (which He surely was and is) saying, “My Father is greater than I?” A strange piece of information in the mouth (I will not say of a Socrates or a Bacon merely, but) of a Moses or a Daniel, a Peter or a Paul; but in Him, how suitable and even needful, yet only so because He was truly God and equal with the Father, as He was man, the sent One, and so the Father was greater than He! Take again that striking declaration in John 17:3, “This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” Of course He was man, He deigned to be born of woman: else unbelief would have no ground of argument on that score. But what mere man ever dared, save the vilest impostor, calmly to class himself with God, yea, to speak of the knowledge of the only true God, and of Him, as life everlasting? So, again, the scripture before us; nothing can be conceived more conclusively to prove His own supremely divine glory, than the simple statement of the text. Gabriel, yea, the archangel Michael, has no higher dignity than that of being God's servant, in the sphere assigned to each. The Son of God alone had to empty Himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. All others were, at best, God's servants, and nothing could increase that dignity for them or lift them above it. Of Christ alone it was true, that He took a bondservant's form; and of Him alone could it be true, because He was in the form of God. In this nature He subsisted originally, as truly as He received a bondman's; both were real, equally real; the one intrinsic, the other that which He condescended to assume in infinite grace.

Nor was this all. When “found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” This is another distinct step in His descent of grace to glorify God. First, it was humiliation for Him to become a servant and a man; next, being man, he humbled Himself as far as death in His obedience (the blessed converse of Adam's disobedience unto death). And that death was the extreme of human shame, besides its atoning character. Yet must we carefully bear in mind that it would be as impossible for a divine person to cease to be God, as for a man to become a divine person. But it was the joy and triumph of divine grace that He who was God, equally with the Father, when about to become a man, did not carry down the glory and power of the Godhead to confound man before Him, but rather emptied Himself;

contrariwise perfection morally was seen in this. Thus He was thoroughly the dependent man, not once falling into self-reliance, but under all circumstances, and in the face of the utmost difficulties, the very fullest pattern and exhibition of One who waited upon God, who set the Lord always before him, who never acted from Himself, but whose meat and drink it was to do the will of His Father in heaven; in a word, He became a perfect servant. This is what we have here. He is said to have been in the form of God; that is, it was not in mere appearance, but it had that form, and not a creature's. The form of God means that He had His and no other form. He was then in that nature being, and nothing else; He had no creature being whatever; He was simply and solely God the Son. He, subsisting in this condition, did not think it a robbery to be equal with God. He was God; yet, into the place of man which He truly entered, He carried down the willingness to be nothing. He made Himself of no reputation. How admirable! How magnifying to God! He put in abeyance all His glory. It was not even in angelic majesty that He deigned to become a servant, but in the likeness of men. Here we have the form of a servant as well as the form of God, but that does not in anywise mean that He was not really both. In truth as He was very God, so He became the veriest servant that God or man ever saw. But we may go yet farther. “And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” Mark that. There are two great stages in the advent and humiliation of the Son of God. The first is in respect of His divine nature or proper deity: He emptied Himself. He would not act on a ground which exempted Him from human obedience, when He takes the place of servant here below. Indeed, we may say that He would act upon what God the Father was to Him, not upon what He the Son was to the Father. On the one hand, though He were a Son, He learned obedience through the things that He suffered. On the other, if He had not been a divine person—the Son no doubt—He would not have been the perfect man that He was. But He walks on through unheard-of shame, sorrow, and suffering, as one that sought only the will and glory of His Father in everything. He would choose nothing, not even in saving sinners or receiving a soul. (John 6) He would act in nothing apart from the Father. He would have only those whom the Father draws. Whom the Father gives Him, whoever come to Him, He welcomes them: He will in no wise cast any out, be they ever so bad. What a proof that He is thoroughly the servant, when He, the Savior, absolutely puts aside all choice of those He will save! When acting as Lord with His apostles, He tells us that He chose; but in the question of salvation He virtually says, Here I am a Savior; and whoever is drawn to me by the Father, that is enough for me. Whoever comes I will save. No matter who or what it was, you have in the Lord Jesus this perfect subjection and self-abnegation, and this too in the only person that never had a will to sin, whose will cared not for its own way in anything. He was the only man that never used His own will; His will as man was unreservedly in subjection to God. But we find another thing. He emptied Himself of His deity, when He took the form of a servant. Next, when He becomes a man, He humbles Himself and becomes obedient as far as death. This is important because it shows, among other things, this also, that death was not the natural portion of our Lord as man, but that to which, when found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient. There was no death for Him merely as man, for death was the wages of sin, not of man as such before sin, still less of the Holy One of God. How could He come under death? In this was the contrast between Him and the first Adam. The first Adam became disobedient unto death; Christ on the contrary obeyed unto death. No other was competent so to lay down His life. Sinners had none to give: it was due to God, and they had no title to offer it. It would have been sin to have pretended to it. But in Christ all is reversed.

His death in a world of sin is His glory—not only perfect grace, but the vindication of God in all His character. “I have power,” He says,” to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.” In the laying down of His life He was accomplishing the glory of God. “Now is the Son of man glorified and God is glorified in Him.” So that while God was pleased with and exalted in every step of the Lord Jesus Christ's life, yet the deepest moral glory of God shines out in His death. Never was nor could be such obedience before or in any other. He “became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”

In this chapter it is not a question of putting away sin. It is ignorance of the mind of God to confine the death of Christ, even to that astonishing part of it, while fully admitting that there is not, nor ever will be, anything to compare with it. But the death of Christ, for instance, takes in the reconciliation of all things, as well as the bringing us who believe unto God; and now that the world is fallen under vanity, without that death there could not be the righteous gathering up again out of the ruin that which is manifestly marred and spoiled by the power of Satan. Again, where without it was the perfect display of what God is? Where else the utmost extent of Christ's suffering and humiliation, and obedience in them? The truth, love, holiness, wisdom, and majesty of God were all to the fullest degree vindicated in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is not a single feature of God but what, though it expresses itself elsewhere in Christ, finds its richest and most complete answer in His death. Here it is the perfect servant, who would not stop short at any one thing, and this not merely in the truest love to us, but absolutely for the glory of God. It is in this point of view that His death is referred to here; and the Spirit of God adds, “Therefore God also hath highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name, that at [in virtue of] the name of Jesus every knee should bow both of things in heaven and things on earth.”

It is not merely a question of saints or of Israel, but “every knee shall bow,” &c. This takes in angels and saints, and even those that are forever under the judgment of God; for “things under the earth” carries the worst possible sense. Thus the infernal beings, the lost come in here, as well as the saved; those that have rejected salvation, no less than those who confess the Savior. It is the universal subjection of all to Christ. Jesus has won the title even as man. If unbelievers despised Him as man, as Son of man He will judge them. As man they must bow to Him. The lowly name that was His as Nazarene on the earth must be honored everywhere: God's glory is concerned in it. In the name of Jesus or in virtue of His name “every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

It is not, again, a question of His being Son (which of course He was from all eternity), but Lord also. We know that the spirit of this is true for the believer now. Every soul that is born of God now bows his knee in virtue of the name of Jesus and to Jesus. The Christian now confesses by the Holy Ghost that Jesus Christ is Lord; but this homage will be made good to an incomparably larger extent by and by. But then it will be too late for salvation. It is now received by faith, which finds blessedness and eternal life in the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ, whom He has sent. Neither is there any man that confesses Him to be the Lord by the Holy Ghost, but a saved person. But there will be more than this by and by. When the day of grace is past and God is not merely gathering out an elect body, the Church, but putting down all opposing authority, then the name of Jesus will be throughout the universe owned even by those who did it by compulsion, and who by that very acknowledgment confess their own eternal misery. In Eph. 1:10 we are told of God's purpose for the dispensation of the fullness of times to “gather together in one all things in Christ,

both which are in heaven and which are on earth.” There is not a word, it has often been remarked, about things under the earth, because there it is not a question of universal, compulsory acknowledgment of Christ, even by the devils and the lost, but very simply of all things being put under the headship of Christ. Neither lost men nor devils will ever stand in any such relation to Christ. He will surely judge them both. In Ephesians it is Christ viewed as the head of the whole creation of God, all things heavenly and earthly being summed up under His administration. Besides that, He is the head of the Church, which consequently shares His place of exaltation over all things heavenly and earthly, as being the bride of the true and last Adam. “He has made Him to be Head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.” Christ fills all in all; but the Church is that which fills up the mystic, glorified man, just as Eve was necessary to the completeness of God's thoughts as to the first Adam. The Church is the bride, the Lamb's wife. This mystery is great and largely treated in Ephesians; but it is not the subject of our epistle, where the aim is practical, enforced from One who came down from infinite glory and made Himself nothing, and who now is exalted and made Lord of all, so that every creature must bow. This is put before the Philippians as the most powerful of motives and weightiest of examples for self-abnegation, in love, to God's glory.

Chapter 176

# Notes on Philippians 2:12-18

As a whole, we have seen that the state of the Philippian saints was good and healthy. It was not with them as with the Galatians, over whose speedy lapse into error—and what error it was!—the apostle had to marvel and mourn. And as in doctrine, so in practice, what a change for the worse! Their love, once excessive one might say, was turned into bitterness and contempt, as the sweetest thing in nature, if soured, becomes the sourest of all. “Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first. And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me. Am I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth? They zealously affect you, but not well; yea, they would exclude you that ye might affect them.” (Gal. 4:13-17.) “But,” adds the apostle, with cutting severity, “it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you.”

What a refreshing contrast was the condition of the Philippians! It was not only that their love was true and fervent, proving their fellowship with the gospel and their hearty sympathy with those engaged in its labors and sufferings, but their faithfulness shone out yet more when the apostle was not in their midst. “Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence...” What reserve in his tone to the one, and what opening of affections, heartily expressed, to the other! And no wonder. In Galatia, Christ was shaded under nature; religion it might be, but unsubject to God, ay, and unloving too, spite of vain talk about love. In Philippi Christ was increasingly the object; love was in true and wholesome exercise; and obedience grew firmly, because liberty and responsibility were happily realized, even the more in the absence of the apostle and without his immediate help.

Accordingly he exhorts them thus: “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who worketh in you both the willing and the working of [according to] his good pleasure.” In Eph. 2 the saints are viewed as seated together in heavenly places in Christ: they are regarded here as working out their own salvation with fear and trembling. How can we put these two things together? With perfect ease, if we are simply subject to the word of God. if you try to make out that there is only one meaning of salvation in the New Testament, you are in a difficulty indeed, and you will find that there is no possibility of making the passages square. In fact, nothing is more certain and easy to ascertain, than that salvation in the New Testament is more frequently spoken of as a process incomplete as yet, a thing not finished, than as a completed end. It is not, then, a question of taking away something, but of getting a further idea. Take Rom. 13:11, 12, for instance. There we find salvation spoken of as not yet arrived. “Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.” From the context we find that it is connected with “the day” being at hand; so that the salvation spoken of there is evidently a thing that we have not actually got, no doubt, coming nearer and nearer every day, but only ours in fact when the day is come. “The night is far spent, and the day is at hand.” Salvation here, therefore, is manifestly future. In the First Epistle to the Corinthians (chap. 1, 5, 9, 10) the same thing appears, though it be not so marked in

expression. Take Hebrews again as a very plain instance. It is said there (chap. vii. 25) that Jesus is “able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him.” The passage plainly is limited to believers. It is a saving of those that are in living relationship to God. Christ is looked at as a Priest, and He is a Priest only for God's people—believers. It would, therefore, be an illegitimate use of the verse to apply it to the salvation of sinners as such. Again, in chapter ix., “As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment; so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.” There cannot be the shadow of a doubt that there the Spirit speaks of salvation (salvation of bodies, and not merely of souls) as a thing only effectuated when Christ in person appears to us; when He receives us to Himself in and to His own glory. But without going through all similar statements in other epistles, let me refer to the First Epistle of Peter. It appears to me that, with the exception of a single phrase in 1 Peter 1:9, salvation is always regarded as a thing not yet accomplished, and only indeed accomplished in the redemption of the body. That one phrase is— “Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of [your] souls.” Now soul-salvation will not be more complete for believers after Christ comes than now when they believe and are being carried through the wilderness; it is an already enjoyed blessing as regards the resting-place of faith. But, with that exception, salvation in Peter applies to the deliverance that crowns the close of all the difficulties we may encounter in the passage through the desert-world, as well as to the present guardian care of our God who brings us safely through. It is a salvation only completed at the appearing of Jesus. (See chap. 1: 5; 2:2, “grow unto salvation” in the critical text; and 4:18)

This, too, I believe to be the meaning of “salvation” in the Epistle to the Philippians; and that it is so will appear still more clearly when we come to chapter 3, where our Lord is spoken of as a “Savior,” even when He comes to transform the body. “Our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change,” &c. The real meaning is, We look for the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, who shall change our body of humiliation, that it should be conformed to His body of glory. There is the character of the salvation: it is a question not of the soul merely, but of our bodies. If we accept this thought as a true one and as the real scope of salvation throughout the context, interpreting the language here by the general object that the Holy Ghost has in view, the meaning of our verse 12 becomes plain: “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” It is as if the apostle said I am no longer with you to warn, exhort, and stir you up when your courage is flagging—you are now thrown entirely upon God. You have got the ordinary helps of bishops and deacons, but there is no present apostolic care to look to. No doubt the apostle's absence was an immense loss. But God is able to turn any loss into gain, and this was the gain for them that they were more consciously in dependence on the resources of God Himself. When the apostle was there, they could go to him with whatever question arose: they might seek counsel direct from him. Now his departure leads them to wait upon God Himself for guidance. The effect on the spiritual would be to make them feel the need of being more prayerful, and more circumspect than ever. “As ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” I am not there to watch over you and to give you my counsel and help in difficulties, and emergencies, and dangers. You have to do with a mighty, subtle, active foe. Hence you have not to look to the hills, but to God, and to work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” If the apostle was not there, but in prison far away, God, he says, is there. It is God who worketh in you. That would give

solemnity of feeling, but it would also infuse confidence. There would be fear and trembling in their hearts, feeling that it is a bitter, painful thing to compromise God in any way by want of jealous self-judgment in their walk—fear and trembling because of the seriousness of the conflict. They had to do with Satan in his efforts against them. But on the other hand God was with them, working in them. It was not the idea of anxiety and dread lest they should break down and be lost, but because of the struggle in which they were engaged with the enemy, without the presence of an apostle to render them his invaluable succor.

But now he turns to those things in which they might be to blame and certainly had to be on their guard. “Do all things without murmurings and disputings [or reasonings]: that ye may be blameless and harmless [simple, or, sincere], irreproachable children of God, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.” He calls them to that which would be manifestly a blameless walk and spirit in the eyes of the crooked and perverse round about them. But besides this, he looks for that which would direct in them, and show men clearly the way to be delivered from their wretchedness and sin; lights in the world, “holding forth the word of life;” and this with the motive to their affections, “that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain nor labored in vain.”

But now he puts another consideration before them. What if he, Paul, should be called to die in the career of the gospel! Up to this point he had been communicating his mind and feelings to them with the thought that he was going to live: he had stated his own conviction that God meant him to continue a little longer here below for the good of the Church. But he suggests the supposition of his death. Supposing he were to suffer unto death, what then? “But if also I be poured out upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.” To him it was the very reverse of a pain or trouble, the thought of being thus a libation upon what he sweetly calls the sacrifice and service of their faith. Nay, more, he calls on them to share his feelings. “For the same cause also do ye joy and rejoice with me.” Thus the apostle triumphs, turning not only his imprisonment into a question of joy, but also the anticipation, were it God's will, of his laying down his life in the work. He is even congratulating them upon the joyful news. How mighty and unselfish is the power of faith! He calls upon them that there should be this perfect reciprocity of joy through faith, that they might take it as a personal honor, and feel a common interest in his joy, as much as if it were for themselves. This is just what love does produce. As the apostle identified himself with them, so they, in their measure, would identify themselves with him. May the Lord grant us to know it better through His grace.

Chapter 177

# Notes on Philippians 2:19-30

“But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state.” What a beautiful sample of the same self-denying love which the apostle had pointed out in Christ and was seeking to form in the hearts of the Philippians! We know what Timothy was to the apostle, but though to lose him, especially then, might be the greatest privation to himself, still he says, “I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you.” Divine love thinks of the good of others; and this grace had wrought in the apostle. It was to further nothing of his own. He desired to know their state that his own heart might be comforted. Is not this the mind which was also in Christ Jesus? The imprisoned apostle sent Timotheus from himself to them in the hope of getting good tidings of these saints that were so dear to his heart. “For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state;” no one with such genuine affection and care, not merely for me, but for you. “For all seek their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's. But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son the father, he hath served with me in the gospel.” There was at once what was the common bond. The love of Christ filled both and made them both serve. They were doing the same thing. There was mutual confidence for the same reason; for Christ and stumblingblocks are incompatible. “Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me. But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly.”

What then does he add? He could not come as yet himself; he was delaying Timothy till the result of his trial should be known, that the Philippians might have the latest intelligence about that which he was sure would be near to their hearts. But would he leave them without a word meanwhile? Far from it. He says, “Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labor.” We see how love delights to share all things with others. He chooses terms which would link Epaphroditus with himself— “my brother, and companion in labor, and fellow-soldier.” There was everything that could clothe him with honor and endear him to the saints, “but your messenger and he that ministered to my wants.” He had all these insignia of honor in the cause of Christ. Nothing can be sweeter than this unfolding of affection; but it could only be, because the state of the Philippians had been thoroughly sound with God. We get nothing of this in writing to the Galatians or Corinthians. So far from being sound in state, they were not even sound in the faith. The Galatians, we know, were letting slip justification: the consequence is, there is not an Epistle so reserved, so distant, as we may see in the marked absence of personal salutation. He wrote to them as a duty, as an urgent service springing from his love that desired their deliverance; but he had no kind of liberty in letting out his affections in the way we find here. God Himself led him to act thus differently.

“For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick. For indeed he was sick, nigh unto death; but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.” I cannot conceive a more admirable picture of divine affections flowing out without hindrance to these saints. He descants upon what Timothy was to him, whom he hoped to send to them, and now upon Epaphroditus who had come

from them as their messenger. His heart glows, and he opens out all his feelings about this link between himself and them. “He longed after you all and was full of heaviness,” not because he was sick himself or was nigh unto death, but “because that ye had heard that he had been sick.” Such was the heart of Epaphroditus; such Paul's to see and record it. Both were desirous that they should be relieved, by knowing how the Lord had shown Himself on their behalf. “But God had mercy on him, and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.” See how the apostle loves to trace the goodness of God, not merely towards the person who was the immediate object of God's dealings, but towards himself also. Scripture nowhere intimates such a thing in the mind of God as looking coldly upon the sickness or death of His children. Too often this is the case with us, as if it did not much matter, or it were a point of spirituality to be like a stone. There is such a thing as the Spirit of God identifying Himself with human affections, as well as with divine ones. We find divine affections in chapter 1, and human affections here in chapter ii. The Holy Spirit has been pleased, not only to bring down divine affections, so to speak, and put them into us; but also to animate the human affections of the saints. Christ Himself had them in His heart, for He was truly man. And now the Spirit of God gives another and higher value to these affections in the saints of God. This is as plain as it is important. The Holy Ghost mingles Himself, so to speak, with all. “I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful.” The apostle does not say, And that I may rejoice too. There is no unreality, nothing but transparent truthfulness here, as well as the most blessed love. It is “that ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful.” He did feel the pang of parting with Epaphroditus, but he could rejoice that such a help went to them, because they would rejoice, and he himself would be the less sorrowful. It was his loss; but assuredly it would be their gain.

“Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such in reputation.” Remark how he is careful to commend his fellow-laborer to the esteem of the saints. Epaphroditus does not seem to have been a man of much outward mark. But men highly gifted ought to be tenacious on behalf of those of lesser gift. Certainly in the case of the apostle, instead of being jealous as to others, there is the greatest desire to keep up their value in the eyes of the saints. “Hold such in reputation.” Others might have feared for Epaphroditus or others like him, lest they might be puffed up. “Receive him,” he says,” with all gladness, and hold such in reputation; because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.” We do not find any great account of what he had done in preaching or teaching; but there was the earnest, unselfish service of love in this blessed man of God, and that was enough for the Apostle Paul and ought to be also for God's children.

The Lord grant that we may be thus quick to discern and thus hearty in our appreciation of what is of Christ in others, whoever they may be, cultivating not so much keenness of eye for that which is painful and inconsistent in the saints, as steady desire for whatever brings Christ before the soul, whatever gives the ring of the true metal, whatever bears the stamp of the Spirit of God.

Chapter 178

# Notes on Philippians 3:1-11

THE apostle had touched on various sources of joy to himself and the saints he was addressing. It was with joy he made supplication for them all. (Chap. 1:4) It was with joy, and ever new joy, that he beheld his very bonds giving a fresh impulse to the preaching of Christ. (Chap. 1:18) So too he is assured of his continuance with them all for their progress and joy of faith, that their boasting might abound in Christ through him. (Chap. 1:25) Next, he called on them to fulfill his joy (chap. ii. 2), not merely by the proof of their love to him, but by cultivating unity of mind and mutual love according to Christ, who, though the highest, made Himself the lowest in grace, and is now exalted to the pinnacle of glory. “Yea, and if I be offered (or, poured forth) on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all. For the same cause also do ye joy and rejoice with me.” (Chap. 2:17, 18) So, again, the apostle sends away his companion and solace, Epaphroditus, when recovered, to the Philippians, who were uneasy at the tidings of his dangerous sickness, “that when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be less sorrowful.” (Chap. 2:28)

But there is a joy independent of all passing circumstances, and deeper than all others because it is nearer to, yea, it is the one spring of all joy: it is to this the apostle now calls them. “Finally [or, for the rest], my brethren, rejoice in the Lord.” It is of the deepest moment that we, that all saints, should heed the call. It is due to Him, in whom we are exhorted to rejoice, that we should bear a true testimony in this respect. I say not a testimony worthy of Him, for none is, save that which God the Father has borne and bears, and that which the Holy Ghost renders in word and deed. Still, great as our shortcoming is, the Holy Ghost is in us to give us a divine appreciation of the Lord. May we not then dishonor Him by gloomy thoughts, by unbelieving feelings, by ways that betoken fear, doubt, dissatisfaction, yearning after creature pleasure in one form or another; but may we be enabled by faith, heartily, simply, alone or with others, in public and in private, to “rejoice in the Lord.”

It was thus with Paul and Silas when the foundation of the assembly at Philippi was laid at midnight in the prison, and the jailor and his house were gathered among the first-fruits. (Acts 16:25-34.) Long labors had intervened, many years of reproach and suffering. The heart of the apostle fresh as ever, though a prisoner at Rome, calls on the saints to “rejoice in the Lord.” So he had taught when with them; so he had already urged in this letter, though now he presses it with greater distinctness as to its ground and spring. “To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe.” It was no trouble to him, for beloved them too well to mind it.

It was safe for them, for Satan threatened otherwise. Joy in the Lord is the truest safeguard against the religious snares of the enemy. Where the truth is known, the grand thing is to have the affections kept on the right object, and withal in happy liberty. This is secured by rejoicing in the Lord, which supposes the heart at rest in His grace, and Himself known and beloved, the most attractive and precious object before us. Put Him at a distance, wrap Him in clouds and darkness, think of Him mainly as the inflexible Judge about to be revealed in flaming fire taking vengeance, mix all this up with your own associations and relationships to Him, and with your experience; and

is it any wonder that, under such conditions, peace is unknown, and eternal life a question unsolved and insoluble till the day of death or judgment? In such a state “rejoice in the Lord” has no tangible place, no practical application, not even a distinct meaning; and the soul is exposed, but for divine mercy which by other means may hinder all, to sink lower and lower into the dregs and deceits of Judaisers.

Hence, says the apostle, “beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.” (Ver. 2) There is not only a warning to take heed, but accumulated and bitter scorn of these high-minded men. For, rejecting grace and not submitting to the righteousness of God, they were restlessly prowling about, themselves unclean, whatever their pretensions; their work mischievous, their boasted privileges not only null but despicable in the extreme. There were “the dogs” now, not Gentiles even, still less Christians, as such, but the Judaisers. Evil workmen were they, and not the circumcision, which they affected literally or in principle—they were but “the concision.” “For we,” the apostle says with emphasis, “are the circumcision (whatever we might have been in the flesh, Jews or Gentiles—it mattered not), who worship God in the Spirit, [or, according to the best MSS., who worship by God's Spirit], and boast in Christ Jesus, and trust not in flesh.” (Ver. 3)

It is a mistake to imagine that these adversaries of God's work advocated a return to mere Judaism. Such there were elsewhere, as in Hebrews, but they are treated as apostates. The class here in view consists rather of persons who professed Christianity, but sought to blend the law along with it, a system of evil which, far from being rare, is the commonest thing now-a-days. Do you not hear of a fresh recourse to the cross, and fresh sprinkling of the blood to restore the soul? Are there not souls who take the place of God's children and Church, and yet confess themselves miserable sinners, crying for mercy; sheep of His pasture, yet tied and bound with the chain of their sins? Does not this return to Jewish experience, under tutors and governors, ignore Christianity and annul redemption and the Spirit of adoption? Are there not notions still of holy places and holy castes, holy feast-days and fast-days, and administration of sacraments among those baptized into Christ's death? The word of God is read, Christ is more or less preached, but these unquestionable Jewish elements are mingled with what is Christian. Hence human forms of prayer, ordinances, &c., take the place of God's Spirit as the power of worship; law-fulfilling (though by Christ) is openly boasted as the door into heaven, and our only title of righteousness; and thus to be risen with Christ, to be not in flesh but in Spirit, is supposed to be a fanatical dream, instead of the only condition which the Holy Ghost now recognizes as properly Christian.

Next, in verses 4-6, the apostle briefly exposes the entire baselessness of their claims in comparison of his own, if flesh availed in divine things. “Though I [again speaking emphatically] have trust in flesh also; if another think to trust in flesh, I more: in circumcision of eight days, of the race of Israel, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, persecuting the Church; as to righteousness that is in the law, blameless.” Thus, on grounds of the best earthly stock, due honor to ancient and divine ordinances, a high rank acquired in the school of tradition, an utter repudiation and hatred of new light in religion, and a life blameless according to the law, who could stand as firmly as Paul? “But,” adds he, “what things were gain to me, these I counted loss on account of Christ. But so then I also count all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, on account of whom I suffered the loss of all, and count them to be dung [refuse], that I may win Christ and be found in him, not having my righteousness, which [is] of law, but that which is by faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God on my faith; to

know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death, if by any means I may arrive at the resurrection which is from out of the dead." (Ver. 7-11.)

What was it, then, which had wrought so deep, so permanent, and, as we know from Acts 9, so sudden a change? What poured contempt on every natural, on every religious advantage from the birth up to the day when, with credentials from the high priest, he neared Damascus? It was the heavenly vision which arrested him on the way; it was Christ seen in glory, yet one with those whom his infatuated zeal was persecuting to prison and death. "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest." Sure that He whose light shone on him brighter than the noonday sun was no other than the Lord God of Israel, the astonished Saul of Tarsus learns from His own mouth that He was the Crucified, whose disciples he would have up to this conscientiously exterminated. No wonder, then, that the converted, delivered Israelite, obedient to the heavenly vision, judges all things by this new and divine light. A new creature in Christ, for him old things had passed away, all things were become new; all things were of that God who reconciled to Himself by Jesus Christ. Hence the things that were to him gains, he counted loss on account of Christ; yea, all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge, as he says with such affection, "of Christ Jesus any Lord," on whose account he not only suffered the loss of all at first, but now to the last continued to count them refuse that he might gain Christ (or, have Him for gain). What was his boasted righteousness now? His one thought was to be found in Christ, not having any such righteousness of his own, which must be legal, but that which is by faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God grounded on faith; to know Christ and the power of His resurrection (not even Christ on this side the grave), and the fellowship of His sufferings. His eye was on Christ above, and if he added aught of Christ here, it was not in His deeds of power, nor His recognition of the ancient sheepfold, but in the moral glory of His sufferings. It was in that which proved the total alienation of man from God in his good things, not in his bad; in his religion, and not merely in his lusts and passions. His own experience was the witness of it. His confidence in the tradition of the elders, in Israel, in the law even, was ruin and rebellion to God as He now reveals Himself in Him who died, and rose, and ascended. Nothing, consequently, has the trust of his soul or value in his eyes, but Christ; and even if he could have anything else that looked good, he would know none but Christ, and have nothing but Christ the sufferer, risen and in heaven, as his portion. Hence conformity to His death was now a jewel to be won, rather than an evil to be shunned. Let the path be ever so dangerous, come what might, all would be welcome, "if by any means I may arrive at the resurrection from out of the dead." This last is not an expression of fear of failure, but of a heart which so prized the blessing of being thus with Christ as to mind no suffering that might intervene.

Chapter 179

# Notes on Philippians 3:12-21

Whatever the pathway might be, the apostle intimated, as we have seen, that he must be there. Such was the value of the resurrection of the just in his eyes. Like the Israelite in Psa. 84 on his way to Jerusalem, the ways were in his heart. He loved the way of Jesus, of His sufferings, of the cross, and not merely the glory at the end. “Not as though I had already attained [literally, received, i.e., the prize], or am already perfected.” It was not a question merely of the soul's happiness. “I would to God,” he had said to king Agrippa, “that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.” Who of all men was so happy as the Apostle Paul? Yet he warns us against supposing that he had yet obtained what he desired. There is no such thing as getting the prize till we are in the resurrection from amongst the dead. But he adds, “I follow after [or pursue], if also I may lay hold, for that also I am laid hold on by Christ.” He keeps his eye fixed upon Christ all the way through as well as at last. This was the strength of his triumphing over all the difficulties that lay between. No present experience, no actual joy detains his heart from God's end. The apostle wanted to gain possession of Christ by and by; but also Christ had possession of himself already.

“Brethren, I count not myself to have laid hold [whatever others might dream]; but one thing, forgetting the things behind, and stretching out to the things before, I pursue “The apostle does not mean that one ought to overlook, or that he did overlook his past sins and failure. On the contrary, it is most evil to forget what Christ has suffered for our sakes, and also the manifold ways wherein we have dishonored God. This will not at all interfere with settled peace—rather the reverse. A man can rejoice so much the more in the Lord if he fully judge his failure. It is the tendency of a conscience not thoroughly happy to desire to escape from thinking of anything in which we have consciously turned aside to the grief of the Holy Ghost. It is a right thing to search ourselves through and through, it is right to ask God to search and try us, and to lead us in the way everlasting. Confidence in grace, so far from weakening the sense of our own shortcomings or covering over our failure, is the very spring that enables us to see and deal with the reality of things in the presence of God. Thus the apostle speaks of “forgetting the things behind,” not with reference to his failure, but rather to his points of progress, the steps or stages in which he had made advance in the knowledge of Christ. Instead of dwelling upon any attainment, as if it were something to be thought of (like the Pharisee comparing himself with his neighbor), here we have this blessed man forgetting all that might have fed self-complacency or been creditable to himself. His back was on the ground traversed. “Stretching out to the things before, I pursue towards the goal for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” This can only be in the resurrection state. Till then he was content to run. This was his one business. It was to live Christ, because Christ was his object.

But now follows another thing which we need to bear in mind. We find different conditions, and not at all the same degree of progress made by the children of God. What then is the grand principle to guide us? Let us suppose a company of believers gathered together, all of the same mind, every one of them brought up to think exactly alike, from baptism with water to the coming and

kingdom of Christ, their minds made up and consenting even about points of detail. Would this satisfy the heart? Would it give a just witness to the ways of God towards His children? I dare not think so. It is sweet where God brings souls by exercise of spiritual judgment under the guidance of the Holy Ghost to feel alike. But where sameness is the result of dinning one doctrine into people's heads, and by rules and regulations which squeeze minds into monotony, can anything be more miserable? The apostle lays down the only divine rule for dealing with these cases. We have to do with a state of things, where there exist all varieties of attainments. In heaven we shall know as we are known; but the question is how to bear ourselves about these things here. It is a natural desire that all should grow and rise to a certain height of the stature of Christ. But are we not apt to confound the stature of Christ with our own idea of it? to desire that people should have our mind? This we have to guard against; and the true corrective is given here.

“As many, therefore, as be perfect, let us be thus minded.” He speaks of himself and others also, as being “perfect;” but there is no contradiction of what went before. When he had, in verse 12, disclaimed as yet the reception of the prize and being perfected, he meant that he was not yet out of the conflict in a resurrection condition. But when he here exhorts “as many as be perfect,” he means those who are of full age in the faith, thoroughly grounded in the Christian position, entering into it by faith and spiritual intelligence. It means a Christian who is not a babe, but full grown; not, of course, a Christian who has thoroughly finished his course, for this is in resurrection, but one who has become a man in Christ. We shall not have grown up into the full likeness of Christ till He comes and transforms us like to His glory. But there is such a thing even here as growing into the full knowledge of the mind of God, and it is through having got Christ in glory before us now the personal object of our souls. But suppose there are others among the children of God still in difficulty and doubt, what then? Are we to make them adopt our feelings and judgments about things? Certainly not. It would be a positive loss, unless it were by the power of the Holy Ghost leading the saints into a fuller apprehension of Christ.

The reference here is not to such matters of faith or practice as preclude difference. We ought not to have a hesitation where the glory of the Lord is concerned. There can be no question about sin. It is taken for granted in the Bible that no difference of mind could be tolerated where Christ is at stake. All saints instinctively see the enormity of bringing in moral evil to the table of the Lord. The Holy Ghost counts upon our resenting affronts to God. Allegiance to Him commands the conscience and rouses the heart of every saint of God if properly stated. These things God reckons upon. Nor is it only the wise and intelligent who are able to judge things of the sort, but the babes also. The only cases that ought to be brought before the Church as such are those which every believer is able to judge. It is quite a mistake to drag habitually everything before the assembly; but where things come out of an evidently immoral or of an heretical character, there any saint rejects the poison, one as much as another. It is not the babes who have difficulties or who give trouble, as a general rule. How often clever, intelligent people do the mischief, while the simple-minded would feel the evil of such things at once! Here on the contrary the matters spoken of are such as some saints might feel, and not others. There might be practical or doctrinal questions, as the particular manner in which children ought to be brought up, or the style of living, furniture or house. There one must be content to point out the holy principles of God, not to assume hastily that our own measure is such that we ought to attempt to make every other adjust his children or house by it. God is jealous that He should have the forming of His saints. A good

example is precious and we cannot be too careful as to the ways we allow. But having said this, it is for the children of God to examine themselves conscientiously by His word. In such things we must be patient and look for the action of God by His own truth on the souls of His saints.

We may suggest what we can of the truth of God to influence the heart; but there is no rule absolute to be laid down by any on points like these. One has often known persons who began strongly with a certain idea which governed them, and with which they zealously sought to govern others. How long does it stand? In the very thing on which they have prided themselves, they are apt to break down. It is Christ whom God makes the standard of everything. All else fails. Why push so strongly and in haste? “If in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.” There is no need then to be anxious. “Nevertheless whereto we have attained, walk by the same.” So far as we are occupied with Christ together and see His will, it is of great importance that we should walk together. But the apostle goes farther; he refers to his own example and points out as a beacon the walk of some, once owned as brethren. Need I say that it was no fleshly thing in the apostle thus to speak of himself? As a mere man, a person would be ashamed to talk about himself; it would be but a piece of vanity. The apostle was so completely raised above the thoughts of men, he so thoroughly realized the power of God in Christ, that it just illustrated the energy of the Spirit in him. He was led of the Holy Ghost to speak thus. He calls upon them therefore to be imitators together of him, and mark those that walk so as ye have us for an example. (Ver. 17.) “For many walk of whom I have told you often and now tell you even weeping that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction, whose god is the belly and glory in their shame, who mind earthly things.” (Ver. 18, 19.) We are not even told whether these men were put away from the Church of God. They are characterized as enemies of the cross of Christ and yet they may not have been formally without. If so, what a terrible state of things before the eyes of the apostle! persons probably not guilty of such flagrant wickedness as to require excision; and yet the source of the deepest sorrow to the apostle. They were going on carelessly, indifferently. How awful to view some within perhaps with less hope than others put away for flagrant sin! We all know how truly this is verified in the present state of Christendom. How many bear the name of Christ who by their ways show there is not the slightest breath of divine life in them! Professing to know God, in works they deny This drew out the tears of the apostle even in the midst of his joy; but he turns it to practical profit, calling on the saints to take heed. Let us watch against the beginnings of self-indulgence or allowing earthliness. “For our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven,” our real association is with Him who is there. Whatever we might have been as citizens of the earth, it is at an end now and forever. We belong to Christ on high. It is not merely that we are going there, but we belong to heaven now. Our commonwealth, our citizenship is there, and therefore from thence also “we look for the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior.” He has decided to have us in entire fellowship with the home to winch we pertain, because it is His. He is coming from heaven, and, when He does, “he will change our body of humiliation so as to be conformed to the body of His glory according to the working whereby He is able also to subdue all things to Himself.” Then we shall be manifested what we now are in call, life, and desire. We are now heavenly and then we shall be declared and proved to be so. We belong to heaven even while we are upon the earth: then it will be made plain that we had no real link with the earth, but with Christ above.

The Lord grant that we may seek to bring this into everything with which we have to do, into the heart, the home, and the whole life. He has made us His friends, and may we be enabled with a purged conscience, and with a heart rejoicing in Himself, to look onward to that blessed moment when we shall prove Him true to all the hopes He has given us.

Chapter 180

# Notes on Philippians 4:1-5

The main truth which was in the mind of the apostle and which the Lord was using him to lay upon the hearts of the Philippian saints was now clearly expressed and enforced. The rest of the epistle, this last chapter, consists rather in the connected exhortations and practical use to which it was turned for present profit. Indeed it may have been noticed that, throughout, this epistle is eminently practical. Every whit of it has an immediate and important bearing upon the communion and walk of the saint of God. Of course in a general way there is no truth which is not meant to deal with the heart and walk in some way or another; yet I do not hesitate to say that this epistle is remarkable for nothing more than for its being the personal experience of the apostle himself seeking to raise the experience of the saints at Philippi to the same measure, yea, according to the standard of Christ Himself. Accordingly, having shown us Christ fully, both as an example here below and as a motive in heaven (the earthly example being specially given in chapter ii., and the heavenly motive in chapter iii.), now comes the practical object to which it is applied. “Therefore,” says he, “my brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.” It is evident that the spiritual affections of the apostle were deeply moved. Brotherly love was flowing out powerfully, and net the less because he had been occupied with Christ, with the deep feeling of what Christ had been and is, and with the joyous anticipation of that which the saints are destined to be when they see Him coming from heaven in the fullness of His grace and power, changing even their very bodies of humiliation that they may be fashioned like unto His glorious body. Salvation being only then and there complete, he bids them “to stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.” And so much the more because it would appear that there were some among them who were at variance one with another. Things were working there which separated in the way of affection, or at least, in the service of the Lord, those who had been engaged in it from earliest days. And this may be found where there is nothing at work of a scandalous character, because the very ardor and zeal of the servant of God may easily carry him, if there be not adequate occupation with Christ, into danger; even service ensnares and imperils where it becomes an object instead of Christ. It would appear that such was the case with some active saints at Philippi. “I beseech Euodia, and I beseech Syntyche that they be of the same mind in the Lord; yea, I entreat thee also true yoke-fellow, help them [i. e., these women just named], seeing that they contended with me in the gospel, with Clement also and the rest of my fellow-laborers whose names are in the book of life.”

Now, it is plain that there are two things which the apostle here presses. First is the great importance of having the same mind not only in the Lord but also in the work of the Lord. The danger is of having some aim or way of our own in that holy occupation. The Lord is assuredly jealous over those whom He employs and He works continually to preserve each servant in the immediate sense of his own responsibility to Himself. No one need fear that this would interfere with mutual respect or hinder the outflow of divine affection linking together the various servants of God. Man would think so because he must judge from his own selfish heart. It is the flesh that seeks its own things; while the Spirit of Christ, whatever may be its holy judgment of evil, is never

selfish. It is the grossest mistake to suppose that where the heart is brought to estimate all things according to God, you bring in an element of division between brethren; not this, but the indulgence of flesh opens the door to strife and schism. Supposing a child of God who has gone astray, what is it that separates him from his brethren? Nothing but the evil that has been indulged in. The Holy Ghost acts in the man's soul; now he feels, confesses, and separates from that which is fleshly. At once the balance is restored and you are more united in love with that erring soul than, perhaps, you ever were before. Up to that time there may have been much which hindered fellowship. The irritability of spirit, the censoriousness, the vanity, the self-confidence broke out too often in the very service and worship of God—all this had previously produced many an anxious feeling for spiritual minds, and this just because there was real love to his soul. The consequence was so far that which separated, not in outward walk, but in fellowship of heart; whereas the moment there was the genuine action of the Holy Spirit of God—sin having actually, perhaps, broken out because of nature not being judged and the separation having become complete—the moment the evil is dealt with even in the man's spirit, and he owns frankly that he has sinned against the Lord, your heart is knit to him and you have a confidence in him which may never have existed before. The notion is false, therefore, that serious judgment of evil is what divides between brethren. On the contrary, it is evil (not separation from it) which sows discord or makes separation necessary among brethren. Gracious separation from evil knits the heart of those who are true with the Lord. It is holiness in fact. Apart from sin there is the enjoyment of God Himself and of His good and acceptable will. In this world holiness implies the judgment of evil and separation from it in heart and practice, as far as we are concerned. The cross of the Lord Jesus Christ is that which gathers the children of God on the ground that all their evil has been judged there and separated from them forever by His death. No matter how you look at it, in every case it is evil that divides, and the judgment of evil that unites, hearts in an evil world according to God. Any unity of the children of God would be a positive sin against Him if it were not founded upon separation from evil. Having referred to the broad and fundamental principle of separation from evil, which will be found to be eminently practical, we may turn now to see its application to the matter before us.

At Philippi there rose before the apostle's heart godly persons there at work; but work is not always Christ and may be division. The tendency is not uncommon to disparage what another is found doing, and to exalt ourselves in what we may know to be our own line of things. This tends to break up happy fellowship of heart, and, where there is anything of a spiritual atmosphere these things are deeply felt. Among the Corinthians this was but a small thing compared with the grosser evils that were active in their midst; but at Philippi where the state was comparatively healthy and blessed, where also the spirit of obedience reigned as we know, the lack of harmony from whatever cause it may have sprung becomes of importance, and the variance therefore of these two sisters is pressed home by the Spirit of God, but not before ample comfort had been ministered, which would encourage their hearts to look to Christ. How tender, and withal how personal, is the appeal to each of these Christian women! “I exhort Euodia and I exhort Syntyche that they be of the same mind in the Lord.” He begins with the Lord, not with the service, though the variance may have grown up in its course. He calls on them one by one (for one might hear if not the other) to be of the same mind in the Lord. Depend upon it that, where the Lord occupies us, differences soon dwindle. Having each the eye fixed upon the Lord, there is found a common object of attraction, and thus the enemy's hope of producing alienation is defeated at once. He adds a request also to his true yoke-fellow in the case. I suppose the reference is to Epaphroditus,

of whom he had spoken with ardent affection in chapter ii. “Yoke” in Scripture is a badge of union or of subjection, as the case may be, in service. Thus, in 2 Cor. 6, the believer is told not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers. Many narrow that scripture to the natural relationship of marriage. But though the marriage tie between believers and unbelievers is evidently not according to God, yet I doubt that there is any particular allusion to it in that scripture. The object there of the Spirit of God is to take up the commixture of the believer with the unbeliever in the service and worship of God. The apostle brings forward the temple of God as well as individual matters, and shows that we are not to have fellowship corporately any more than individually with unbelievers. I only refer to it now because it is often put aside from the consciences of the children of God through the mistaken habit of referring it to marriage; whereas, it is plain on the face of it that the direction the Holy Ghost gives would not strictly apply to marriage. Bad as it is for a believer to marry an unbeliever, God does not even then say, Come out from the relationship; leave your wife; part from your husband. Apply it to its legitimate object (viz., fellowship with unbelievers in the things of God), and there you have a maxim of deep and urgent importance. I am not to unite with the world in any one thing that concerns the service and worship of God. This is the true meaning of being unequally yoked. “Come out and be separate” is then the special word that applies to any such unholy alliance. This makes all plain, when men ask if we are not to do anything for the world? If there is sorrow and want, am I not to help sufferers? Surely if there be a peculiar duty to the household of faith, I am also bound to do good unto all men; but there is no yoking together with others outside Christ in this, and no communion. The worldly man gives because he is generous, or feels for the need of the person, or is expected to give. The child of God does it because it is the will of God. The one acts on the ground of nature, the other in faith. Even in the most ordinary necessary acts, as eating and drinking, I may and ought to do it all to God's glory. Supposing a man drowning, or a house on fire, there is a claim of course on any man; but to use the help that a servant of God might render on such occasions, as a reason for joining the world with the saint in the service of God, is to deceive or be deceived—it may be, willingly. I have no hesitation in saying that to put an unbeliever on the ground of joining in prayers and hymns and taking the Lord's Supper, to sanction his joining with you in such services, is as far as you can to damage if not destroy his soul. No believer would act thus without an object other than Christ. What the Holy Ghost seeks for the unregenerate soul is to convince him of his ruin; but, if yoked with you in God's work or temple, you are cheating him (or he you) into a false ground. You thus far treat him as an acceptable worshipper and make him think that he is doing God's service as truly, though perhaps not so well, as yourself. This is as contrary to holiness as to love, equally opposed to God's glory and man's good.

Were these godly energetic women now apart in spirit? He not only exhorts each separately, but asks Epaphroditus as I suppose, the true yoke-fellow of the apostle, to help them. For these women had shared the apostle's sufferings in the gospel when it entered Philippi. It is not, “And entreat thee,” as in the English version or the commonly received text; nor is it, “Yea and,” &c. The best authorities omit “and” altogether, which was a corruption of yea.” For the apostle is continuing in verse 3 the same thought as in verse 2, and is urging his dear and true yoke-fellow at Philippi to succor those previously named women (not others, as the ordinary rendering might convey), “the which” (aInves) or “since they” contended with him in the gospel. It is not said that they preached; there is no reference to public service here. There is a great difference between preaching the gospel and sharing the contentions of the gospel. Even a man might have labored diligently and

never have preached in his life; and there might be some striving every day in the gospel as diligently, or more so even, than those who preached it every day. There is beautiful choice in the language of the Holy Ghost. We all ought to know that the New Testament puts the Christian woman in the place of exceeding blessedness, removing every thought that would give her an inferior place in Christ, but it puts her also at the same time in the back ground, wherever it is a case of public action. Here officially, so to speak, the man is called to be uncovered, the woman to be veiled. She is thus as it were put behind the man, whereas, when you speak of our privileges in Christ, there is neither male nor female. It is of importance to see where there is no difference and where there is. The First Epistle to the Corinthians is most plain that the head of the woman is the man, and as Christ is the glory of the man, so the man is the glory of the woman. We find there the administrative difference between the man and the woman. When you come to the heavenly privileges we have in Christ, all these distinctions disappear. There is no public action that I know in the world or in the Church allotted to the Christian woman. As to private dealing with souls, the case is different. In their father's house, the four daughters of Philip may have prophesied. They were evidently highly gifted women; for it is not said of them that they labored in the gospel, but that they prophesied—one of the highest forms of gift from Christ. At the same time the Holy Spirit, who tells us that a woman might and did prophesy as a fact, instructs us that it is forbidden to a woman to speak in the Church where prophesying properly had its course. But there a woman was forbidden to speak, not even allowed to ask a question, much less to give an answer. Yet as to the private scene, at home, even with an Apollos, a woman might fitly act: that is, if she acted under and with her husband. Priscilla might be of more spiritual weight than Aquila; but this very thing would lead her to be the more careful to take an unobtrusive lowly place. The yoke-fellow of the apostle seems to have been somewhat timid of helping these women. The apostle, accordingly, entreats him also as he had exhorted him. “Help those women, in that they contended with me in the gospel.” They were not putting themselves forward in an unseemly public sort; but they had shared the early trials of the gospel with St. Paul. At Corinth the women assumed much and the apostle manifests his sense of it by the reproachful demand, if the word of God came out from them, or if it came to them only. (1 Cor. 14:36.) Thus, and not only thus, had they quite slipped aside from that which prevailed in the churches of the saints. No doubt they reasoned that, if women had gifts, why should they not exercise them and exercise them in all places? But He who gives the gift is alone entitled to say when, how, and by whom it is to be exercised. At Philippi where there was an obedient spirit, there might have been too great reluctance to meddle with these otherwise estimable women who were estranged from each other. The apostle bids Epaphroditus to render his help. “Help them who are such as contended with me in the gospel.” He gives them special praise. They strove for and with him in the work. He joins himself with those persons whom his yokefellow may have been rather afraid of. He joins them also with Clement and other fellow-laborers. What tenderness in touching the case! He encourages the fellowship in the service of the gospel not only with faithful men, but with women whose faithfulness was not forgotten, because there were painful hindrances just now.

But now, leaving the question of variance among them, he returns to his topic of exceeding joy. He had been encouraging one who had his sympathy and confidence to help these women. He now calls on all to rejoice in the Lord alway. If he touched on these sorrows, let them not suppose that he wanted to damp their joy: on the contrary, “rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say rejoice.” This, let me repeat, is an important thing practically. It is a total mistake when we allow difficulties

or differences among the saints of God to hinder our perfect delight in the Lord. Do we desire the glory of Christ among those who are His? I must always maintain that glory in my own soul if I am to be a witness to Christ among others. Is the Lord's love affected or at least enfeebled by these passing circumstances? Is His glory less bright because some shades of self have betrayed themselves over the brow of His saints? Surely not. Thus he turns to the key-note of the epistle, that joy in the Lord, of which he had been speaking as his own portion now, and by and by in chapters and that to which they were called in chapter 3, and again in chapter iv. Is it not a sorrow to think where Christians have got to in this respect—how this answer of heart to Christ has faded away from the hearts of so many; how even the assembling together to remember Christ in His supper does not always awaken fullness of joy but often an uneasy feeling and most painful shrinking back from His table as if it concealed some hidden danger, some lion in the way, instead of Jesus my Savior and Lord, who loved me and gave Himself for me? What humiliation of spirit ought to be ours as we think of all that thus dishonors the name of Christ. But does God intend that even this should hinder our joy? In no wise. Let the ruined state of God's people be in Israel or in the Church, it is always those who felt it most who enjoyed the greatest nearness to Himself and most of all entered into His own joy, while at the same time they mourned the more over the short-comings of those bearing His name. The two things go together. Show me hearts which, though godly, are not happy; hearts over occupied with the circumstances of the Church, constantly talking about the evil and low condition here and there; and you will never show me souls that deeply enjoy the Lord and His grace; whereas in the person who really enjoys the Lord and has the consciousness of what Christ and the Church of God are in Christ and should be in the power of the Spirit now, who therefore best estimates what Christendom has become, there will be the two things harmonized—the heart resting upon Christ, dwelling in His love; while, at the same time, man's weakness and Satan's malice in ruining all can be rightly judged. These two things we have to cultivate.

# Notes on Philippians 4:5-23

“Let your moderation [mildness] be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful [anxious] about nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.” (Ver. 5, 6.) To prayer is added thanksgiving, because the Lord is entitled to it. The heart should not forget what a God we are making our requests to. In the confidence of this let us thank Him, even when we are spreading our wants before Him. But he had said before this, “Let your moderation be known unto all men.” Supposing there is somebody who has seen us a little off our balance in standing upon our right, real or imaginary, something which contradicted the gentleness of Christ, ought we not to feel humbled, and take an early opportunity to wipe off what may have given a false impression to that man's soul? God would have our readiness to yield, not resist, known, and this not sometimes or to some persons, but to all men. By moderation the apostle means that spirit of meekness which can only be where the will is not allowed to work powerfully for that which we desire. And what a reason why we need not be anxious to assert a thing, even when we are right! “The Lord is at hand.” Where there is the happy feeling in the soul that one is doing that which pleases God, there is generally the readiness of trust in the Lord that puts aside anxiety and leaves all in His hands. Besides, He is coming soon.

He will bring out everything that is according to Himself. He will bless every desire wherever there may have been a true testimony for Himself. He will give effect to it in that day. “The Lord is at hand.” He is not come yet, but you can go to Him now and lay all your requests before Him, assured that He is near, that He is coming. And what is the result? “The peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” (Ver. 7.) When the heart commits to God all that would be a burden to it, the consequence is that His peace, the peace in which He moves and lives, guards us from the entrance of all that would harass. The sources of care are cast into the Lord's lap and the peace of God Himself, which surpasses every understanding, becomes our protection.

Wherever we have grace to commit to God what would have tried us (had we thought of it and kept it before our spirits), there is infallibly His own peace as the answer of God to it. The affections are at rest and the working of the mind that would otherwise forecast evil. Hence all is calmed down by the peace of God Himself.

Peace is viewed in more ways than one in Scripture. The peace of God here has nothing to do with the question of conscience. It shall keep the heart and mind. Where conscience is in question there is. but one way of finding peace. “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Sins were there; and how was the moral nature and majesty of God to be vindicated about sin? Far from God, in all our ways at war with God, how could we have peace with Him? The only door through which we, poor enemies, pass out of the condition of war into peace with God is by believing the testimony He has given of His Son. But this is “peace with God,” not “the peace of God.” If I endeavor to get comfort for my conscience by spreading out my need before God, there is never full rest of conscience. The only means entitled to give rest to the

conscience is faith in God's assurance that sin has been perfectly judged in the cross, and sins blotted out by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. By Christ all that believe are justified. If one's own state mingles for a single moment with this, it is a delusion on such a ground to reckon upon peace with God. But if I believe on Christ and what He has done, I can boldly say that Christ deserved that even my sins should be forgiven. Therefore I can add, “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God.” The value is not in the faith, but in our Lord Jesus Christ. You cannot get the blessing without believing, but it is an answer to the worth of Christ in the sight of God. But, besides this settled peace which we have through the work of Christ, there is the practical peace of God, which has nothing to do with the remission of sins (which it assumes as a settled thing for a foundation), but of the circumstances through which the believer passes day by day. Paul was in prison, when he wrote to the Philippians, unable to build up the churches or to labor in the gospel. He might have been cast down in spirit; but he never was more happy in his life. How is this? Because instead of being anxious and troubled about the danger of the Church, and the afflictions of individuals, about souls that were perishing, instead of looking at them as connected with himself, he looked at them in connection with God. If God was in peace about these things, why should not he too? Thus the simple resource of spreading out all before God and casting it off himself into the bosom of his Father has for its effect that God's peace kept his heart and mind. Nor was it special to the apostle. He puts it before the saints as that which ought to be equally their portion. It is evident there is no room left for anxiety. God would not have His children burdened or troubled about circumstances. Till the Lord come, this is the blessed source of relief. God is here working and His peace keeps our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus, where we give Him His honor and our trust.

But even this is not all, for there are other things which claim or test us besides anxieties and cares. There is our ordinary Christian life: what can strengthen us in it? Here is the word, the apostolic counsel (ver. 8), “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true.” There may not be many bright spots, but there are some; am I not to think of them? This is what I am called upon to do—to be quick of discernment, seeing not what is bad but what is good. I may have to judge what is evil, but what God looks for is that the spirit should be occupied with the good. “Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest [rather, venerable, or noble], whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report: if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.” Our consciences can answer whether these are the things we are most apt to think about. If we are swift to hear not of these things but all that is painful, while slow to hear whatever is of God, the consequence is, instead of having the God of peace as our companion, we have ourselves and others hindered by evil thoughts and communications. For that which the soul wants is that which is good. We are not exhorted to be learned in the iniquity of world or church, but “wise unto that which is good and simple concerning evil.” God has given those whom He qualifies to judge evil, spiritual men, who can take it up as a duty to Him, and with sorrow and love towards those concerned; but these God employs, among other purposes, for the sake of keeping His saints in general out of the need of such tasks. It is happy that we are not called upon to be searching and prying into evil, seeing and hearing its details; but that, while the Lord may graciously interfere to guard us from being mistaken, our proper wisdom is growing in what is according to God. Why, ordinarily, should a simple child of God occupy himself, for instance, with a bad book or a false teacher? It is enough for us if we have good ground to know that a thing is mischievous, and all we have then to do is to

avoid it. If, on the contrary, I know of something good, it has a claim on love and respect; it is not only for myself but for others. We are never right if we shut up our hearts from the sympathy of Christ with the members of His body or the workings of His Spirit here below. If there were even a poor Roman Catholic priest, who knew and brought out the truth of God more plainly than others, let us not say," can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" but, come and see if anything come with adequate evidence of having God's stamp upon it. Let us not limit Him who is above all circumstances; even if there be that which is most distressing, let us thank God that His gracious power refuses to be bound by any limits of man. It is of great importance that we should have largeness of heart to think of all that is good, wherever it may be.

"Those things which ye both learned, and received, and heard, and saw in me, do." (Ver. 9.) If ever there was a man with a large heart, it was the Apostle Paul. And yet no servant of God had a deeper view of evil, and a more intense abhorrence of it. Here the Spirit directs them by what they had seen in his own spirit and ways. It is not matter of doctrine but his practical life. This goes farther than supplanting anxiety by the safeguard of God's own peace; it is the practical power of positive good. What is the effect upon the heart? "The God of peace shall be with you." "The God of peace" is far more than even "the peace of God." It is Himself the source; it is the enjoyment of His own blessed presence in this way. There is relief in having the "peace of God" as the guard of our hearts and minds; there is power in having "the God of peace" with us. Want we anything? Impossible. "But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at the last your care of me flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity." They had shown love to the Apostle Paul at a previous time, as we find afterward (ver. 15) where he contrasts "the beginning of the gospel" with "the last."

The Philippians had been favored of God and had shown their love to the apostle in their early days. He had not forgotten it. It would appear that he rarely received from the saints of God, perhaps because he met with but few even among them that could have been trusted. It would have wrought evil by reason of their want of spiritual feeling. They might have thought something of it, or the gospel might have suffered in their minds or with others through it. But the Philippians were sufficiently simple and spiritual; and we know what delicate feelings the power of the Spirit can produce. They, accordingly, had the privilege of ministering to his wants. This the apostle alludes to, and with exceeding sweetness of feeling on his part. He felt that the word, "at the last," might be construed into a kind of reproach, as if they had forgotten him for a long time. He hastens to add therefore, "wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity." (Ver. 10.) On the other hand, he guards them against supposing he wanted more from them. "Not that I speak in respect of want." (Ver. 11.) In the corrupt heart of man, the very expression of gratitude may be an oblique hint that further favors would not be amiss. The apostle cuts off all thought of this by the words, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." This is not indigenous to human nature. Even Paul may not always have known it: he had learned it. "I know both how to be abased and I know how to abound." (Ver. 12.) His experience had known betimes what it was to be in absolute want, as be knew what it was to have want of nothing. "Everywhere and in all things I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer. I can do all things through him [the true, reading] who strengtheneth me." A wonderful thing for a man in prison to say, one who apparently was in most abject circumstances, and in no small danger—unable to do anything, men would say. But faith speaks according to God, and the man who can do nothing in

the judgment of his fellows, is the very one who could say he had strength for all things in Him that strengthened him. (Ver. 13.)

When the world comes into collision with a Christian, when it criminates, robs, and imprisons him, when the Christian is evidently as happy as before, and speaks of his riches as much as before, the world cannot but feel it has come into contact with a power that is entirely above its own. Whenever it is not so, we have failed. What the world should find in us under all circumstances, is the expression of Christ and His strength. It is not merely when the trial comes that we should go to the Lord and spread out our failure before Him; we ought to be with Him before it. If we wait for the trial, we shall not stand. In our Lord's case you will find that where there was victory in the power of faith, our Lord went through the suffering before it came. He went through it with God, yet no one felt trial as He. This therefore does not make the suffering less, but the contrary. Take the garden of Gethsemane as an instance. Who but our Lord ever sweated drops of blood in the prospect of death? Hence others may have entered into it in some little degree; and the measure has always been the power of the Spirit of God giving them to feel what is contrary to God in this world: for in this world whoever loves most suffers most. But here was one who had suffered much, who knew rejection as few men ever knew it, who had found the world's enmity as it is the lot of not many to prove. And yet this man, under these circumstances, says he has strength for all things through Him who strengthened him. Be assured that a blessed strengthener is near every one who leans upon Him. Paul does not speak here of apostolic privilege, but as a saint, a ground on which he can link himself with us, that we may learn to walk in the same path which he was treading himself. Having freely owned their love (in verses 14-16), having shown that it was because he desired fruit that might abound to their account in verse 17, he closes all with this: “I have all and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God.” (Ver. 18.) And marvelous to say, he is a giver himself. At any rate he counts upon One who would give everything that was needed in full supply. “But my God shall supply all your need, according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” (Ver. 19.)

What language from a man who had been just in want, and whose want had been supplied by these saints! Now he turns round and says, “My God shall supply all your need.” The God whose love and care and resources he had proved through all his Christian career— “my God,” he says, “shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” He is supplying the saints now according to all the wealth of His resources even in glory in Christ. There the shadow of a want will be unknown; but God is acting according to the same riches now. Therefore the apostle breaks forth in praise to God forthwith. “Now unto God and our Father be glory forever and ever, Amen.” (Ver. 20.) There is a notable change in the phraseology. He says first, “My God shall supply all your need,” and then “to our God and Father.” When it is a question of experimental knowledge and confidence he could not say “our God,” because they might not have the same measure of acquaintance with His love as he had who had proved and learned so profoundly and variedly what God was. But when he ascribes unto the ages of ages glory to God the Father, he cannot but join them fully with himself. “Now unto our God and Father be glory,” &c. His heart goes out to all believers. “Salute every saint in Christ Jesus.” (Ver. 21.) What a joy for those in Philippi to hear of brethren in unexpected quarters! The apostle had gone to Rome to be tried before Caesar. Now, it appears, there were those of the imperial household who send special salutation through

the apostle to the Philippians. “The brethren which are with me greet you. All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household.” (Ver. 21, 22.)

The heart gets wonderful relief in seeing the things that are lovely and of good report, and calculated to give our hearts confidence in the darkest day. Whatever the great trial of the present time (and never were there subtler snares or more imminent danger), there is no less grace in God, no less blessing to man in view of all. Let us not forget the word, “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.” (Ver. 4.) This epistle was not written as looking back upon the day of Pentecost, but for a time when the apostle was cut off from helping the churches, and when the saints were warned that they must work out their own salvation with fear and trembling. But the trial is yet sharper for the spirit, if not bodily, for those who would walk with the Lord now. Let us not doubt His love, but be sure that God is equal to all circumstances. If God has cast our lot in these days, let us not doubt His goodness, but know that we may have as deep and even deeper joy because the joy is less in saints, less in circumstances, and more exclusively in Christ. It was sin that hindered the Church's blessedness in these ways and others; but since God has cast our lot when and where we are now, may we eschew the unbelieving wish to exchange this time for any other. It is a question very simply of faith in God. He loves us and He cares for us. May our hearts answer to the perfections of His grace. While feeling the sorrow of the saints, of the gospel, of the Church more deeply, as all affects the glory of God, let us leave room in our hearts to count upon a known, tried God, who ever will be God, superior to all difficulties, foes, snares, and sorrows. “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.” (Ver. 23.)

Chapter 182

# Pilgrim Fathers: Hebrews 11:13-16

(Heb. 11:13-16)

What is declared in these verses of the Epistle to the Hebrews of the fathers in the book of Genesis, is beautifully exhibited and thereby fully verified by their histories. I feel anxious to consider this a little carefully, the Lord leading the heart (as through circumstances I trust He graciously has done lately) a little more vividly beyond the grave.

1. “These all died in faith.” The history strikingly illustrates this. They valued their dead bodies and the burying-places which held them. While they lived, they were content to sojourn in Canaan without having so much as to set their foot on. But “they died in faith.” The promise of God had made over that land, that very land, to them, though they themselves were to be gathered to their fathers (Gen. 15); and this was the warrant for their dying in faith, in the sure and certain hope of a resurrection unto the enjoyment of it. They would link their dead, though not their living, bodies with that land. Their care in securing the field of Ephron, the cave of Machpelah, for a burying-place, tells us this; and so the jealousy with which those of them who died in Egypt secured the carriage of their bones over to the promised land. All this verifies that “they died in faith.” Whether their bodies lay in Machpelah or Sychem, mattered not, for their bones would, in either case, be equally linked with the promised land. Stephen tells us that all the fathers were animated with this same faith. (Acts 7:13.) And I quite agree with those who say that this solves that difficult verse. (Acts 7:16.) Stephen shortly tells us that all were carried over from Egypt to Canaan, but whether to the ground which Abraham bought of Ephron, or that which Jacob bought of Hamor, it mattered not, for both equally linked their hopes with the promised inheritance. By faith they “gave commandment concerning their bones.” (Heb. 11:22.)

“They saw the promises afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them.”

As they died in faith of the promises, so did they live in the full persuasion of them though still distant. Their history, in like manner, gives beautiful witness of this.

Abraham lived in tents with Isaac and Jacob. That was so indeed. But, then, they were heirs together of the promise. Of this they were, in the midst of their pilgrim-days, fully persuaded. And, therefore, on fitting occasions, they can act upon that full persuasion, in a way which nothing but such persuasion can account for, assuming the dignities and places which the promise warranted. Their “name was to be great” and “the land was to be theirs,” and they would, if the moment called them, act in such character without thinking it robbery. See some instances of this.

Abimelech the king of Gerar courts the friendship of Abraham. Abraham at once allows the vail to drop, and puts off the pilgrim-girdle that hid or bound up his royal apparel, and takes headship of the Philistine king. (Gen. 21)

Isaac, in his day, does the same. Another Abimelech, king of Gerar, with the high estates of his kingdom, waits on Isaac, and Isaac accepts his person, grants his requests, prepares a feast, and

then (instead of being sent away by Abimelech as before, in the day of humiliation) sends Abimelech away as in a day of power and majesty. His state is kingly. The great man of the earth, and the heavenly pilgrim, for a mystic hour have exchanged places; or if not quite that, the pilgrim has become “king of kings.” (Gen. 26)

And so, Jacob. He blesses Pharaoh, taking to him without reserve the place of “the better.” For “without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better.” The confessed pilgrim assumes, for a moment, a dignity beyond that of the chief man of the earth in that day, the Pharaoh of Egypt. (Gen. 47)

Delightful scriptures, indeed, these are. Without reserve or apology, the heavenly strangers assume the station which will be theirs under promise of God in its season. And such an act tells us that, though as yet they “had not received the promises,” yet were they “persuaded of them, and embraced them.” They could, in the faith and spirit of their Lord, ascend the mount of transfiguration, on a due occasion.

“They confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”

This was literally so, in the progress of their journeys along the stream of time. By word of mouth they declared this of themselves. (Gen. 23:4; 28:4; 47:9.)

Their actions, also, were according to this. The moral principles on which they carried themselves spoke the same language.

They lived in tents, signifying plainly that they were not taking up any certain settlement in the earth. They surrendered their rights in the world. Abraham, for instance, gave up the choice of the land to his younger brother, leaving it with him to appoint him whatever portion he pleased. (Gen. 13)

And Isaac does the same. The instance is very striking. The Lord so signally blesses him, there was so much of the divine presence manifestly with him, that his company becomes oppressive to the world, and the men of Gerar require him to withdraw from them, He yields at once. But the blessing follows him. His servants dig a well, and the Lord fills it. And then the uncircumcised seek his wells, and he yields again.

This was a pilgrim's practical life. He would put up with either insult or injury, with an affront to his name, or damage to his estate. This was moral power—the principle of a pilgrim's life. This was conduct becoming his confession, that he was a stranger on the earth. “Let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth.” It is natural they should. But neither Abraham nor Isaac are potsherds of the earth, but heavenly strangers.

Thus was their confession verified by their ways. They acted, and in their behavior bore witness that they were pilgrims here.

4. “If they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to return.”

The history very largely warrants this thought concerning the pilgrim fathers; a thought which tells us that their sense of strangership on earth did not arise from regrets, but from hopes. They were

dissatisfied with the present thing not because of that which was past but of that which was to come. The scene around was a wilderness by reason of the power over them of the scene before and not of that behind them.

They might easily have retraced the road to Padanaram—Eliezer did so. They had not forgotten the way, for he did not mistake a step nor had to inquire it. And as easy would it have been for Abraham or for Isaac to have taken that journey as for Eliezer. But Eliezer went there only to do a certain business and to return. In a moral sense, his visit to the land from whence his master, Abraham, had come out, was no return to it. He did not linger there beyond the term of the appointed service. “Send me away unto my master,” was his word then, and no entreaties or kindnesses could change it. (Gen. 24)

And Rebecca's mind was the same. “I will go” was her immediate decision, when the matter was referred to her. All this being according to the purposes and thoughts of the great patriarch himself. For on sending Eliezer away, he had taken an oath of him that he would, on no pretense whatever, take his son back to that land of his kindred. Let consequences be what they may, that was never to be done.

Jacob, too, however to appearance it may be otherwise, acts exactly in the same spirit and on the same principles. His wrong way brings him under divine chastening, and he has to seek the distant land of his forefathers. But he is there as an exile rather than as at home. He is there actually because of God's discipline, but not there morally, because of the desire of his own heart. He remains there, it is true, a far longer time than Eliezer had; as many years, perhaps, as the other had hours. But still, all the time, he is there in the spirit of Eliezer. For, like him, as soon as the business was done, as soon as the purpose or hand of the Lord gives him his dismissal, he leaves it—leaves it too, I may add, though Laban's contract and God's blessing were making it profitable for him to remain; and though Esau's enmity, he might well judge, awaited him if he dared to return. But so it was. With loss behind and danger before him, he leaves it. Indeed such had been his purpose throughout, from beginning to end. As he was setting out, he talks, with all desire, of his return. As soon as Joseph is born, his hopes are all alive that the time of his banishment is over. And he remains after that, only under God's sanction, and departs as soon as God's word allows him. (Gen. 28:21; 30:25; 31:3-13.) All this surely telling us that morally, or in the spirit of his mind, he had no more returned to that land than Abraham or Isaac.

This mind not to go back to the place from which they had been called was, therefore, the mind which strongly impregnated the whole pilgrim family. It was so much the air they breathed, that even the Syrian servant inhaled it, and lived by it, and the elect bride felt the virtue of it at once. The language of their walk concerning their native land, was what ours should be concerning “this present evil world.”

“Twere easy, did we choose,

Again to reach the shore;

But this is what our souls refuse:

We'll never touch it more.”

Chapter 183

# The Moral Power of the World to Come

I have specially taken pleasure of late in considering the moral happiness of heaven and of the Millennium. For what a relief it must be to be free of the selfishness and pride which so spoils the pleasures of the heart now, and of many and many a working of our impure and perverted nature. And Scripture, more largely than we may suppose, gives us witnesses and examples of this character of heavenly enjoyments.

We know that great physical power or virtue will attend the coming kingdom of Christ. Then, as prophets sing, “the wilderness shall rejoice and blossom as the rose the lame shall leap as an hart, the tongue of the dumb shall sing;” “the wolf shall lie down with the lamb, and the leopard with the kid.” Nature, in all its order, shall own the presence of the Lord. The floods shall lift up their voice, the trees of the wood shall rejoice, before Him. As creation has already felt the bondage of corruption, it shall then feel the liberty of glory.

It will be like the awakening of latent sensibilities, like the sweeping of an exquisite instrument by the touch of a master-hand. For it is the same creation, the same vegetable and animal world still, but under new authority. Let the sons of God be manifested in their glory, let the Lord's holy mountain be established, and His knowledge cover the earth as the waters do the sea, and then the whole system, as thus pictured by the prophets, shall spring forth into new conditions. And so in man, when the powers of that coming age take him for their subject. Let but the glory appear, let but the passage be made from “this present evil world” into” the world to come,” and new principles will rise at once to gild the scene, and give to all personal and social life its richest enjoyments, that is, its moral enjoyments. This will be the sweeping with perfect skill an instrument of still finer workmanship. For there are in the renewed mind latent qualities of admirable texture and beauty. In its present condition it has to struggle with nature, and to suffer sore let and hindrance from the flesh. It is oppressed and encumbered by a gross atmosphere which ever surrounds it; but it has qualities inlaid in it of admirable excellence. It has capabilities of acting, judging, and feeling of the highest order, partaking, as we know, of “the divine nature.” And let but the due power reach it and move it, and all these latent sensibilities and faculties will be awakened. Let but the presence of Christ address itself to the renewed mind brought into the liberty of the kingdom, and forms of moral beauty in purity and benevolence throughout all personal and social life will be blessedly unfolded. It will not be another creation, but the same “new creature” in other conditions, all its powers and affections finding their exercise in their native air, and under their proper and undisturbed influences. Scripture, as I have observed, more largely than we may suppose, gives us the witnesses of this character of the virtues and enjoyments of the kingdom. Some of them I will now look at shortly.

In Gen. 21 the father of Israel and the Gentile are seen together, for a mystic moment, as Israel and the nations will be in the days of the kingdom. All is peace and good-will between them. Questions which before had divided them are settled. The ways of their hearts, in themselves and towards each other, are all right. No grudging here, no provoking there. All pure social affections

and principles adorn the scene of their intercourse. Abraham's grave makes the desert to blossom, and his altar makes the earth a sanctuary, but his way with Abimelech and Abimelech's with him witness the presence and power of right moral principles and pure social affections, giving the moment its highest character and richest enjoyments.

But how had it been with Abraham and Abimelech before? What was the moral of the scene when they last met? I need not speak of it; the preceding chapter, as we know, tells us. But what a change! The very same men are here before us, the Abimelech and the Abraham of chapter 20, but what a change! How blessed to think of it! No trespass now of defiling lusts, no practicing the skill of a guileful heart. The scene is morally new, though the materials are the same. Because, in principle, there has been a passage out of “this present evil world” into “the world to come.”

And so between Isaac and another Abimelech. It is of one character with this, and therefore I need not further notice it than as being another happy witness of the moral virtue that there will be in millennial days, when the atmosphere will be cleared of its noxious humors which now so dim and taint the whole social system. (Gen. 26)

Ex. 18 presents a kindred occasion. The whole family in heaven and on earth are there seen, holding high and holy communion, and nothing of nature soils it. Jethro acts the part of the heavenly visitor, Moses that of the head and representative of the earthly people, and the people themselves are there, waiting upon him in full subjection, “to inquire of God,” and know “the judgment of God” in their matters. All is happy, from the highest to the lowest, throughout this mystic millennial heavens and earth; all is full of moral beauty and order. And only remember of what materials such a lovely scene is formed! The last time that Moses and Zipporah were together, they parted as in a rage; the last time the people are seen and heard, it was murmuring again and again at the ways of the Lord, one after another. (Ex. 4; 15 - 17) The same Moses, the same Zipporah, the same people, but, morally, how different! The people inquire and obey, instead of murmuring; and Zipporah's offense with her “bloody husband” ends in her bringing back her children to greet and rejoice with her lord.

Is there to be in those coming days, as we know there is, a transfiguration, and in the heavenly places that which is now natural will then be spiritual, and the corruptible will be raised in glory? And is there to be then, in the earthly places, as we know there is, the leopard dwelling with the kid, and the child playing with the hole of the asp? And are such prospects bright and animating? And shall these moral transfigurations be left so? Is not the hope of them bright and animating also, yea, unspeakably so? Is it not deeply cheering to our spirits, that such an air as this shall be breathed, when once “the mount of God” is reached? Cloud and vapor gather over the road to it, where now we travel, but the sunshine of purity and love gilds the hill itself forever and ever.

But again, that generation in Israel which lived in the closing days of David and in the opening days of Solomon gives us another witness and example of the same mystery. As David was ending his reign, they carry themselves very badly. Absalom had stolen their hearts from his father, and Sheba, the son of Bichri, had headed them against his king. And at the very end Adonijah makes a party for himself out of them. The whole moral state, with the exception of a remnant, is forbidding indeed. But millennial days were at hand. The scepter of the King of Glory waves across the scene, and there is virtue in it, strange and precious virtue. Confusion and enmities cease. Roots of bitterness are extracted from the soil. The people are happy in each

other's happiness. Instead of Judah and Israel numbering each other to the sword, “Judah and Israel are many, as the sands on the sea-shore, eating, drinking, and making merry.” Instead of going again to the wood of Ephraim to battle, they sit under their vines and fig trees, calling each other their neighbor, and none making them afraid. The sword is turned into the plow-share, I may say, in more senses than one. (2 Sam. 15; 1 Kings 4)

What comfort is there in all this! Pass but the boundaries of the two worlds, leave man's day for the day of the Lord, and all this moral renovation, with its thousand offerings and streams of social happiness, will be known even in the place where pride and selfishness now spoil, or at least depreciate, all the pleasures of our hearts. And again in the mouth of another witness the same joy is proved to us. The sight we get of “the holy mount” tells the same wondrous, happy tale. There, the kingdom shines before us in its heavenly and earthly places. We see the progression of glory in some, and the vision of it only in others. But no grudging, no provoking attends this. Peter utters the moral power of such a moment as this, for all with him is gladness and benevolence, satisfaction and unselfishness. And yet who was this Peter? The man who shortly before, as at the foot of that hill, had been an offense to the Lord; resisting that very truth which the heavenly strangers, who now so ravish him, talk about; savoring there of the things “of man,” but now so richly of those that be “of God!”

And yet, all this exquisite moral change in Peter does not bespeak him so much, as the virtue of the place he was in. He wist not that he said. All that, however, makes it only the more blessed to us. For it is the presence of Christ that forms him and fills him, making him thus the necessary witness of its benevolence and joy. And I ask, if the possession of glory, or even the vision of glory be thus to be desired, what says the heart to this prospect of being freed of its selfishness, breathing elements which gender love and purity like this? Surely we are now harassed by our corruption, again and again discouraged and depressed by the low condition of the saints, the contrary sources into which changeful tempers and passions are urging us, with jealousies that daily arise, heart-burnings, debates, and whisperings. But all this is to end. All this shall yield to the authority of all personal and social virtues, as soon as “the mountain of the Lord's house” is established. “For Ephraim shall not envy Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim.”

It is this one feature, common to each of these samples of millennial days, that has at this time particularly attracted one. In each of these scenes and illustrations, there was so much of the working of perverted nature just before, but immediately on reaching the place of the power of the day of the Lord, the purest and happiest principles and affections adorn and animate everything.

Such is the moral power of “the world to come,” or in it, if we would rather that it were so expressed. It is but a little while, and thus shall it be. And happy to apply all this to our own history. The very same brethren, who now so often grieve one another will ere long be sharers, yea, helpers, of each other's joy. The air of the kingdom, the presence of Christ, will have such virtue accompanying it.

But then, I ask, can we indeed say that we prize such a prospect of moral happiness as this, which is to be ours in the presence of the Lord, and not even now cherish that presence, and the virtues of it in spirit? Surely we cannot. And though I have hinted it before, I may just add, if the atmosphere of the coming kingdom be thus a cure for corruption, how will it have power to nourish and expand the virtues of the renewed mind! In the Holy Ghost it will then unfold its affections and

faculties, as in its native air; the day-star, at least in the heavenly places, will then have arisen in the heart.

Chapter 184

# Prayer in Ephesians 3 Compared With Ephesians 1

In Eph. 1 we have our standing in Christ: this must not be weakened. There must be no turning aside from our place before God in Him. There I get to know that all I was as the old man is for faith gone. I see that I am dead, and that my life is hid with Christ in God, In the flesh there is no good thing. nothing but sin, will, lusts, which lead me away from God. But I believe the testimony of God, and see that Christ died, and that, by death for sins and to sin, the entire evil thing for faith is put an end to. The next step is, that, an end being put to me as the old man, Christ becomes in me the new man, and I am put in the presence of God as in Christ Himself, entitled to consider the old as done away. This is my place and standing before God. It is not only that sin is put away, but my position before Him is in consequence of this.

Nor is this the only thing; for I know that not only am I in Christ, but Christ is in me. These two things cannot be separated, but they are quite different. The one expresses my standing, the other my state. The Lord Himself said, before He left the world, “At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.” He has brought me into the standing; and this we have in Eph. 1; 2 Christ is looked at as having lain in death but now raised, and we are raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Him. There we are; and such is our position as connected with the “God of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Chap. 1:17, &c.) But in chapter 3:14, it is “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Again, in chapter 1., it is written, “that we should be to the praise of his glory;” whereas in chapter 3., the prayer is founded on “the riches of his glory.” (Ver. 16.) In the first chapter, God is called the Father of glory. Here the standing is taken as a settled thing; but we have something further, “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 it is state, not standing. We do not ask God to raise us up: that is an accomplished fact and is my standing. But here the apostle prays that something may be accomplished; that according to the riches of His glory, we may be “strengthened with might by His Spirit.” The condition of the soul must answer to the place into which it has been brought, “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 fullness of God.”

I know that Christ is in me, and I in Him; but I ought not to be satisfied without the consciousness of enjoying Him. “That Christ may dwell in your hearts,” is a prayer as to state, not a declaration of standing. What we have to watch is, not to unsettle the truth of the standing, but to apply the blessedness of the standing to the judgment of the state.

Thus, if you say you have fellowship with the Father and the Son, I say, Come, let us see. I saw you laughing just now at foolishness in the street: is not that having fellowship with a fool? Thus it is one applies the standing to judge the state. And here it is that the advocacy of Christ comes in, and connects the perfectness of the standing with the state. Can I have a better place and standing than in Christ? I am righteous as He is righteous. My sins are all gone. And what now? I

have been brought into the light as God is in the light. But you sin? Alas! yes. Is this the light? No. But are you going to put me back under law? No! I am going to make you own that you need and have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. The condition of the soul does not depend on standing but on present grace.

If a person says, I am in Christ and I am satisfied, it is to be feared, and very likely, that he is not in Christ. As to doctrine, he may be clear enough; but if he really were in Him, he could not be satisfied without communion. “Knowledge puffeth up;” but the effect of being in the light is to make us value not the place only, but fellowship with the Father and the Son (with one another, too, of course; but this comes in by the way). The way it works is this—the very essence of the condition of a soul in a right state is conscious dependence. Now I may use the fact of completeness in Christ to make me independent. Two things are implied in dependence—first, the sense that I cannot do without God in a single instance; and, secondly, that He is “for us.” In other words, there is confidence in His love and power on our behalf, as well as the consciousness that without Him we can do nothing.

That is the reason why you will find constant reference to mercy when Scripture speaks of or to the individual. When the Church is addressed, “grace and grace only” are mentioned. Only in Jude we have “mercy unto you, and peace and love be multiplied;” and then in verse 21, “looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life,” where the departure of Christendom is contemplated and when things were rapidly going on to judgment. We find therefore the saints exhorted to keep themselves “in the love of God.” This is state again, and it shows that when the Christian profession had slipped, and was slipping, more personal dependence comes in urgently. The moment I let this in, I let all the light in, and gradually my eyes get to see clearly. Christ is that light, and when we have to do with Him, the subtlety of evil is seen. But, besides the light, there is grace and present dependence needed.

Let us delight in dependence—that a person above us should minister to us and care for us.

What should we think of a child with its father and mother, who yet said, I do not like to have anything to do with them? Should we not say, These are not the feelings of a child? You may think yourself a fine man in being independent, but you are not like a father's child.

Again, in Eph. 3, it is not our being glorified with Him, but that God may be glorified. Thus, in verse 21, “Unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus.” But this state is produced by Christ's dwelling in us by faith. It is not a question of the standing we have in Christ. This carries full, practical blessedness with it, as it is said, “That ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.” Whereas in chapter i. 22, the point is, that God has put all things under Christ's feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all. Hence also in Eph. 1, it is the exceeding greatness of God's power to usward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, &c.; whereas in chapter iii. it is, “Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,” not the power which has wrought for us in Christ's resurrection, raising us up with Him.

When the heart gets this, according to Eph. 3, it is safer, very jealous of itself, and in a lowly condition—in a word, it is with God instead of without Him. I am perfect, I want nothing—that is my

standing in Christ; but if I look for fellowship, I want God every day and every moment. But if I think of standing, suppose you have paid my debts and give me a capital besides, I have got the thing and want you no more for it. So I do not want God to give the place He has put me in before Himself in Christ; but I do want Him for communion, and if I find an evil thought, I go to Him for grace to get rid of it. Do you want to be perfect in Christ before God and not have a bit of communion? The work is done. If all your sins are not put away, they never can be; for Christ cannot die again: not only a sin-offering has been made, but sin has been put away. This is what I call my standing, in part at least, and it is as perfect as God can make it. That by which God has been glorified is my place before God. The best robe is on me; with me it is all grace, with Him it is His own glory. But are you to be a stock? Is there to be no fellowship? Not only there ought to be fellowship, but your joy should be full. Come, like an honest man, is your joy full? No. Well, but that is what you ought to be, and it is what we find in the end of Eph. 3—Christ dwelling in the heart by faith, not Christ our life, though this last is a blessed truth, but that we may be able to comprehend all the effects produced by the reality of Christ's blessed presence—His being in us thus. What an unlimited extent of blessing! (Ver. 18, 19.) When the standing is known, it is but the beginning of Christian life. If I am saved, I am inside the door; but inside, I want to know something of what is within. First, let the soul be grounded in that which is the substance of the whole truth. Then, if a person is not kept in a state corresponding to the standing, he may do worse even than the unbeliever. The devil may make him for a time cast off everything.

Chapter 185

# Priesthood

(Ex. 29)

There is a desire at all times in the people of God, whether in Jewish ignorance or Christian life, that they should always have God dwelling with them. Thus, in Ex. 15, as soon as Moses had come out of Egypt, he said, “He is my God; I will prepare him a habitation.” So we are “builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.”

We do look to God's dwelling amongst us; yet we have much more thought of dwelling with Him. This was not the case with Israel. We have boldness to enter into the holiest, Christ having passed through the heavens for us, as Aaron passed through the tabernacle for them. Israel could not enter within the veil; but Christ has rent it, and opened a new and living way, which He has consecrated for us. God having, in the cross of Christ, put sin away, we can stand in the light of His presence. Here we find the presence of God among them. This is not redemption, the object of which is that we should be with God. We could not meet God without redemption. Christ suffered the “just for the unjust that he might bring us to God.”

We learn in this chapter bow we can thus be in the presence of God constantly and abidingly. We are really, in title, made “kings and priests to God and His Father;” our provision and character being this, provision is made in Christ for us, so that we can be continually in the presence of God. There was to be the burnt-offering continually at the door of the tabernacle, the place where the Lord met with the people. We are consecrated to God to be priests. Christ has not yet taken upon Him His office as King; but He has taken the priesthood, and therefore we have got, even now, our priesthood. He exercises in heaven continually a perpetual priesthood, filling up in this respect the figure of Aaron, though the order be of Melchizedec.

We see here how we are put in the place of priests, and yet Christ is personally distinguished. Aaron goes first (ver. 5-7) alone, to represent Christ; then the sons (ver. 8) to represent the whole Church, the priests. In referring to the cleansing of the leper, we have the way a sinner is cleansed from the evil that is in him. It is the same ordinance as regards the leper and the priest; but the leper wants to get cleansed as a sinner, the priest that he may be consecrated to God. If not cleansed in every respect we could not stand before God at all. There was sprinkling of blood on the leper, on the right ear, the right hand, the right toe, his thoughts, his acts, his walk, must be all cleansed, by being brought under the “blood of sprinkling.” So in this chapter we are consecrated in the same way. In verse 4, “Aaron and his sons thou shalt bring unto the door of the tabernacle,” &c. You do not find Aaron washed by himself, because Christ did not want it. They are washed together as a figure of the Christian body. Christ as a man identifies Himself with the Church. (1 Cor. 12:12.) Aaron was anointed. (Ver. 17.) The Holy Ghost descended upon Christ when He had been baptized. The word of God applied to the beast and conscience with power by the Spirit is called washing with the word. “Ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.” This is not habitation, but washing. Christ came not by water only, but by water and blood. The blood was for expiation, the water for washing, in order to meet God. In anything of Christ's work, it is not

a question merely of atonement, but of meeting God. If I think of meeting God, it is what God requires. There must be perfect cleansing. It turns the eye on God Himself. I shall always know evil in myself; but if God is satisfied, so may I be. It is wholesome to look within and judge myself; but I shall not get the blessed peace that flows from faith, if I am looking for it into my own heart. When we see God is satisfied with Christ, then comes in peace; it gives the highest standard of right and wrong, but peace, because God is satisfied with Christ.

Moses clothes him with the priest's robe, and there is no sacrifice here, because Christ required none. He was a perfect man in obedience and love. As man, Christ identifies Himself with His people. He comes into the same place as regards the walk of holiness. He was anointed with the Spirit and with power. All He did was in the power of the Spirit. (Ver. 7, 20, 21; Acts 10:38.) Christ was anointed as man. When He ascended on high, there He received the promise of the Father, and sent down the Spirit to the saints, so constituting them the Church. Next, we come to the sons. (Ver. 8, 9.) We are going to get them introduced into the priesthood; and now comes the sacrifice. Aaron needed none. (Ver. 10-13, 14.) There is no sweet savor in the sin-offering or trespass-offering. It must be burnt without the clamp.

Here it is a sin-offering—sin must be totally put away before our consecration. It is the nature judged before God. Christ is made sin for us, that we may be made priests. We have these two aspects of the value of Christ's work. First, the sin is charged upon Him. In the Hebrew there is no difference between “sin” and “sin-offering.” Here He is the sin-offering; He who “knew no sin, made sin for us,” &c. Secondly, the other character was offering Himself up to God, all the devotedness of a life of obedience offered up; this was a sweet savor to God. “Therefore hath my Father loved me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again.” (John 10)

In verses 15-18 we find Aaron and his sons not merely having sin taken away, but accepted of God in all the perfection of Christ. If I am looked at as a sinner in myself, the sin is put away, but this is not all. Aaron and his sons put their hands upon the sin-offering; they also identified themselves with the burnt-offering. All the savor of everything that Christ has done, we are; in everything consumed and put to the test. Nothing failed; it is all gone up, and we are in it before God. Here we get our blessed position, previous to consecration as priests. For this, it is not a question of what I think of myself; but the measure of my acceptance is what Christ is in God's presence and estimate. We cannot measure grace by anything that is fitted for us, but by what is fitted for God.

Ver. 19, 21. We come now to the proper character of those persons that are cleansed and accepted. Now it is to consecrate, and, as in cleansing the leper, the blood is put on the right ear, right hand, and right foot—the acts, thoughts, and walk. We are now consecrated to God in all these. We have to render unto the Lord our bodies as well as our spirits; for we are not our own, but bought with a price. Every act that Christ did was as perfect as His sacrifice, but every step made it increasingly difficult. So we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. Christ's conduct and Christ's devotedness is the measure of our walk before God. There is not so much as to set one's foot on left for self-will. Christ did not come to do His own will. Even to death He went, the death of the cross. So with us, if the eye is single, the whole body is full of light. If the heart is right, it makes the aim right. The apostle says, “Not that I have already attained but this one thing I do,” &e. He exercised himself day and night “to have a conscience void of offense.” Then it is real

liberty. If the heart be right, it will be joy; if not, it will be terrible, because there is not the smallest liberty given to self-will. In many things we fail; but if we feel what sin is, and the claim God has on us, it will be our privilege to do His will. It is not a pretense that we are set up as something wonderful. No, it is faith in the blood of Christ that has cleansed us, as to purpose and thought, according to the perfectness of Christ; and now we are consecrated to serve God. It is simple Christianity.

Verse 21 shows them consecrated by the blood put upon their persons; but not only so, for there is the Anointing with the Spirit of God to give power and energy for action. It was put on the “sons' garments with him.” I have got the power of Christ in heaven, and the power of the Spirit that comes down from Christ for garments; (i.e., for all that I appear in before the world.) It is “with Him,” a thorough, complete association by the power of the Spirit with a crucified Christ who is now in heaven. Thus, we get real, thorough joy and gladness of heart. The first fruits are with God, the results are in what we show to men. If peace and joy are in my heart, let me go in that, and it produces joy and gladness in my ways. The beginning of all practical fruits is from what we have with God, and then there is a testimony to men. What we really are with God shows itself out. It is, or should be, the effect of the consciousness of union with Christ.

This anointing of the Spirit can be put on us, because the blood is on us. Aaron had no blood put on him. The Spirit is the seal. The least relic of sin would, prevent Him from sealing, but when the blood has cleansed from sin, then the seal is applied. The presence of the Spirit is the witness of the blood-shedding; the fruits are the witness of the Spirit. We thus get a wonderful power, stamp, and measure of holiness. If we believe in Christ we are so cleansed that the Spirit can come and dwell in us. The Spirit is the seal to the value of Christ's work, not to what He is going to produce. (Ver. 23, 24.) Now He can fill Aaron's hands. What is produced by the Spirit is Christ's after all. I can come with an object now that I know God delights in it. Suppose I praise Christ's name, I know God's delight rests on it; it may be imperfectly done, but I know what the thing is to God, not the manner of my presenting it. It is the sweet savor of Christ to God. (Ver. 31, 32.) We feed on Christ, now that He has given us His flesh to eat and His blood to drink. We gather strength, and grace, and comfort, the perfectness of Christ Himself, as our souls' food. “He that eateth me, even he shall live by me.” We come so to think of Christ, so to realize in our hearts and spirits what He is, that we live Christ. What a man thinks is what he is, more than what he does. A man may think of sin, and love it, and desire to do it, but will not because of his character: he may be a hypocrite. If I realize Christ in my heart, I am a Christian. Verse 42 shows a continual burnt-offering at the place where God meets the people. Christ is before God day by day continually, a sweet savor. I cannot go to God without finding the savor of Christ there, in the perfect sweetness of His offering. The reason God gave for not cursing is that He looks to Noah's sacrifice, not to the sin. God deals with us in virtue of what the Mediator is, instead of what we are. It ought to be always in our hearts, but it is always before God. When the daily sacrifice was taken away, the Jew could not go to God; there was no savor.

In verses 42, 43, it is “I will meet you to speak there to thee.” It is through Christ we gain everything. Finally, God says, (ver. 45, 46,) “I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God.” It is by the Spirit He does so now. The whole Church is His dwelling place. He is not merely a Redeemer, but a constant dweller with the people; as verse 46 shows, it was not to do an act and then leave them. So it is with the Church in a still more blessed way. Sin is put away first;

then there is the continual savor where God meets us; and we are consecrated to His service. It supposes that the heart is right; for I cannot wish to be consecrated to God and have my own will. The death of Christ will never find its intelligent value in our hearts, if we want to escape the consequences of consecration. if we are consecrated, the motive of every action should be that Christ may be glorified. You cannot be happy unless Christ be everything. We may have to condemn ourselves daily, but when we think what a savor is before God, we go on with confidence.

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# Psalm 16

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

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

There are two other characters regarding Christ very precious, because drawing out the affections until by and by we shall see Him. He has not only delivering power, whether by life or death, but He is an object, in glory as in humiliation; and there is a third thing. He is a Priest for us, and that character in which He is to us is connected with these new affections, not as an object, but connected with affections. Christ said, “I go to my Father and your Father.” “In that day ye shall know that I am in the Father, and ye in me, and I in you.” The congregation must not jar with His praise, and are therefore placed in the same position with Him before “My Father and your Father.” Our place before God now is in Him, the Christ in glory. Such is our place, and we are predestinated to bear the image of the heavenly. This gives us power of hope; we are excited by it to run the race; it is not so much dependence marks it (although we must always be in dependence, or fall), but the energy and joy of hope. We wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. We do not hope for righteousness, we have it, or rather we are it. Christ is the righteousness; He has entered into the glory, and this is the consequence of the righteousness. “We wait for the hope of righteousness;” we wait for the glory. The Spirit now takes of the things of Christ, and shows them unto us down here—then in glory. The law was a ministration of condemnation, the Spirit is the ministry of righteousness. When Christ was glorified, He sent the Holy Ghost down to seal our persons and make us partakers of the glory to come; the effect of this is, that beholding Him we are changed into the same image from glory to glory. This is practical realization, and it becomes fruitful in us. Seeing Christ glorified, by the Spirit, has this effect on our hearts; we are conformed to Him. It is through looking at Christ in glory.

There is another thing of great moment, namely, our looking at Christ as Priest. “When Jesus knew that his hour was come He took a towel and girded himself.” He became, in a certain sense, their servant. Whenever we see Him taking a place down here, serving, the affections are drawn out in a different way to that which excites the energy of hope. God put before Christ an object of hope, “who, for the joy that was set before him, endured,” &c. So He gives us an object to encourage us and brighten our hope all through the way. We are not counting ourselves to have already attained, “but press on towards the mark.” But when we think of ourselves in weakness and infirmity, there is the sense of dependence on One either to restore or to keep us going on. In this there is daily much exercise to be kept walking before Him (not touching what we are in Christ), and that is very fruitful. (1 John 1:7.) Am I under law? No! “We have an advocate with the Father.” (1 John 2:1-2.) Have I to run to Him to be forgiven? No! We run away from Him when we have sinned. He restores us as Peter. Christ looks at him directly he has committed the fault and brings him back. So now He brings our souls back by the Spirit. He is an Advocate, the One who carries on our affairs before God. The same word is also used of the Holy Ghost who carries on our affairs down here. When we fail, or there is the need that we should fail, because of self-confidence, it is Christ's work on High to bring us back to communion with the Father and the Son. 1 do not speak of our going to Him to do it, but I am dependent on Him to do it. “To humble thee, to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart.” (Deut. viii. 2.) That God does to make us discern between good and evil, which it is needful for us to discern through the fall. He sets us in righteousness first, and then carries us on by His Priesthood, maintaining the whole scene of our dependence. Christ is not so much an object to us in all this as an agent.

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

God had His food in the offering, but there was the meat offering and part of the peace-offering which the priests ate. He says, “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again.” Then we find the Father has given us the very object He delights in for the object of our affection. The Father could not be silent when Christ was here. “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” The perfection of the object is the reason of the imperfectness of our apprehension of it, but that is the way God brings our affections into tune with Himself. He could say at the beginning, because of His intrinsic perfectness, and at the end because of His developed and displayed perfectness, “This is my beloved Son.” Then what do we say? In weakness and poverty, yet surely, each can say with unhesitating heart, I know He is perfect. We cannot reach to His perfectness, but we do feel our hearts, poor and feeble as they are, responding. The Father has shown us something of His perfectness. The Father is communicating of His delight. “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased,” not in whom you ought to be well pleased (which is true too); but His way is to communicate to them. of His own love to Christ. It is a wonderful thing that the Father should tell of His affection for Christ, and that when He was here amongst us, the Son of man on earth amongst sinful man.

A person must know that he is righteous in Christ, before he can be attracted by this communication with Him. With the woman in the Pharisee's house it was what was revealed in Christ to her made her love much, not what she got from Him. The blessedness of what was in Christ had so attracted her and absorbed her mind that she found her way into the house, thought not of the dinner, &c. She was taken up with Him—she wept, but had nothing to say. Jesus was there. He commanded all her thoughts, her tears, her silence, her anointing of His feet—all noticed by Him, and all before she knew what He had done for her. Attracted there by what she saw in Him, she got the answer as regards peace of conscience from Himself. Now a person may be attracted by Christ, but the effect of that will be conviction of sin, and, if forgiveness is not known, the presence of Christ to the soul, becomes quite the opposite of God's righteousness, and holiness will take the form of a law. Many rest satisfied with being only thus attracted for a season, but then they can slip back into any vanity, because righteousness is not known to the conscience. Righteousness sets us in conscience before God as Christ is—in the light. If I have not peace, I cannot have fellowship with another Christian. My sins are all my thought, if my conscience is awake. “If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship.” It does not say, if we walk according to the light; but the case stated is being in the light. The Christian state is being in the light, and we have fellowship with one another and cleanness in His sight. There is no communion in sin, but wretchedness and misery. When we are there (in the light, as He is) we can feed on Him. There is no real feeding on Him as bread come down from heaven, when not feeding on His flesh and drinking His blood. The power of death must be known before the heart can be given to be occupied with Him. The Lord gives Himself to us, and He expects us to be occupied with this affection towards Him. “If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I go to the Father. What a place! The Lord comes down here so low, takes such a place amongst men, that He reckons on their affection being such as to rejoice in His joy at going away, though it was for them to be left without Him. This affection that He looks for now cannot be known, unless He is known as salvation.

“In thee do I put my trust.” This is quoted in Heb. 2 to prove His humanity. There are two things make perfection in a man, dependence and obedience. They were in Christ, the contrast to what was in Adam when he sinned. Christ was ever the dependent and the obedient one. Independence is sin—there is the principle of sin in it. All thought of freedom from the will of another, where one's own will is at work, is a terrible thing. With Christ there was no will, but His Father's. That was not any check but motive. It is most blessed for us to see Christ taking this place of dependence. It is natural to us to say, I must do something. But no! you should not eat or drink unless He tells you. Whatever you do, do all in the name of the Lord: yet it is all liberty. No person who has his Father in his affections at all times would do anything without a desire to please Him. Love makes it perfectly indifferent to the child what is to be done. It is done to please the Father. Would not a child like, even in eating and drinking, to please his father? It is not the thing that is of consequence, but the relationship and affection to Him. Satan tempted Christ to make the stones bread, when He was hungry, and He could have done so. He might have had twelve legions of angels, but He had taken the place of dependence and waits.

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

He was able in love to go through all; He was thoroughly man—able to touch others, being untouched by evil Himself. The fact of being untaintable made Him go forth in love dispensing blessing to all. “O my soul, thou hast said unto Jehovah, thou art my Lord.” (Ver. 2.) Now I take the place of a servant. Thou art my Master. To the young man in the gospel He said, “Why callest thou me good? none is good but One, that is God.” I am my master's; I am taking the place of dependence, leaning on thee, looking to thee. Then comes fellowship.

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

He could go back unsullied to the throne of God, and take man back with Him into the glory, out of which He carne. There is manhood now in the presence of God. In Matt. 3 is John's baptism. They came to Him confessing their sins: “fruits meet for repentance” were needed. The beginning of all excellence is to confess we have none. “Fruit” was confessing they had brought forth none. The instant the Spirit of God is working, Jesus goes to be baptized with them; not having any sin to confess, of course, but doing His Father's will. He takes His place with them; He had come for that; and the consequence is, that He takes His place after to praise in the midst of the congregation. He must be alone in death, but no sooner is He risen than He must have them with Him; He will be in company.

Ver. 4-8. “I have set the Lord always before me:” still dependence—perfection “because thou art on my right hand, I shall not be moved.” “Thou wilt shew me the path of life.” It is most blessed to hear Christ say this. It is the path of death in verse 10; how did He find that of life? Adam found the path of death in his fall and his self-will, but back from it never. The tree of life was never to be touched in the garden of Eden; he had taken the other path. Thus we see there are two trees all through the world—that of responsibility and the gift of God, which is life. All man does ends in death (but it is too late to speak of that); he is dead in trespasses and sins; but now Christ came, bringing life into a world that drove Him away; where Satan the prince of it was, and everything was bearing the stamp of its prince. In this place of death He makes out a path for us. He is shown by His Father the “path of life.” He was the life; but then the path of life had to be tracked through this place of death, where no one thing testifies of God—one wide waste, where there is no way. Christ has tracked the path Himself: it is for the Christian I am speaking now. The gospel shews He gives it to those who believe. He had to make out the path of life through a world of sin and wretchedness, in obedience, up to God. It must be through death for us, because we are sinners. Now He says to us, If any man serve me, let Him follow me. We must take up the cross. The cross to Him was atonement—that was the path. As He came for us, it must be by the cross. He has

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

We have to follow Him. It is not the quantity we do, but the measure of presenting Christ that is the value of our service; in a world where there is nothing of God. “All that is in the world... is not of the Father.” In that world the Son of the Father has marked out this path of life up to the Father. “Let my sentence come forth from Thy presence” —in the controversy with man in this path; then in the end “I shall behold thy face in righteousness:” I shall be satisfied when I awake up in thy likeness.” (Psa. 17) Here we get the two parts of the blessedness for us—with Christ, and like Him, in the Father's presence. If we were constantly before Christ, with the consciousness of not being like Him, it would be constant distress. Now we are unlike, alas! but “in thy presence is fullness of joy.” With Him and like Him we shall enjoy the light of the Father's countenance. In Rev. 4, elders are first seen sitting in peace, then prostrate in worship. In the Psalms we get Christ walking with the Jewish remnant—Christ first humbled and glorified in the end; His own experiences. Christ is the object of our study when we have righteousness in Him. When brought into blessing, we can study Him who brought us there. It is this searches the thoughts, affections, motives in the path. He must be our life to go in the path; then we go through the death in taking up His cross; then in the end we are to be like Him. The Lord give us to know the blessedness of being identified with Him, following in the path He has tracked out for us.

Chapter 188

# A Few Thoughts on the Psalms, Especially 110

The character of the fourth book of Psalms is marked by the bringing in of the “only-begotten” into the world again. But first He is cut off, and He who was cut off is Jehovah the Creator. The fifth and last book is the only one which speaks of Christ as Melchizedec. This is the first psalm which speaks of Him as man after the restoration. He now takes His throne as Priest. The last psalms are the hallelujahs.

After psalm 102, which is the center of book 4, we find the people repassing all the ways and dealings of God, when they gather round Him their center, the Messiah. All the blessings cluster round Him in this character of Melchizedec. Psa. 103 is a review of God's moral dealings with the people; psalm 104 of dealings with creation, celebrating Jehovah, God of Israel, in connection with creation. In psalm 105 we have God's positive, special favor to them as His people, and in psalm 106 their failure under it. “Gather us from amongst the brethren” refers to the last day, &c. There is a summary of all God's dealings with them, as to forgiveness, creation, special favor, and their failure and cry to be brought forth in mercy.

There is one remarkable feature to be noticed in these psalms; viz., the manner of their connection with Christ. Psa. 102 shows the way in which He was the poor man cut off, yet Jehovah; and psalm 103. begins, “Bless the Lord, O my soul, who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases.” There is especial interest in seeing how this is connected with Christ in the Gospels. Jehovah is the One who forgives and heals. This is just what the Lord does with the paralytic. It was an example of God's governmental dealings with man. He healed the palsy, and besides, He forgave the sins. They say, “Who is this that forgiveth sins also?” He proved that He was the Jehovah who forgave them and healed their diseases. The Gospels, while most simple (the first three especially) in many ways, have the greatest depth in them, if you get below the surface. They show what He was, if searched into; and it is most blessed to see who He was that thus walked amongst men, going about doing good. In the Epistles the Holy Ghost gives the explanation of the value of Christ's work, and until I get peace I want that which will settle me on that point; and when settled there, I can turn back and see who He was, and the heart finds more food than even in the Epistles. We find Christ Himself. But there is also much relative to Christ in the Psalms and in special connection with the remnant of Israel. He calls Himself the Son of man in the passages about the paralytic referred to; but what He did proved Him to be the Jehovah of the Psalms. We have in them either His own experience; or He is in sympathy with those there; (i.e., in connection with the remnant).

The fifth book has a peculiar bearing, because it rehearses the circumstances of the remnant, after their restoration. It is their retrospect of all that has gone by. Hence it begins with this formula, (107.) “Give thanks unto the Lord, for his mercy endureth forever.” That was the set phrase for the celebration of the faithfulness of God in Israel. David used it when be brought the ark back; (1 Chron. 16;) and again they used it when they came from Babylon. (Ezra 3) “Let the redeemed of the Lord say so,” &c. This refers to Israel brought back, and goes back to their history in the

wilderness—deliverance from Egypt; “they that go down to the sea in ships.” (Psa. 107:23.) Israel is being brought back; and it ends in God's setting “the poor on high from affliction.” What we get as a sort of preface to the book is that all these are gathered from different places, in the midst of humbled circumstances. They are diminished and brought low—enemies are in the land; and the result of all is, that God pours contempt upon the proud, and iniquity in the earth is entirely cleansed.

In psalm 108 is praise in taking possession. “Through God we shall do valiantly” — “He is their strength and glory.” The subject then turns back to Christ's sorrow in the wilderness, antichrist literally being represented by Judas. See how Christ got Himself in spirit into the very same circumstances in which they will be in the latter day.

There are but few of the psalms apply wholly and entirely to the Lord in His personal sorrows. Psa. 22 applies thus exclusively to Christ, as also psalm 102., but not in many others. Those referring to His glory at the end of course are different. There are a great many in which some passages apply to the Lord and others to the remnant. For instance, Psa. 69, (“They gave me gall for my meat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink,") refers to Christ; but the subject of psalm 69 is first Israel. In verse 5 He speaks in the name of His people. The one in whom the Spirit works takes up the sorrows of the remnant. It is the Spirit of Christ; but some are the expression of what Christ Himself went through. In psalm 22 you have not only what exclusively belongs to Him, but atonement—that which man could have nothing to do with, except in needing and getting the blessing of it. When we find His Person as Creator and His atoning work, we find Him alone; but in all others, others could come and do come into them. No sorrow was like His, even that besides His sufferings in making the atonement. Psa. 69:26 shows how others are brought in. “They talk to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded.” This is the same psalm in which He speaks of “reproach hath broken my heart;” and we all know the accomplishment of that in the Gospels. Yet in the other verse there were some who, however insignificant, had a part in it.

There is a character of suffering flowing from the activity of divine love. There is another kind—anxiety and distress for sin, both of which we may go through, not in atonement as Christ did, whose alone it was to be there. But Israel will feel the distress of their sin in the last day. What is the foundation on which He can sympathize with sinners now in any way? Atonement.

In psalm xxii. you get, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” “I cry in the day time and thou Nearest not,” &c. But in this psalm 69, which approaches nearest to that, we get the suffering very different in principle. “Save me, O God, for the waters,” &c.; “but as for me, my prayer is unto thee in an acceptable time,” though going up to death; whereas in psalm 22. He is forsaken, bearing divine wrath for sin. There are dogs around— “my soul like wax,” He says, “but be not thou far from me.” He is far from Him, entirely alone. He could not then speak of “those whom thou hast wounded.” He does bring in the Church at the end of psalm 22: “in the midst of the church will I sing praise.” The judgment being completely and fully borne, and atonement made, He sings praise to Him who heard Him, resurrection being the proof of it.

In Gethsemane, in prospect of the cup, He experienced man's weakness and the power of Satan. He sweat great drops of blood, and cries to His Father, “Father, if it be possible,” &c. He had not got the cup then, though He was thinking of it. The moment He has got the cup He says,” My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” The remnant may dread the wrath of God for sin; but they

never endure it: He has endured it for them.

We may go through and feel the reproach of Christ in our little measure, a privilege Paul had. It scourges, reproaches, &c. He was wonderfully like his Master; but would he have thought it a privilege to bear the wrath of God for sin? The power of Satan and the power of wicked men might be all let loose upon us; but that would not be like the suffering in atonement. The sorrow and suffering on account of sin He can feel with us, for He felt it in bearing it, and so could say, “Out of the depths have I cried unto thee;” but in the activity of divine love He can feel with us, and we with Him. The other thing into which we can never enter is what He endured for us. The historical circumstances of Christ were just what Israel will have to go through in the latter day—circumstances in a smaller sphere, but in greater depth of feeling. He went through all in spirit and through some in fact. Psa. 109 is Judas' betrayal personally, but not confined to Judas—“them.” “Let them be before the Lord continually, that he may cut off the memory of them from the earth;” (ver. 15;) “them that speak evil, &c.” (Ver. 20.) What a wonderful provision God has made for the comfort of the remnant in that day! Suppose them reading these words! Christ made the atonement and has put words into their mouths, expressing for them their cry, speaking of their sins, &c., and they will say, “This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him,” and thus they will be encouraged to think He will hear them. These two things will give them encouragement when they find out their sin; otherwise they might say, What will become of us? and get into despair.

When all come up, as recorded in Matthew, asking what authority has Caesar, the Lord puts a question. There was a solemn process going on between them and God—they were with “the officer” in the way. Then He refers to this psalm ex. speaking of His exaltation on high, (Matt. 22:44.) “Sit on my right hand until I make thine enemies,” &c. This is the time He is sitting there—doing nothing for Israel, though He is their great High Priest within, and “the gifts and calling of God are without repentance;” but their whole condition, since the day of the cross till He comes again to earth, is that He is doing nothing for them. This is not the time that He is making His enemies His footstool, but He is gathering the joint-heirs, while He is sitting on the throne of God. How remarkably this comes in as connected with making our peace! “When he had by Himself purged our sins;” that was part of His divine glory. He could not sit down without it, and the work is complete; “He forever sat down,” referring to completeness, not to constancy. Every believer has immutable, unchangeable perfection before God in Christ. He sits on the right hand of God, and, consequent upon His sitting down there, He has received the Holy Ghost. There is now no true Christian state, but that of unclouded assurance in the presence of God—absolute brightness there. There is no continual cleansing with blood; the water is for practical purifying. Thus in 1 John 1, “The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” refers to our place or standing before God.

Remark, Jehovah says in verse 1, “Sit thou on my right hand until I make thy foes thy footstool.” He is not treading them under His feet. When He comes forth, we come with Him, not to triumph upon them; that He does alone, and the time not come yet. Our actual condition will then be with Him. It is now by faith with Him. We have association with Him as a heavenly Christ. Now they are giving a place to this Jehovah on earth, who was the rejected man. “The Lord send the rod of thy strength out of Zion.” We are going back to the fulfillment of psalm 2. He has set His King in Zion. “Thy people (Jehovah's people) shall be willing” &c., (ver. 3,) but not before the day of His power. They were not willing in His weakness; a little remnant were, and they became the nucleus of the

Church. But now “Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power,” that is in contrast with “sit thou on my right hand until I make,” &c. In verse 3 “dew of thy youth,” means of these youths, the generation just come in, and “the womb of the morning” is the opening of the new day just coming in. The people that shall be born are the dew of the morning. The Jew elsewhere is compared to dew, and to a lion too—strength, and not tarrying for man. “The Sun shall arise with healing in his wings” for this earth; that is, in the “day of the Lord.” We shall be with Him in the heavenlies then. We watch for the Morning Star; it is those watching through the night who see this.

The Lord in verse 5 is not the same as Jehovah, it is Adonai. “The Lord shall strike through kings in the day of thy wrath.” It is not the day of His wrath now at all, but when that time comes He will strike through kings. The beast will be destroyed first—Gog and these kings; no human power will stand before Him.

“He shall wound the heads” (it is rather the head) over a great country. (Ver 6.)

“He shall drink of the brook by the way,” &c. (Ver. 7.) This is according to the grand principle of God's moral government. Those who humble themselves shall be exalted, while those who exalt themselves shall be abased. Christ was always the dependent One. He drank of the brook by the way. He took whatever refreshment God sent Him—took it as He could got it by the way. As Christ wept over Jerusalem, so be went out really in heart giving it up finds a poor Samaritan, and He says “The fields are white unto harvest.” He had meat to eat, He drank of the brook by the way, in perfect subjection He took it as He could “by the way.” He did not keep what He had to save Him from the sorrow of the way; but He emptied Himself, to be entirely dependent.

“The head over a great country” is a follower of Nebuchadnezzar. What will he have when the humbled One comes in? He will be smitten. He has exalted himself, and he will be abased; and that other Man, who humbled Himself—took only what God gave Him, He shall be exalted. It is a future scene.

How blessed that God should give us Christ's history in this way! If I look at Him as in the bosom of the Father, as Jehovah come in moral glory, the One who was humbled, if I look at the springs that moved His heart, His sufferings under the hand of God, His glory in the latter day, what food it gives me! “He that eateth me, even he shall live by me,” and “If ye abide in me, ye shall bring forth much fruit.” He brings us by faith into another world altogether, where striving together, and jostling one another up and down, are unknown.

The Lord's walk on earth is good for us. If we believe on Him, we must then abide in Him. The first thing He will do for us, when He comes for us, will be what He speaks of in John 17, “Father I will that those whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.” May we learn in dependence on the Lord what will never have an end, the depth and blessedness of what is in the Son; and so walk with Him as that the Holy Ghost need not occupy us with ourselves, which He must do if we walk badly!

Chapter 189

# Practical Reflections on the Psalms: Psalms 90-93

Psa. 90 is in a special manner Israel's cry for mercy and restoration in the last days, after their long affliction. But we will apply its principles as usual. It contemplates two things in the government of God: discipline, properly speaking, and satisfying mercy. But both are founded on another point: that God is the one unchangeable God—the same before the world, with which discipline is connected, was created, as now, and now as then; time being as nothing to Him, which to us may seem so long; and that He is the dwellingplace of His people, where is their rest and home, and secure abode, whatever wanderings they may have. As to man in time, He sets man aside with a word, and restores him. They are like grass growing up and then withering. But though this be true, if we compare God and man, yet faith gets hold both of the ways and purposes of God in dealing with His people. For Israel it is felt as wrath, because they do not yet know reconciliation. We know it is love, but the truth of the dealing is the same and we can apply it. And first as to ways: “as His fear, so is His wrath.” It is not arbitrary, but according to His own nature and character. Fear is knowing Him in truth, so that what He is, is applied to the holy judgment of all that is in the soul, so that nothing should displease Him or hinder communion. Now wrath as discipline—governmental displeasure—is the expression of this as regards the state of the soul, where it has been unheeded, or the will has been in it. It makes good God's character as regards that which is opposed to it in us. Faith, divine teaching, shows us, that His wrath is, as His fear. But when the will bows, our very feebleness becomes not terror, but a motive in our appeal to God, And He owns it. He considers whereof we are made, and remembers we are but dust. But when once we feel our nothingness and apply our hearts to wisdom, the beginning of which is the fear of Jehovah, instead of God's having to enforce it by subduing our will, and correcting our carelessness, the heart gets courage, gets bold. It is not reasoning, but by grace confidence is restored, and the heart says, “Return; O Lord, how long?”

Now this, we have often seen, is the expression of faith. God purposes to bless, and in result will bless His people; and hence, when under pressure, faith can say, How long? Self is not faith, and the fear of God must be produced, but where faith is, it springs up again into the sense of known mercy and says, How long? And note, there is known mercy. It is not come, but “return;” not as if God had left them, (though, as to His ways, that is true as to Israel—He hides His face from the house of Jacob,) but we look to His returning in the sense of known present mercies and enjoyment of favor. Then it brightens up into full confidence. Faith knows His purpose is to bless, to give delight and joy to His people, and that by His own favor. It knows He delights in them; it counts on this: “Satisfy us early,” What a bold word with God! But it is confidence now; the soul is morally restored in His love which He delights in. This is looked at as constant too. “Rejoice and be glad all our days,” it says. Why should it not expect it from the God of goodness? It may be more outwardly with Israel, still the spirit of it is right. It looks for a refraining God; one who takes account of the sorrow of His people, though He has been found to inflict it. See how beautifully and blessedly this is put, Isa. 40, (just what is sought here,) “Speak ye to the heart of Jerusalem; tell her her time of trouble is accomplished,.... for she has received at the hand of the Lord double of

all her sins.” His heart counted it twice the chastisement needed, compared with her sins; for the answer to faith is ever more than the request. (See the prayers and answers in Psa. 132)

But faith, looking on the thoughts and purpose of God in blessing, goes beyond returning and refraining mercies. God has purpose in His love and works in its accomplishment; hence they say, Not only satisfy us with thy mercy, but “let thy work appear unto thy servants.” God's own work will make good blessing, and so how good it will be? and it will be manifested to their honor and delight. So we, even for our souls; we seek not only restoring mercy, but thereon the positive work of God, in producing blessing in bringing us yet nearer to Himself. It is never then merely restoration; it is a soul better able to appreciate God, and God more fully revealed to it. Yet still awaiting, knowing as we are known, the result is the full display of glory; (here for children, because it is literally for Israel in the millennium;) but we do look for the complete work of God in raising and glorifying us, and then entering into glory to abide. But another sweet thought is added to this: “that the beauty of Jehovah, their God, should be upon them.” Their thoughts would hardly go beyond the manifest endowment of blessing from His own hand marking them His. With us how fully is it so! Shall not we be in the glory of Christ Himself? like Him arrayed in this blessed likeness before God our Father, a place of perfect delight? Nor do I exclude present blessing, how we may be as thus under grace as the lign-aloes which the Lord had planted; and that was when Israel was abiding in their tents. So the Church should be a spectacle of grace, to the angels, of order and beauty, and the life of Jesus as manifested in the individual believer. In this case, too, the works of our hands under divine favor are established for us.

Psa. 91 On this beautiful psalm, of the structure of which I have spoken elsewhere, I have not much to say, because it defines the names of God which are available, and the specific effects of faith going on even to what is directly applicable to Christ; so that the general principle is less justly deducible from or connected with it. It would be reducing what is purposely specific to what is vague. It takes Jehovah, as such, as God; and so he who owns that name, comes under the care of El-Shaddai for a specific performance of earthly promises in the ways of God. This is not our place; one who acted on it would deceive himself. Yet a general faith, and trust of heart founded on it, would surely be blessed. It does not take up a Father's chastenings with which the government of God connects itself.

Here, in trusting Jehovah, no evil comes nigh the dwelling of them who does so. This was what made it strange to David till he went into the sanctuary of God. He saw the wicked prospering, himself plagued every moment. This is the certain result of owning Jehovah, when the government of God does come in.

Still we may learn some of the characters of trust. It is not merely the knowledge that there is an Almighty God, who is above all things: the secret place of His true revelation of Himself must be known. This, true faith has, and confers with God there according to it. His name is revealed to faith. To us, it is Christ as Lord and the Father. Faith thus, in its confession of His name, makes its refuge and strong tower, and moreover trusts in it: a great thing, for no power of evil, no cause of distress can be anything to upset the mind, if the Lord be looked to and trusted in. It has here the promise of ever watchful and protecting care. This is true whatever outward evil may come. As we see in Luke 21:16-18, the Lord says some of them should be put to death, but not a hair of their head should perish—they were all counted. Providential power is all at God's disposal. Faith is

identified with the interests of God's people; (ver. 9;) but the Lord's own name is what has governed the heart, and the true name of God is known to it; that is, as I have said, the true revelation of God Himself known by divine teaching. To us it is Christ Himself, and the Father in Him. Faith calls. It is not merely passive trust, right as this is in its place, but it communicates with God about its needs, because it trusts Him. God's presence is there for faith and the exercise of its power; and this is as true now, in its just application, as then, as hereafter. The way is different, because the object is different, that is, to bring in a heavenly state. It brings present blessing though with persecution, and is assured of eternal and heavenly salvation.

Psa. 92 is really praise for the final deliverance of Israel, and Jehovah's millennial name is the key to it, as of the last. As the following psalms are the bringing in again the only begotten, there is one principle to note in it—the elevation of the wicked is finally for their destruction. The man untaught of God does not see this; but faith discerns in its adversaries and the power of evil which rises up and presses on it, darkening its horizon, the enemies of the Lord. Hence, though tried more than another, for the power of evil is very painful to it, it has confidence. For though it would be foreign to wish personally for vengeance (and we have to watch against this), is it so to the Christian to rejoice in the earth being delivered from the power of the wicked? On the contrary, “Rejoice now ye prophets and ye holy apostles.” It is said, Faith gives a keen sense of the evil, because it is such and hostile to God and goodness and truth, and rejoices in the righteous judgment. But it is as the Lord's work, as the work of His hands, it rejoices in it; and that is perfect. It displays, too, the uprightness of the Lord, but faith must wait in patience. The following psalms discuss and celebrate the coming in of this judgment.

Psa. 93 In this psalm we shall find some very important principles. Though power be now exercised for the triumph of good, it is no new power. The Lord's throne is of old, Himself from everlasting. No inroad of evil has touched or weakened that. This had taken place. The passions and will of man had risen up as the angry and tumultuous waves in vain. The Lord on high is mightier. Rebellious man is allowed to do this, but the power of the Ancient of Days, is concealed from unbelief in the days of patience, so that man thought all in his hand. When evil rises up so as to reach Him and call out His action, an instant suffices to bring about the counsels of God in power by their destruction. But this is not quite all. Faith has that on which it rests—the Lord's testimonies: they are very sure. God's word may be counted on as Himself, not only for final deliverance but for guidance along the path of difficulty. Nor is this all. There is a character which is a safeguard against delusion and a means of judgment and discerning the right path: “Holiness becomes God's house.” Oh! how these two principles do cheer and enlighten us in our path. How they strengthen it in the consciousness that it is of God's very nature, and cannot but be! Thus God's testimonies and God's holiness secure and fix the heart as to that which is of God. If the water-floods rise up, the Lord's power will settle all in His own judgment.

Chapter 190

# Practical Reflections on the Psalms: Psalms 93-101

ON these psalms, though they are very striking ones, I have very little to say with my present object, because they treat not of the exercises of the heart in the time of trial, but of the coming in of power to put an end to that time. They are characterized by the title “Jehovah reigns, the world is established.” I have, therefore, only a few remarks to make: first, that the result of all this patience of government in God is, that man rises up as the water floods against Him: but God is mightier. The termination of it is by power. But two great truths accompany this. God's testimonies are very sure; we can count upon His word through all. It reveals His nature, His purpose, His character. It gives that according to which He will act—no peace to the wicked, but infallible certainty of purpose and power. Man may be as the grass, evil rise up like the water-floods, the word of Jehovah abides forever, and he that does His will. Hence in all times we can go by it as a rule, dark as all may seem, mighty as evil may be. Israel or the Church, apostasy or hollow profession, persecution or seductive prosperity, His word is true and a sure guide, according to His own nature and character—His to whom power, after all, belongs. And if the time was when He to whom power belonged was counted as a malefactor, He was guided by that word, bowed to it, and fulfilled it; and judgment after all will return to righteousness. Thus far of all present government and future display of public power, the kingdom and patience, or kingdom and glory of the Lord. But there is another thing—Jehovah has a house, a dwelling. Take it as His heavenly dwelling, His temple where all speak of His glory, or in its place as the Church, His habitation by the Spirit. It is always essentially characterized by one thing, because it is Ills habitation—holiness becomes His house forever, separation to Him according to His nature.

These two points guide the saint through all circumstances till power comes in to sustain him, because he counts on God, through all the risings up of the power of evil: the word of God, and the holiness of His nature. God has graciously communicated His mind to men, has spoken. His word remains sure come what will. That is inherent to His nature, depends on His power as God. “Hath He said and shall He not do it, hath He spoken and shall it not come to pass?” If He be God, truth nor power to make it good cannot fail, or He is not God. His speaking obliges Himself, so to speak, by His nature. I cannot believe He is God at all, if, when He has spoken, it is not made good. He would not be God. It would be ignorance, or some one else would have power to hinder Him. His testimonies are sure. In the midst of evil this is an immense, a perfect consolation and stay. But the other test is of importance, the other claim on conscience. Holiness, if He be God, is in every sense necessary. No elevation of truth, no certainty of word to be reckoned on can alter this. It puts man subjectively in his place. He might boast of truth, may exult in sure promises, as if God had bound Himself. But God must be consistent with Himself; what is not holy is in no case of Him. He is supreme, and all must refer to Him, all be consecrated to Him in His presence, and, so far as He is revealed, suited to what He is. Thus a counter-check on man is furnished, and the true knowledge of God. It is not holiness apart from the word, nor knowledge or certainty apart from holiness. The Spirit of truth is the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit the Spirit of truth.

Note further, they are testimonies coming from God, the positive declaration of His mind and will, (not a boasted knowledge of God by man's will, and his pretension to know what God must be, though there he a certain apprehension of conscience connected with, often perverted by, traditional knowledge; but) the positive testimonies of God, so that man is subject to them, though sustained by them. It is not man's reasoning, or man's conscience, but the testimonies of God, His own active revelation of Himself, the utterance of His word. They are simply received by faith, the soul is subject to them as such. This characterizes the soul that owns God. Power will come in due time. This will make all publicly right. Till then faith rests in the testimonies; the soul-subjecting, soul-sustaining revelation of God.

God, moreover, has a house, a dwelling. This, as noticed elsewhere, is an immense fruit of redemption. Neither with innocence, nor with the faithful did God dwell; Adam before His fall nor Abraham had God dwelling with them; innocence marked one, faith the blessed path of the other. A frustrated or gracious visit told of God's condescension and goodness to either. But in Israel's redemption we find that Jehovah had brought them out of the land of Egypt, that He might dwell among them. (Ex. 29:45, 46.) Innocence does not become God's house, but absolute consecration to Him according to His nature where good and evil are known; so it is in heaven—this character and nature. But, there, testimonies are not needed. Knowledge of good and evil man has, but separated from God and in sin. But where God has redeemed man to Himself, purified him, and delivered him, then He dwells with him, in him—in Israel according to His then partial revelation of Himself, in the saint now by His Spirit, and in the Church; and so eternally, for now it is according to what He is in Himself, fully revealed in Christ, and by His death. Hence it is founded on testimony. For God must reveal Himself, and His redemption, and His ways, and what He is. Thus the Holy Spirit is given consequent on Christ's exaltation on the accomplishment of redemption, and in fact on the reception of the testimony of God by faith. When God is known, (not merely truth,) then there is the consciousness of what suits, there is the delight of His name according to His nature; and thus it becomes the test not only of truth being known, but truth and so God Himself—for Christ is the truth, and the Spirit is truth. Hence, as soon as Israel is redeemed, the holiness of God is spoken of, not before, because He was going to dwell in them, having brought them to Himself. The world will be established by power; but this is consecration to God by testimony and His own presence through redemption. It is not the pomp and order of His house here, (that we have in psalm 51) but a dwelling-place of delight and nature. (Comp. Psa. 132:13, 14.)

In Psa. 94 judgment is looked for and vengeance to set the world right. But we find the discipline and comforts of the Lord sustaining the soul meanwhile, which must occupy us a moment. The triumph of the wicked is, for him who believes in God, a painful and oppressive thought, the power of evil is evident; this is what just affects the mind of the saint, not in a prophetic but a moral way. But the blindness of the haughtiness of man away from God, presses on him who sees, from knowing God, the day of the wicked approaching. There is also the distinct consciousness of being God's people whose weakness and sorrow are but an occasion of oppression. Both are clear motives of judgment that this cannot go on forever. He that formed the eye surely sees it all. Man's thoughts are vanity. These two things then are the foundation of the saint's thought. God's interest in His people, and His goodness which will not overlook the poor when oppressed; yea, the very fact of the pride of the wicked.

But another element is introduced: God does judge evil, but He begins at His own house. God's hand is in the dealings which make His people suffer, as well as man's. It is to this the heart of the saint turns. “Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Jehovah.” We have the interpreter here one among a thousand. God with the chastening teaches out of the law. God, by all this process of evil having the upper hand, breaks the will, teaches dependence, separates not only the heart but the spirit from the world where this evil reigns. How could there be union with a world in which this power of evil is seen and morally shrunk from? Man thinks he can go on amiably in the world without its evil, but when the world itself is evil and felt to be so, what then? Thus wickedness and its rising up, discarding God, is its own remedy in the heart of him who owns God, exercises it, purifies it, removes it from the sphere in which its own will works, when it, if not in intention, at any rate practically, sought an outlet for nature. Divine life having given it thoughts of God; it is met by a world which will none of Him, and rises up against Him: all this is God's hand.

But there is more, there is, with the discipline of His hand, direct inward teaching by His word, which reveals Himself. Thus the haughty evil which drives back the heart, also has subduedness, and has tasted that the Lord is gracious, drives it to God, known in grace and the revelation of Himself, His ways, His purposes; and grace effectuates itself in the heart. The renewed heart gets into its own sphere and learns not merely the necessary character of God as hating evil and loving good, but His own ways, the development of His grace and truth, His holiness in the sphere in which He reveals what He is for those who know Him. This is a rest of heart for the saint, a repose of the spirit which seeks and delights in good. If it sought to meet the evil, (though actively in service there will be according to God's will,) but to meet the evil in the world, largely as the heart desires it and looks for God's bringing it in, there would be weariness and heart-breaking; but when the power of evil is rife, the soul is driven up into its own place, into the direct revelation of God and His ways, and there near God's altar, for it draws out worship, it finds rest—till. It still looks for setting evil right and the deliverance of the poor and needy, but it abides in patience, learning God's mind, and finds rest therein, rest in what is eternal. The activity of good it will engage in, where the open door is, but its rest is in that which is properly of God. The establishment of that by power will come, and that is certain. God is sure in His ways. He will not cast off His people. He will not have evil in power forever. Here it is, of course, the intervention of judgment on earth, judgment returning to righteousness—power and good going together, not power and evil. We have better things, a heavenly revelation for sons, a heavenly place, our Father's house before us, but the principle is the same. The judgment, once in the chief priests and Pilate, while righteousness and truth were in the blessed Jesus, will come to His hands who was once Himself the poor and oppressed; judgment will return to righteousness. And if we, taking up our cross, are glad to suffer and so shall reign with Him, yet the thoughts and ways, and counsels, and faithfulness of God will be fulfilled. Heavenly grace and heavenly glory may be added in our present rest of spirit, and the rest that remains to us; still righteousness will have dominion if it be heavenly, and eternal blessing for us who have a part with Him who suffered. The appeal to the impossibility of its going on, if the Lord is to show Himself at all, is strikingly put forward in verse 20.

The power of evil, note, (16, 17) was deeply felt. Be it so; it may show our weakness sometimes, but it is well it should, if faith be there. The heart ought not to get accustomed to the power of evil, will not if it be with God; will be sensible to it, astonished at it, and dependent on divine restoration

to meet it in thought. This was true of Christ, only in perfection, and no fault in His thoughts. He was astonished at their unbelief; He looked round upon them with anger, being grieved at the hardness of their hearts; He could say, How long shall I be with you, how long shall I suffer you? But then, no less ready in heart in the activity of good where there was a want, He could say, Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour; but then perfect in submission and obedience, and the one desire to glorify His Father, that His Father Should glorify Himself—perfect in all things. We, alas! if not helped sometimes, ready to dwell in silence, should soon, so to speak, give up, where Christ, the blessed One, felt all infinitely more, and was perfect in it. But when we turn, in the consciousness of tendency to fail, or being actually in present danger, to God, His help is there. This is great mercy. Teaching, then, is for the rest of the spirit, but there is holding up and help in our ways. David encouraged himself in God: who can fail then? He who is mightier than all, He whose force is accomplished in weakness, is there to help, there in a tried one, witness of goodness, that if we never failed we were in danger.

Another scene opens too, for God thinks of all things for us. What questions, if our minds work, present themselves to us, in the confusion and labyrinths of the mixture of good and evil! The mind enjoying God's goodness may abstain from it. It does well, but the root and spring of all these questions are in men's hearts, and the power of evil around us awakens them. It is not only selfishness, though self is always the center, the center of the questionings, but when evil affects the spirit, a multitude of thoughts are there. I do not say it is right—it is not. It is the fruit of our departure from God, and the consequent letting in of evil into God's world, a being within it in fact; but when heart and mind go out beyond it, having the knowledge of good and evil, revelation here, when the mind works, increases the difficulty and the multitude of thoughts, for the mind sees good clearer. Why and whence this evil? It sees another world of God's power. Why then this? It looks into a world beyond it and brings back its thoughts into this where they are not realized. It sees goodness and power, and dwells in the midst of sorrow and evil. This may be in a selfish shape—often is. It is then a low principle, but it has always man for its center, and, (save as it was in perfect love and holiness in Christ who perfectly brought another world into this, I mean in His own mind and person,) is always evil, is but the “multitude of our thoughts.” Yet God has compassion. I retreat into God by faith. This comforts, delights my soul. Our thoughts speculating, as knowing good and evil, either by personal sorrow, or by working of mind which is worse, launch out into the endlessness, not really infinitude, of speculation as to what ought to be, or into complaint against God as to what God is. It may be sometimes in a more submissive way of wonder and acknowledgment of its being too hard for us; but it is a finite mind, a mind in the sphere of this world, out of which it has no natural powers, let, in thought and speculation, into its relationship with the infinite, with good and with evil. It has a multitude of thoughts, but no possible rest. In its state it does not belong to the sphere it has got into.

Hence, let me add, in passing, the form infidelity has largely taken in these days—what is called positivism or realism, saying, I know what I see and experience, with perhaps some small conclusions from it, and pretending to stop there. It does not, for it pretends to deny all beyond it. This is false upon the face of it, for if it only knows what is knowable to man from himself, it can deny nothing beyond it, any more than it can affirm. It is a low thought. But it is false on another ground. The mind has no certainty, but it has a multitude of thoughts beyond the sphere of the natural human powers which can decide on what is within these powers. There are a multitude of

thoughts within us. We are incompetent to come to a conclusion, but there are thoughts and something or other to suggest them, but the heart has no answer. Where there is no infidelity, but merely the natural working of the human heart, this is the case. There is no further answer till judgment comes, till judgment returns to righteousness. In the psalm, this exercise of soul refers naturally more entirely to the government of this world; Christianity, the revelation of another world, has with the former brought in a thousand others, where men's minds work. But there is a refuge and a resource, not in the explanation of everything to the mind, so as to maintain it, in the mad and wicked pretensions to judge God, but in the introduction of the positive good which is in God into the soul, so that it knows it has got blessedness and truth, whatever of its multitude of thoughts it may be unable to solve. Conscience is upright when it is acted on and judges self. But when by our enfeebled and beclouded knowledge of good and evil we pretend, calling it conscience, to judge God, the pretension is to make our ignorance and moral state, as it is, the measure of what is perfect, when all is imperfectly known and God not at all. For in that state men are forming a judgment—what they are to acknowledge as such. It is, on the face of it, judging of a whole system of things when only an obscure end of it is before us. Reasoning from that state of things full of evil, I can judge nothing. God has not yet set things right, nor am I competent to judge even how to do it; but He has introduced good, perfect good, Himself into the midst of the evil. He has made me discover my own evil—judge myself: an immense moral gain. Those only who have done so are, as to soul matters, upright. That is true, honest conscience, and gives me a resource in grace, a perfect knowledge of His love, (in Israel a relative knowledge by His ways,) and in the details of exercises which follow for self-knowledge and purifying the soul, I have known, perfect love to have recourse to, and what it has revealed and imparted to me, grace and truth; and that, not only in the outward revelation of it, however, authoritative, but in my soul by the Holy Ghost. “that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.” “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for them who love him, but God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit;” and again, “We joy in God.” Besides, God acts directly by His Spirit. His love is shed abroad in our hearts, His faithfulness in that love can be counted on; but direct communion with Himself raises us up to a kind and source of joy which the trouble and sorrow do not touch; nothing separates from His love. We are more than conquerors in this world; we have the joys of another, divine comforts through the sorrows we have to bear, in presence of the evil which besets us: the power of it drives us into our retreat, our joy in Him who is always the same, and whom we learn to know better. Judgment will close the scene in which I have to be troubled.

The psalms that follow I do not dwell upon, because they are the actual coming in of the Lord to judgment, not the exercises of the heart in awaiting it. Psalm calls the Jews to be ready to meet Him. Psalm the Gentiles. In Psa. 47, He is actually coming in clouds; 48, He has wrought the deliverance; 49, He has taken His seat in Jerusalem between the Cherubim. Psa. 100, calls the Gentiles up to partake in Israel's joy and worship; 51 gives us the principles on which the government of the earth will be carried on by Jehovah's king.

Chapter 191

# Practical Reflections on the Psalms: Psalms 102-106

Psa. 102 is one of the most profoundly interesting in the whole book of Psalms, but I have no remark to make on it here. It applies especially to the Lord Jesus Himself, whatever occasion circumstances of individual sorrow may have furnished to its composition. The citation of it in Heb. 1 leaves no doubt as to this; and gives to the psalm a depth of interest which scarce another equals it in. It shows how the divine, eternal nature of the Lord meets the difficulty of His having been cut off when Zion is to be restored hereafter. But this gives to the poignancy of His sorrows a depth and character of its own. It is not a glorious result in blessing, the consequence of a work alone in its nature and value, nor the judgment which follows the rejection of Messiah, but the eternal truth of the Lord's divine nature meeting the reality of His sorrows even unto death. Hence it is especially His Person which is the peculiar object of this psalm, and gives it its especial interest. But though the security of the children of His servants, it does not afford us instruction so much on the government of God, though the foundation of it all is in grace. Nor do the following psalms very largely either, 103 - 106, which closes this book. The Spirit views what God always is for faith, but in connection with the deliverance coming in by the coming of the Lord.

Still the power of good manifested in setting all things right, which faith looks at as coming in, is realized by that faith as belonging to Him whom it knows already, so that it rests in it, as God's character, in Him as bearing that character, though its results are not yet produced, and clothes present things with that knowledge of God" though evil be still here. It looks at this world as the display of power and wisdom under a government of goodness, God being known, though the evil is not finally set aside, nor the result of goodness produced. But He who governs is good. And this is known by those who have sinned against Him, known for themselves and in themselves; and it is this knowledge of God which enables the soul to see wisdom and goodness in all things, though the effects of sin are still present. This is a very important principle: the perception of God and goodness in the midst of the sense of evil in which we live. True, a godly Jew, who had not seen Jesus rejected, who did not know the cross, could not know evil as we do, still he knew it; and the faith which looked to a final deliverance not yet come, introduced God thus known into the scene through which faith had to pass. God who, in the midst of evil, has let nothing out of His hand, has ordered all things sovereignly in the midst of the evil, though the evil be not His, in judgment has remembered mercy. And when the bondage of corruption came in, He who made all things very good, has held the reins and ordered all things wisely, whatever witness of evil remains, and sorrow and death. We are in bondage to it till divinely freed, but God never has been, never will be—would have us know that all things groan—but that there comes deliverance when He shall rule—but that the Creator, who made all things good, overrules and orders all things now. His mercy is over all His works. Now faith pierces through the felt evil, does not wish to be insensible to it, but by faith gets at Him who is above it, and can bring in His goodness even into this present scene, see His part in it, and even His part as superior to all the evil. It is not natural enjoyment of creation, which, though as creatures all are good and lowly, may be utter self-deception and blindness to evil, but faith getting to goodness above the evil and bringing this into its own

enjoyment of God in the creature.

I repeat, Israel could not know the evil as we do; but then, on the other hand, he could not have known the redemption wrought and reconciliation to be wrought as we do, so that we can bring in God more fully yet. This is the general character of Psa. 103; 104; 105. They contemplate the full deliverance of Israel, but by faith; and look at creation not in its abstract perfection, but God in it; and Israel's history, too, as a series of failures, but God's mercy and goodness rising above it.

Thus Psa. 103 recognizes forgiveness and healing, looks on by faith to the deliverance and grace in store for Israel, but knows God according to that; sees His patience and goodness meanwhile, and this applied to His government. He is slow to anger and plenteous in mercy. We know on what a perfect basis, as regards sin, all is founded: but here the effect is celebrated in the government of Israel; but God is known for all times according to this knowledge of Him. Hence it is not vague goodness, deceiving oneself, but evil owned, but God known in goodness. This ought to characterize our ways and thoughts. Not that we shall not have to deal with evil, and, if we go below the surface, meet it everywhere; but I ought to have so gone to God about it, as to bring Him back with me according to what I have found Him to be above it all. My feet should be shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.

Psa. 104 takes up creation in the same way. The last verse shows the judgment which clears the world of evil, and His sovereign power is owned. But the Spirit is able to bring in the goodness into the midst of all it sees. But it does not go beyond a fallen creation.

Psa. 105 reviews the special dealings with Israel in past times. The present deliverance by judgment is also found here, but it is looked at as His faithfulness to His promise and grace. Here that is present manifestation of goodness, awakes the memory on all God's past ways. This is what He is, what He always was.

The following psalm takes the other side of the picture and shows man's ways—that, in all the interventions of God in goodness, man, after the first gladness at being delivered, turned back to his own evil and unfaithful ways. Still His ear was ever open, He remembered His promise, repented according to the multitude of His mercies, so as to bring, finally, praise and thanksgiving to His name. The former gave what God was in His own ways, this His being finally above the evil in accomplishing mercy and promise when men had shown what they were. God good in Himself, God good in the midst of evil, but not as allowing the evil, but as making Himself known by His own ways of mercy. And He being thus known by the heart, the heart passes through present circumstances according to this knowledge of Him. But to do this consistently and constantly, supposes the heart not only to know but to be with Him. This closes the fourth book.

Chapter 192

# Practical Reflections on the Psalms: Psalms 107-113

(Fifth Book—Psa. 107-113)

IN the last Book of Psalms we find, besides many songs of praise, all the moral circumstances of Israel on their return to blessing. The first psalm in it stamps this character on it. It looks at them as gathered back, but traces the various scenes through which they might have passed, and that after their entry into the land too, and God's ways with them in them. It is a description of toils and trials, in which the Lord was looked to, and answered and interfered in behalf of the tossed and tried soul, and men are exhorted to own and praise Him. It carried this blessed truth in the forefront. His mercy endures forever. God's unchanging love and goodness, celebrated from the first fully proved failure of Israel onward. Man fails, God's mercy to His people not. It is His redeemed and gathered ones who are the people that have to bear witness to this. Strangers and pilgrims where there was no resting-place, no home, hungry and thirsty, their soul fainting in them, they cried to the Lord and were led in a right way to where their foot and heart found rest. Two characters are given to the soul in this condition. It is a longing soul and a hungry soul. We have craving and want, but these brought before the Lord. This is mercy. It is not the case of holy desires here, but God meeting wants. The wearied and fainting soul wants, but this want turns into a cry to the Lord Mercy is surely there. But this might be even where their affliction and distress was chastisement, the fruit of rebellion. But here where the heart turned to the Lord, mercy met it, and there was deliverance. The gates of brass and iron which shut them in are broken, where iniquity and the folly of departure from the Lord had brought it all on. He sent His word that they might be healed and so delivered. When men were venturesome and braved dangers and found themselves at their wits' end through the storm of the sea which gives no footing to them, the Lord comes in and gives peace and leads them to the haven of their desire. In the very place of the habitation of His people, in the place of promises, there His direct government comes in. Rivers are a wilderness, a fruitful land barren, through judgment; turning the wilderness into pools of water, judging wickedness and showing mercy to the needy soul, satisfying the hungry who lean on Him. Careless and lifted up even there, they are brought down. He pours contempt on princes, but the poor and needy He sets on high. It is not the order of a world blessed of God where evil is not, but the government of God where evil is, where God overrules the evil to the purposes of His own government, to hide pride from man, and comfort and encourage the poor in spirit who look to Him, who trust not in pride and human strength and will rest in the Lord. In all the ways too where their will has brought them, where their sins even have brought them, if He be looked to, His mercy and goodness are found. Thus God deals with the heart—turns the state of things and the ways of men into the means of their hearts knowing Him. The righteous rejoice, and oh how true that is—how much truer it will be where the fruit of the Lord's goodness to the humble, waiting soul which has put its trust in Him is seen. In the end evil will be put down, but in the way the Lord meets, comforts, and justifies in result the path of the humble soul; and the wise and observant soul will see, however busy, however pretending, however seemingly successful man's will may be, the lovingkindness of the Lord will be made good before him to his joy and gladness of heart.

The Lord teach us to walk softly before Him, and leave the results in His own gracious hand. It is sometimes difficult, but always wise—painful to see the wicked and wickedness prosper. It is a world of evil, but God works in it, and His ways will work out blessing, and the fruit of His goodness and righteous power.

One or two brief remarks on Psa. 108, but on a point of great beauty. There is great confidence here, and, as ever, mercy to the soul which knows itself and comes before truth. But, then, for its own deliverance and blessing, it looks to the exalting of God. This shows it must be a holy, righteous exalting. Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens, and thy glory above all the earth, that thy beloved may be delivered. It is a blessed thought, and this is what faith has to lay hold of now, even in the time of trial, that our blessing and God's glory are one, only we must put His glory first. This is the very principle of uprightness— “He that seeketh His glory that sent Him, the same is true,” says Christ, “and there is no unrighteousness in him” —and the highest blessing. So Jesus Himself, “What shall I say, Father, save me from this hour Father, glorify thy name.”

Then comes, “I, if I be lifted up, shall draw all men unto me.” So in trial and even in evil, faith identifies the glory of God and His people. “The Egyptians will hear of it. . . . What wilt thou do to thy great name?” For the same reason there is no sparing evil when we are in the midst of the people, and evil calls this principle out, God being publicly dishonored, “Slay ye every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor.” In a word, faith identifies God's glory and exaltation and His people, but puts God first. Here it is in blessing, and we have the remarkable answer of God. I will rejoice. His own joy and delight is in the blessing of His people; exults in doing them good, in delivering His beloved, in the employment of His might to set aside the evil which oppressed them, and put them in possession of what, by His gift, belonged to them. And, whatever the strength of their adversaries, He will accomplish their blessing: the strong city dare not stand before Him. And even when through their fault they had been refused His help, (in Israel's case, as we know, long cast off,) still, when the just time of the blessing of the humble comes, He will put forth the needed strength that all may be fulfilled. He gives strength to His people, His own power delivers them. They have learned that His only is of any worth or avail.

Psa. 109 is the judgment of Judas and the antichristian Jews at the end. It affords us little experimental teaching, while most solemn in its testimony. First, the motive of help: “Do it for thy name's sake.” The nature and glory of God is at the root of all His ways; and when the heart caught at this, the answer of help is seen, God cannot be inconsistent with Himself. But for this the heart must be brought into the state co-ordinate with that name, lowliness, the judgment of evil in self and so uprightness, dependence; and God may exercise fully to manifest brokenness of will and produce it, and the heart's leaving all submissively to Him. In Christ's place all these exercises only brought out His perfectness, in us they work uprightness and dependence. In Him all this sorrow was purely God's hand, that is, there was no reason for it in Himself. And this is accorded to us in grace, even if we have given occasion to it by our self-will or evil, still God has taken it in hand in our discipline, and when He has wrought His work sets His saints up in blessing to the confusion of the adversary, forced to own His hand where they triumphed in evil, and thought only to triumph over the just. But they have met God, for these were His ways with His people, and this government can go on with us because redemption is complete. In Christ's ease it was pure hatred against good, He undergoing it for us. For His love they were His adversaries. But they, the lovers of evil, are before the Lord continually; the time of showing it is His own, for us when His

work of subjugating our will, teaching us holy dependence, is complete; in Christ, when it has been manifested. and God fully glorified.

Psa. 110 In this, glorifying Christ at God's right hand, I have only one remark to make. The last verse shows the perfection of Christ in this spirit of dependence on the way, the path in which we have to follow Him as walking in the new man; glad of the refreshments of God, but dependent in them and taking them as they are found, that is, as God Himself gives them in the way—the spirit of lowly dependence.

Psa. 111 In a vast number of the psalms of this last book, the present intervention of judgment and power is so contemplated that instructions for the trials of the way are less to be looked for. It is the case in this psalm. It raises, anticipatively no doubt, its hallelujah for the works of God. Only this is to be remarked, and so always, that these works of deliverance are always conformable to, and founded on, and make good, the truth of God's character. They are verity and judgment. His commandments are proved sure in them. They stand fast forever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness. Hence to enjoy the fruit of them our path is to walk after the Lord's ways and reckon on the sureness of His promise, and if He tarry, wait for Him. But, as we have always seen, mercy and compassion towards us is found and felt in them. If we are delivered, it is sovereign goodness. Hence the fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom; obedience leads us to intelligence, being in the path of God. Light is truth in that path, and according to it. You cannot separate the true knowledge of divine things from godliness. It is the nature which is godly, obedient—grace dependent on God which alone desires or understands them. If any man will do my will, He shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God. Hence in the path of obedience, the realizing the light in a subjection which owns God, more is found; for light and the path of the new nature are one. The truth as it is in Jesus, that ye put off the old man and put on the new, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness. We are renewed in knowledge after the image of Him who created us. In this path we have to walk by till power comes in. In Israel, of course, it. was more as law; but the principle is always true, as true knowledge is the knowledge of God. It is impossible to separate true knowledge from a state which owns God for what He is—obedience and dependence on Him.

Psa. 112 I leave aside, of course, the promises of temporal blessing, which apply directly to the Jewish people and system. These latter psalms refer especially to them, because blessing is just come in by judgment, but some principles are worthy of note—the wisdom of acting in obedience through the path of trial is specially insisted on in these psalms. Much was there (there always is) to say that faithfulness was folly and ruin. God warns them, and in that is the path of wisdom. It lasts in its effects when the wicked disappear. The generation of the upright will be blessed. His righteousness endures forever. No doubt darkness seems to shut him in, but light arises for him even there. We must learn to trust to God, blessing is sure to the obedient. But thus walking with God, peace of heart and the sense of goodness make him gracious and full of compassion towards others—upright too with them. Self-seeking is not his governing principle. He shows favor, is liberal in heart, nor is there rashness or self-will. He carries out and carries through his matters in the fear of God, with soundness of mind; does not use lightness, that his yea should be nay. Guided by God in going into them he carries through his path to the end, because it is God's will, and with the strength and steadiness the consciousness of doing that gives. And this is of importance in the path of the saints as a testimony, that God is there, and His mind the guide of

our path. He abides, he that does God's will does so. Further, when the power of evil is abroad, he is not shaken. In the midst of exercises of heart, of moral evil, he has been with God. His will has been supreme with him. He has looked at God as one whose will ordered all, and God Himself as all. If He was pleased, be was content. Circumstances had lost their power as motives, and God had, so to speak, taken their place in his heart and mind. Hence, when adverse ones arise, they find God there known, trusted: his heart is fixed trusting in the Lord.

Only one principle comes before us in Psa. 113, but one which cannot be too often brought before our souls, one which we have constant tendency to forget. God chooses weak things, that it may be evident that good and blessing come from His power and love. God uses means, but when man speaks of means be generally speaks not of reference of heart to God, prayer, His word, and the like, but of leaning on man's influence, and man's strength. This is all evil. Oh that we may remember that God chooses the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and weak things, and things that are not, to bring to naught things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence. Blessing were not divine blessing indeed if it were not so. But then in this strength we may look for grace. He dwells on high, but humbleth Himself to behold the things that are in heaven and earth. He raiseth the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the needy out of the dunghill to set him with the princes, even the princes of His people, and takes the barren and gives her children like a flock, makes her a joyful mother of children. Such are God's ways. The heart delights in them. Power is His, and goodness, but what a lesson in the midst of this world, and for the heart of man.

# Practical Reflections on the Psalms: Psalms 114-118

(Psa. 114-118)

Psa. 113 The same thing as to power is seen in this very beautiful little psalm. He brought water out of the flint rock. His presence makes the earth that has forgotten Him to tremble; but for His people in the desert, His power and grace bring refreshment and life out of what seems to man hopeless and most opposed. Dependence and confidence in Him—such is the peaceful path of faith.

Psa. 115 The first principle here brought under our eye is setting the Lord's glory first, a simple but mighty one— “not to us but to thy name.” So we find perfectly in Christ. But this is followed, for all that, by the connection of that glory with God's people. The first principle gives purity of motive—this the courage and hope of faith. And note what is specially blessed—the name, (i.e., the revelation of God's character) is specially suited to the blessings of His people. He had spoken in promise, but they have failed on their side to take up the promise in the path of righteousness. Yet God has promised, and here His name of government in grace comes in. “Give the glory to thy name for thy mercy,” that is part of His name; “and for thy truth's sake,” that is another. And here the glory comes out—if He were not the former, the latter could not be righteous judgment, would have not cut off the guilty; but there would have been no fulfillment of promise. But mercy rejoices over judgment. What God is in His nature, love interprets itself in His ways towards the failing, in mercy, leading them, no doubt, into the place of repentance that they may suitably enjoy; suitably to any moral relationship with God, but then accomplishing His promise in truth. But the divine glory goes first. This is counted on. God had made Himself to display His ways, the God of His people. “Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is now their God?” Such was the ancient plea of Moses and Joshua. This is, further, in contrast with the idols of the heathen. When God's glory is first sought by faith, it not only turns to the blessing of the people according to that glory, but it opens out into the consciousness and apprehension of that glory in itself in the hearts of the people. This is a great blessing. They joy, no doubt, in the salvation, but they joy in God. For the full display of this, He must come in in judgment; not for our blessing, for He has given us heavenly things, where His own dwelling is, in what He is in Himself, not merely as what He is in His ways. For we may remark how earth is here the sphere, and this present life the energy in which God is known and owned. “The dead praise not the Lord;” “the earth hath He given to the children of men.” We rejoice in being dead and having our place in resurrection with Christ in heavenly places. We cannot keep this too strongly in mind, though there be instruction as to God's ways on earth, in these psalms.

In these last especially, the earthly government is in view, because judgment at the end is just coming in. It is a blessing to have heaven instead, and our God, such as He is, our Father.

In Psa. 116 the suppliant has been heard; the government of God consequently enters but little into its composition. The soul has been brought down under the pressure of death, but delivered. It is the history of the remnant at the end, into which the blessed Lord so wonderfully entered, but

which is not a prophecy of Him, and applicable to any so suffering, as is seen by the apostle's citation of verse 10. The deliverance is for this world. The thought of the psalm is—grace and faithfulness in Jehovah in delivering. The character of the saint is simplicity: a spirit difficult to some, but precious. It is formed by a simple-hearted reference to the thoughts of God and living in them, and then trusting Him who always makes His own thoughts good, and remembers those who thus trust in Him. The opposite to this is—the activity of man's thoughts, his will and counsels mixing themselves with them. These perish, he is disappointed. The humble spirit does not think so much—it receives God's thoughts. They have a moral character. He abides in them, is obedient, and waits on God. (Compare Eleazar, Gen. 24) The deliverance of God comes as favor and an answer to the soul, and is full of sweetness. His faithfulness to this state and expectation is felt. Hence, on receiving the blessing, thankfulness, (not merely enjoying the blessing) is the fruit; and, “I love the Lord:” hence sweet associations of soul are connected with it. It is felt that the Lord has dealt bountifully. The soul returns to its rest, faith had been at work before. The soul believed and spoke as trusting God, but was sore troubled—now finds the God it thus trusted its source of joy and blessing, not, mark, the blessing it gets. The soul was turned to Him, not to comfort, in the trouble. It is turned to Him now in the time of joy. The Lord Himself is before the soul, its source of blessing. Note another thing in this psalm, the feeling of the failure of all men. It is not exactly “in my haste,” but in my anxious pressure of alarm, such as would make man flee in haste. This gave the consciousness that man could not be relied on. It was not simple faith or sound judgment this, but there are moments when God makes us feel that we cannot rely on man, but only on Him. Often we have comfort from men. “God who comforteth them who are cast down, comforted me by the coming of Titus.” But we must not rely on man. Hence there are moments when we have to say, “all men are liars,” and we are cast on the Lord. How truly the Lord was so, I need not say; yet in grace He could say to His disciples, Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. But there was an hour when He must say, “one of you shall betray me,” and feel it; and, “all ye shall be offended because of me this night, and shall leave me alone.” That showed His perfection. It teaches us to lean on the Lord only, not diminishing cordial confidence and openness of heart, but teaching to rely on God. Unhindered joy will come afterward. But in all trouble the Lord thinks of us.

Psa. 117 The consciousness of grace and favor enlarges the heart. Israel never thought of calling the nations to praise when under the law. But now that mercy has brought blessing, they do. It is the sentiment of what God is to us, the thankful enjoyment of it as of God, which opens the mouth and heart by the knowledge of Him. It calls others to enjoy His goodness, too. It is an assimilation to the divine nature and privilege in the knowledge of love; only, as it should be, we learn love by knowing its exercise towards ourselves.

In Psa. 118 we are still on the ground of final blessing, so that the government of God in the midst of trial is only referred to in the past. It is Israel's recognition of the divine ways and of Christ Himself when blessing is come, owning that Jehovah's mercy has lasted out all their ways and endured forever. I notice only the aspect of circumstances as applicable to us at all times. God is for His people; but men, all men, may be against them. One has only to trust the Lord, and victory remains with faith. But in this, where evil has to be governmentally corrected, Satan seeks, Satan has his part. How truly it was so in leading all men against Christ; how fully so in the last days of Antichrist's power, I need not say; but as the book of Job shows, it is so in the various chastenings

of God. Evil on the conscience, or even unconsciously in the heart, gives him a handle, sometimes a terrible one, against the soul even where it is upright. Rest is found only in self-judgment and confession of what gives him a handle. Satan would seek to make us fall thus; but behind all this the hand of God is to be seen, as in Job's case. “Thou hast chastened me sore, but thou hast not given me over unto death.” It is for blessing. One only could declare, “The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me;” but with us, all is love and blessing, to make us know ourselves, and then enjoy His blessing, (compare Deut. 8,) and fully own what Christ is according to His victory and glory in the counsels of God. We must be thus exercised, the ground plowed and harrowed, but the result is— “this is the day which the Lord hath made.” No doubt this is the final blessing of the earth when Christ comes, but in every exercise of a soul brought to the point of uprightness with God, the principle is made good; the gates of righteousness into the joy of communion, so to speak, are opened. And the mercy to which we had no title we own to be the Lord's doing, and all is light. The direct application to the remnant is evidently the just application of the psalm, but we connect this great display of God's government with the details in which it applies to us.

Chapter 194

# Practical Reflections on the Psalms: Psalms 119:1-24

(Psa. 119:1-24)

Psa. 119 is the expression of the effect of the law written in the heart of Israel, when they had long erred from God's ways and were sorrowing under the effects of it. It is one of the psalms which pronounces blessedness. We will examine some of the elements of this work in the heart. This blessedness is pronounced on “the undefiled in the way.” The world is full of defilement. There is only one path in the world (for ours is out of it, we are pilgrims and strangers following Christ who is gone on high) but only one in the world which can be undefiled; that is, God's law. It is not what is heavenly formed within, affections set on things above, a walking in the Spirit; that no doubt will produce fruits which no law of God will condemn. It is the way wholly formed by God's expressed will for man's walk in this world. They “walk in the law of Jehovah.” There is a delight in what is right, in what is not defiled by sin or the world; but that is in walking in the law. It is a perfect rule, according to God, in this world for a living man. But this is carried farther in the heart. It looks to the source. God has borne witness to His will, and shewed that He would have man walk in it, and the heart turns to it, not only as undefiled and right, but as “His testimonies.” This connects itself with the desire after Himself. They “seek Him with the whole heart.” This is the general character of the effect of the law written in the heart. The practical effect is evident: they “do no iniquity.” Not only the heart is set morally right in undefiledness, but evil or unrighteousness, relative wrong, is not done. Instead of their own will, and puffing, as it is said, at God, “they walk in His ways.” The authority of God is recognized in the heart, and diligence in acquiescence in it, and the desires of the heart are towards it. “O that my ways were directed,” &c. It is not only the perception of God's ways—what is intrinsically approved in the heart; but the desire that the actual course of life were ordered so as to keep God's statutes; not satisfying our will, or our will being towards God's. And here dependence is felt as to the course of a man's life, and there is the desire it may be directed. Conscience and spiritual discernment go together. Shame does not flow from man's disapprobation; but from the conscience not being good according to God's revealed will. But this way is complete and an only one. Whatever is out of it is not undefiled, is the world which is abhorrent from God; we must be in it in will, heart, and way, or out of it, and so ashamed, if the will of the heart be right. If my mind and soul have morally discerned the excellency of God's way, the conscience, if I am out of it in every respect, makes me ashamed. The heart set right has respect to “all God's commandments.” But where this is, not only the conscience is right and peaceful, but the heart is set free. “I will praise Thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments.” There is knowledge of God through His ways, and the heart restored to Him, and having learned His thoughts, (not only commandments, but His judgments,) can praise Him not only for benefits but in the heart's association with Himself. Another element of this state is full will and purpose of heart to obey and keep what God has ordained or appointed, what has God's authority attached to it, not merely moral right and wrong. But it was a time when Israel had erred; hence here there is a special looking to God, not utterly giving them up. We see thus that the form of this psalm cannot apply to the Christian. He never expects to be utterly forsaken; in a particular

course he may apply this, when he is conscious of having followed his own will. But from the general principle we may learn much, as that which is wrought in the heart as regards its moral disposition. (Ver. 1-8.)

But there are other points practically. The tendency of man's energy as such is to follow his own will. This s now natural, not before the fall. Then man enjoyed, thanked, and blessed; followed naturally in the path described by God—a simple one. Now, through that first distrust of God, will is come in. And here we have a difference of the very last importance in Christian obedience and the law. The law addresses itself, as such, to responsible man down here without raising the question of and not supposing a new nature, though it may discover (when known to be spiritual) the need of one. It supposes a will and lusts which have to be checked and put down. The Old Testament does not speak of flesh and spirit, but of responsible men and their ways. Christian obedience is as Christ's; the will of God is the motive of action, not merely the rule. “I come to do thy will:” no doubt it will herein be a rule to guide us. In us this is a new nature, Christ being our life. We do not find in the Old Testament “he cannot sin because he is born of God.” It is not that there was not the desire to obey in renewed souls then; surely there was. It could not be otherwise. But the relationship in which men stood to God was a law without them to govern their ways when in flesh, not a known new nature standing in the results of redemption whose only motive of action was God's will. The prophets indeed pointed out Christ as such (as in psalm 90) and the masters in Israel should have known that, to have their future privileges, they must be born of water and the Spirit (as in Ezek. 36). But obedience under the law was a rule applied to one who had a will whose movements were to be judged by the law, not a nature whose only motive was God's will, standing in the power of redemption so as to have the right to reckon a discovered old man to be dead, yea which God had pronounced dead through Christ. Hence the heirs differed nothing from servants, to do this, and that, whatever their own will might be. Ways, and not nature, were in question, even though renewal of heart were there. Hence the young man, where energy of will is found, into “cleanse his way.” Lusts would have carried his will elsewhere: how should he find the means of having his ways clear before God? Watchfulness, the fear of God (not will) according to God's word. God's word—how precious to have it in such a world of darkness and will, to guide our feet in a path according to God's mind! For the heart is set right. It is not indeed the sweet enjoyment of love in a reconciled soul, love shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost given, but (what is of all vital importance) the heart right in the sight of God. It supposes the man away from God but undiscovered in his desire. Both are true of the Christian. He is reconciled and has peaceful affections in perfect relationship (this the law had not); and he has, as known and seen in glory, earnest desire after Him that has loved him, only as knowing (not merely seeking) Him. Here He is “sought with the whole heart;” no guile but the true desire of the heart towards God. Being so, (the commandments of God being precious, as making known His will,) the true heart prays not to be let to wander from them. God is looked to in goodness; for when He is truly sought, there is always some sense of His goodness. It is what distinguishes conversion from mere terror of conscience, desire towards Him and sense of goodness in God. We have then another element. The heart which thus seeks God, and has a desire to do His will, not only seeks outward conduct to be right when the occasion arises, but keeps the word at the center, so to speak, and springs of action. He hides it in his own heart as that which he loves; “out of the heart (where that word is hid) are the issues of life. How large a place the word has here. Note, too, man's estimate of conduct disappears. It is between God and the heart, and that is integrity of heart. It is not here a single eye

to an object; so far as that is here, it is found in seeking with the whole heart. This is the integrity which, by reason of the desire towards God, takes His mind as governing the springs of life. It is a blessed and important principle. The word hid in the heart prevent' sinning against Him. But the heart goes farther. It owns the blessedness of Jehovah Himself, known in His ways, His goodness, His mercy, that endureth forever. There, in the midst of its distress, the renewed heart finds its resource and its rest. “Blessed art thou, O Jehovah.” This makes the heart look for what He has decreed and ordained and for divine teaching in it. This looking at God gives courage and the consciousness of integrity and faithfulness. When the heart is right, this is the case. The heart, however humble, when it walks in integrity, has the consciousness of it before God. It may see weakness and infirmity in its ways, shortcomings of which it will judge the cause; but with God it will have the consciousness of entire guilelessness and purpose of heart. “This one thing I do” — “To me to live is Christ.” This does not affect humility; entire dependence on grace and divine strength for willing and doing is felt, (we are in result unprofitable servants, had we done all,) it is duty and delight. But there is the joyfulness with and from God that the heart is right. Service flows from confidence in God and knowledge of His blessedness with the value we have of what God has given. So Christ fully in Psa. 40. The spirit is the same here. It is the effect of perception of divine things, in power and value for them, to make us declare them. It is glorifying God. Love to others may accompany this, but it is another thing. We owe it to God to declare what He is. He ought to be known, and what He is owned. The difference of praise is that the sense of what He is, is addressed to Himself. Perfection is where He is fully known, so that there is no need to declare it to others; all with one mind worship because of it. Then we hold nothing back, “all the judgments of Thy mouth.” We are filled with what God is, its value; and it is uttered. We may be wise for others' sake, but God is sufficiently valued to be fully declared. God's testimonies become the riches of the soul. The possession of heaven somewhat modifies this; yet, still, for here below, the way of God's testimonies are joy, moral joy, as riches would be to men. But there is an inward life, which occupies itself with these things, as well as the activity of duty; much to be fed on, digested, learned in God's testimonies. We meditate on them: we have thus God's mind—the Holy Ghost's intention in them. Thus the soul is fed in delight. But God's ways are held in respect, as authority to the mind. The heart goes with them too. It is not merely that they delight his soul, but there is the activity of the new man; he delights himself with them, he makes it the matter of his occupation, seeking his enjoyment there, and keeps it (oh! how needed it is) in memory, the true proof of affection.

From the third division, another element comes in. Its literal application is to the sorrows of Israel in the last days; in principle it applies to all times—the sorrows and trials which accompany godliness. The soul looks for mercy from One that is supreme, where it is a stranger. It needs this to keep the law. No doubt, it may be strengthened even to martyrdom; but, in general, it looks for mercy to be able to walk. The heart owns it, is God's servant, and looks to be kept in mercy in order to walk truly. This is a great point of the return of the soul to God. By this fact God has now His own place and authority as such. Whatever evil may be permitted (comp. 94), God, our God, is supreme; and, further, goodness is always then necessarily known in Him. But there is more; the soul thus knowing God desires the knowledge of His mind, not merely a rule to direct, but “wondrous things out of God's law.” But all this gives the consciousness of being a stranger in the earth. A good God, (whose servants we are,) and an evil world, make a man “a stranger” (we much more, through Christ). We need these—our own moral delights—God's commandments; we

must add the fullness of Christ. “They are not of the world as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” And here the heart is fully engaged and filled; “my soul breaketh” forth, for there is infinite delight, in the new nature, in the fullness of God's revelations. It does break forth with delight. But this delight in the word gives a just estimate of man in the world, the “proud” man acting from his own will and setting himself up. He may seem to succeed and puff at God. He is under a curse, he errs from the one true way of man—God’s ways. The exaltation of will brings necessary curse; for we are thus away from, in rebellion against, God—all acting of human will. But godliness does more than make a stranger, a sure thing for the heart. It brings cruel mockings, for proud man will not have subjection to God: it is contemptible to man; and the deist, he cannot help him, he boasts. That is not contemptible, his will is in it. But with God man must be subject, and the willful despise this, though often with misgivings of heart. This the saint, while enduring, seeks to be removed. God should assert His title, not suffer the faithful to be pressed down by evil. Still, meanwhile, he can retreat into his own delights; he meditates in God's statutes, hid there from the pride of man. They are his delight, and his counselors, too. (Ver. 17-24.)

# Practical Reflections on the Psalms: Psalms 119:25-72

He who seeks to follow God's ways will find himself often in evil days—days when the power of evil prevails and presses upon his spirit. What then marks faithfulness is that the heart does not turn aside to an easier path or other comforts, but looks to God and His raising up the heart according to His word. There his heart is. He prefers sorrow with it to leaving it, but has learned to trust God, and in the sorrow looks to relief, according to this revelation of God; and God can be counted on for it. The heart had been true with God—not only knew that He knew all its ways, but the desire of being right in His sight and confidence with God even there. He had declared His ways. This integrity in the time of trouble, when there is not the joy of God's deliverance, is very important—to be able to say, “When my spirit was in heaviness, thou knewest my path.” Still there is confidence in the result, so that the soul cleaves to God's ways, and the heart reckoning on His faithfulness is sure, if led by Him in faithfulness of walk, it will soon declare His wondrous works. Not only did the heart take the lowly and abased place, as having no courage as to external things, but it melted within for heaviness—inwardly was in felt weakness. Still the strength it looks for is according to God's word. It seeks nothing but this. The false way in the midst of which it lived, it would have kept far away from the heart. Through this it was downcast. But better to be downcast through evil than to walk merrily in it. More energetic faith might lift up. Still the sense of evil and dependence is good. It was deliberate. He knew all this, but he had chosen the way of truth. “Lord, to whom should we go?” How simple the path then! The soul had been steadfast, and another thing was connected with this. The heart sees that its joys and sorrows are in the hand of God. If it was put to shame, it would be His doing, but He could not for our keeping His own testimonies. “Put to shame” is not here bearing shame by man's mocking, but confounded as coming under judgment. After all, the free running in God's path is when the heart is set at liberty and free, joyfully, with Him. (Ver. 25-32.)

These last verses look for apprehension of the ways of God's precepts; so that the heart is taught in the midst of sorrow. Here it is more keeping and observing it in his path. Otherwise the first three portions were his own resolutions; here the demand of God's teaching. For the heart, true in its resolutions, then turns to God. It may be first for its sorrows, but then for guidance and dependence on Him. We need His teaching when the will is right, need understanding from Him—His help too. “Make me to go.” But the heart seeks to be rightly inclined also, but that root of all evil turns it aside—covetousness. The same as to vanity, but this is all around us. It is not the inclination of the heart, but distraction and leading away the mind from God to folly. Hence the soul seeks to be given energy and life, to seek in singleness of eye heartily the Lord and His will. He seeks too that the word may be confirmed to the soul. This may be inwardly by the Holy Ghost giving it power or even by God's ways according to it. The heart follows God and bows in heart to Him at any rate, but seeks to be strengthened and confirmed. Reproach is when God allows shame on one for righteousness without interfering to screen or save from it. It is as if He abandoned His servant to the mockery of the enemy, successful in his ways, or at any rate the faithful in a state to be triumphed over. So Christ: “Reproach hath broken my heart.” The world

could say, “He trusted in God, let him deliver him.” But after all, what God ordained was good, in which the faithful walked. Why should he be left to reproach, which he feared? The heart was right. It longed after God's precepts, and looked for the Lord to give liveliness of heart and energy of renewed will, undistractedness through the faithfulness of God (that consistency with His own goodness and favor on which we can reckon in Him). “Quicken me in thy righteousness.” This last supposes an increased knowledge of God, so that we can reckon on Him. So indeed does all this demand on God for help and teaching. Uprightness and integrity lead to confidence in Him for our leading in the way of righteousness, which we know He must love. Being thus of one mind with Him, through grace, gives it; but the last word here shows deepened intimacy of faith, which counts on what God must be. (Ver. 33-40.)

Remark here, that all through there is no thought of looking, in difficulty or trial, to anything but God.

Help to keep the law, deliverance from trial because of it, these are sought, but there is not the smallest idea of turning anywhere else; it does not even to the faithful. This is true integrity of heart. God in truth, of His will, God in mercy, God Himself as an object, but only God—nothing outside or away from Him. His mercies are looked for, and that is right, and deliverance from Him, and this according to His word, for He has perfectly revealed Himself, and we want nothing short of Him. What an answer will His deliverance be to the enemy that reproaches! And the word He had sent to us was trusted in as well as obeyed. This is an important point, it is not only the authority of the word, but we have set to our seal that God is true, we receive it as the word of God, and God, we know, must be true, for we know Him; and the soul is interested in the truth of the word. It has taken it as of and from God, delighted in it, had its confidence in it, taken it in face of the wicked as that which we had of God (was perfect as He, revealed Him,) identified it, so to speak, with God. Hence, when there was deliverance according to it, (and other the heart would not seek,) it was the very answer the heart wanted to him that reproached; God's word has an immense place in the heart. It is what reveals Him. Not only it does so, but it is what does so. (So John 5:39.) Had God abandoned the faithful, as fear would lead him to expect, the word would have been taken out of his mouth. Yet here it is not doubting the truth of the word, or its being God's testimony; but be was allowed to accredit it no more by faith. This he fears because he values it. This was Christ's trial and perfectness of the cross, as to desire (“how, then, should the Scriptures be fulfilled?") as to trust. “Yet thou continuest holy.” Here the faithful has hoped in God's judgments, God's acting on that which is gone out of His mouth, His acting according to the revelation of Himself in His word; and this enabled him to keep it forever. So will it be with Israel when he is delivered from the oppressor at the end, the law having been written in his heart. Christ took none of the promises in life, but higher glory awaited Him as man, an answer to higher and infinite faithfulness to God, faithfulness to make good His nature, to be the proof of it when abandoned, when only it could be done because of sin. Then will Israel walk at large, when God's judgments have come in, for that was his desire, to be free to keep them in delight and joyfully. Through mercy we may learn this by times, but our path is a higher one—to follow and suffer with Christ. But he has been encouraged by these thoughts. The word gets its value and God His place, so to speak, though unseen. He speaks of His testimonies before kings, and is not ashamed. This is the character of faith. It has the sense of the importance of God's testimonies, and is filled with it. Men take their place, may be respected, as due to them; but God fills and

governs the mind, not by effort, but, so to speak, naturally. The commandments of God become thus, instead of a pressure on the conscience, the delights of the heart. There is open confession and dedication to them; I suppose this is lifting up the hands to them. It is a solemn avowal and asseveration of heart; not only he has loved them, but he openly declares his owning their truth and authority, saying, That is what I own. And as he openly owns his affiance to them, so he meditates in them for his own joy. (Ver. 41-48.)

But the soul has counted on God's word; God has taught and led the soul to do it, and now it looks for God to put His amen to it (man, through grace, having put his). This confidence of faith in God's word had been its comfort in affliction. There was that which was firm and steadfast for hope, and brought in God's faithfulness and testimony—Himself in hope to the soul when all circumstances around were adverse, and nothing to lean on. And this is comfort, true comfort, in affliction; but it looks to God to fulfill His word—knows He cannot but do it. That very word had quickened the soul itself to do it. This lowly, patient obedience, accepting meekly reproach, had been the scorn and derision of the proud; but faith in His word had kept the soul from swerving. It kept fast in the sorrow. It looked back to God's ways of old, when His hand bad been stretched out. What made it obedient made it confident: that is, God was looked to, and this kept the vision and memory of faith clear. It counted on faithfulness, and it remembered judgments; for all this is the government of God. And His ways of old are ever the thought of Israel in the Psalms, and, in their place, we can think of them; though our hope be elsewhere, as Christ's, in whose favor, when all was tested, it was not made good; but the better portion of resurrection was the answer for us. But this thought of God's judgments does make it awful to contemplate the result for the wicked, who are hurrying willfully against them. But it is not only the end of the wicked that is spoken of here. The wickedness itself is to the soul poignant distress. The soul dwells in Mesech. It sees around what is grief of heart, for its delight is in the fresh air of God's holy will. The rank and fetid breath of sin is distress and pain to it, and seen not only intrinsically as sin, but in the pride of wickedness. Still there is joy: God's statutes are its song in the house of its pilgrimage. How true that is! How, when pressed in by evil around, does the heart find its relief and enlargement in the word and testimony of God Himself! His statutes are our songs in the house of our pilgrimage; and the loneliness in which the heart is in a world of evil, (for it will and must be isolated, however sweet communion may be by the way, if it be faithful,) will be met by the name of the Lord (to them Jehovah, to us Christ and the Father in Him). And when cast upon our thoughts, these thoughts are filled with their names and all is peace, and the purpose of the heart in obedience and communion is settled and strengthened. And this is the fruit of obedience, for holiness and communion—the sense of God's presence—are the fruit of obedience. So Rom. 6:22, “Ye had your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.” The obedience here has the sense of diligent observation of God's precepts, a thing not to be forgotten. (Ver. 49-56.)

In this part (ver. 57-64) we have more the affections connected with the word written in the heart: “Thou art my portion, O Lord.” The heart has Himself as its source of joy and blessing. This connects itself necessarily with purpose of heart towards God: “I have said.' It is impossible to look to the Lord as one's portion without thus purposing to do His will, for that would be not owning Him. This, too, necessarily involves the desire of His favor since He is God. Still the word here has its place, which has awakened this desire and confidence, both as assuring of the mercy and the revelation of the principles on which this favor and mercy are shown. I see the same desire, not

mere obedience though resulting in it, but the meditation of the heart: “I thought on my ways” —the heart's inward exercises, a needful and important matter for us— “and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.” We may obey instinctively, carelessly almost, with right intention, but showing that the heart is not with God, not exercised, not anxious as to pleasing Him, and in which, though the path be not evil, the heart may be in a very poor state. But the saint rightly with God will review the purpose of his ways, the direction of them, how far they are according to the measure of the purpose which the light given to us leads to, and if the purpose be adequate, how far the filling up in practice be true to it and earnestly pursued, true to the character of that purpose. For we may be externally blameless, in appearance even amiable, and unfaithful to the calling of God. Here, of course, we have to turn to God's testimonies which are able to make the man of God perfect, “throughly furnished unto all good works.” We see how having the Lord for our portion is the very spring of all this. Thus we should have a heart which thinks on our ways. But this gives diligence when the heart is right. It does not confer then with flesh and blood, having only God's favor in view and purpose of heart: “I made haste, and delayed not, to keep thy commandments.” How characteristic and all-important this is I need not say. It is the essential first-fruits and spring of a life true to God, as we see in the blessed Apostle Paul. Suffering may be found in this path, opposition of the haters of the Lord, the instruments of Satan, but the inward life remains steady and rightly directed—does not swerve in its judgment of its path: “I have not forgotten thy law.” We may be occupied with opposition and evil, so as to have the state of our mind formed by it, though opposed to the wicked. It is but meeting flesh by flesh. He who looks to the Lord has the character of his path in the scene of wickedness formed by the unforgotten word, and this leads to see God as the dealer with these things. It looks for the perfectness of God's dealings with evil. This, is a comfort, for an upright mind would often rise up in indignation against public evil; but the wrath of man does not work the righteousness of God. It is hard often for an active energetic mind to take the lowly place, and not bring down fire from heaven, or will to smite with the sword, when Christ and His truth are insulted and annoyed; but in looking above we have songs in the night. The heart, in singleness of eye, led of God in His ways, has springs of joy which wake it up in the time of evil, and when it is alone with God. Sorrow may be around, but joy with Him. It arises. There is a chord of heart to praise. It is not only comforted in the sorrow, but freed from the bond of evil, active in praising Him whom it knows and who is its portion. For judgment and deliverance will come according to the word, and the heart gets up to God as to it now. But though we are and must be alone in faith, not in fellowship, when the Lord is our portion, we are a companion of thorn that fear Him and walk in His ways. And here the heart is able to turn round and, when all the evil had pressed upon it, yet see mercy. And so it is: evil may rise up like a flood, but the Lord is always above it; and when the heart by faith realizes that, and the will is bowed as to it all, if it is then comforted by the thought of God's judgments, it finds the constant exposition of His mercy now, and seeks in peace to be led in His ways. This is an interesting part of the soul's experience under the influence of the word of God. (Ver. 57-64.)

We have now the sense of blessings from God, and the heart turned to Him as its portion: this with the consciousness, the will being broken, of being His servant. Still in unerring goodness the word, the great subject of this psalm, has its place. The word guides Jehovah in His goodness, as it assures us of that goodness, revealing Him and His ways to us, as it guides us in our path. This is very precious, because it teaches how to reckon on it, and that we can. And here he had found it by experience; he had been afflicted, and he can now account for it; but as His word, so Jehovah's

ways had been. So even, (and it is most precious,) we can reckon on it at all times. We may have more, but this we have. Now he looks for discernment as taught of God, divinely-given judgment and knowledge; for be had put the seal to God's commandments, for believing here is putting the amen of His heart. Herein he can confidently look to be guided—so we; and it gives confidence to the heart, so as to look for it. His will had been broken. Affliction had been there; before will had its way, forgetting God and going its own way. Affliction is understood now, and obedience wrought. How graciously God follows though righteously as to government and necessarily so in general! For sometimes He breaks the heart through favor as He knows how, when we have wandered away from Him. Hence God is known in goodness in the subdued heart: “Thou art good and doest good.” The desire of the heart is after God's ways.

Now “teach me thy statutes;” that is, the goodness the heart seeks. This subdual of will and setting the heart right is beautiful to see. The pride of ungodly adversaries is before him, saying evil of him in untruth: it is natural if he has left their ways and his own pride of will, but experience has given purpose of heart. It was enough to have gone astray; he clings to that with purpose which he has now got; and the moral difference is great. Filled with will and self on one side, perhaps success; delight in Jehovah's law on the other: the law of Him whose we are—Jesus Christ's will in all things. But not only was there breaking of will and return; there is positive progress, through infinite grace, in this experience. The breaking of will brings the elements of the heart directly into contact with the word. Self is judged in the forms it takes within in the heart—what flesh is in its ways, however deceitful. Thus the heart gets to learn, freed from self, and the light of the word breaking in on the heart and exercised by it, thus rendered cognizant of its import and power; for (though, yea, and because, of God) it is directed to and adapted to the heart of man: only till the will is broken and conscience awakes, it does not reach it intelligently. See the parable of the sower and John 4. But then the law of God's mouth is precious above all, the expression of His own perfect mind and will, and His will about us. We live by it, but we live on it too, and with delight, as from Him and perfect and for us.

# Practical Reflections on the Psalms: Psalm 119: 73-120

(Psa. 119:73-120.)

The soul looks now to God as dependent for man's very being on God, so that He should surely direct and guide it, as Peter wrote, “Committing the keeping of our souls to him in well doing as unto a faithful Creator.” The heart alone, which knows Him in grace, can do this. Otherwise we seek our own will in resistance to Him. But once He is known, He is known in all that He is according to the truth of His nature in grace. This enlarges our knowledge of God and applies it to everything. It warrants thus the desire founded on it. Here it is applied to the teaching of the word, because the soul is walking and to walk in the old creation. Still we can, as down here now, look to the truth of God's nature, when, as I said, He is known, and look to Him thus because thus our dependence on Him, in the fullest and most absolute sense, is expressed, as well as the desire of the renewed heart. I only exist by thy work: make me then walk as disposed in heart and guided by thee. He who made can give understanding. But there was a common bond in thus looking to God—the same disposition of heart which delighted in His being owned and honored, and was kind to those who did, in the midst of an evil world. They were companions, as Malachi speaks: “They that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and as we see so beautifully in the lovely picture of the hidden ones in the beginning of Luke. There is another trait of this divine work in the soul. God being really known in the soul, it rises up to the justification of Him in His ways, however painful. Thus the heart knows in a double way that His judgments are right. They are His and we know what He is. He cannot but do rightly, and more, rightly towards us. He is faithful to us in goodness; but then, secondly, we see the rightness of it morally. God ought not to allow evil—above all, not in His people. For their good He could not. Right and wrong are known and judged, and it is God's care over His people which makes Him follow them in their ways.

But the feeling that the chastening comes from God, though it gives submission, gives the desire of His favor, when the submission is complete. Still one desires relief; but a subdued heart, while naturally desiring relief, yet seeks divine favor in it, and comfort from God, not in self-will. “Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort.” “God who comforteth,” says the apostle, “them that are cast down;” and this depends on God's faithful word. On that goods ness he counts and looks for it, and this is right.

Mere looking for relief is self-will and may be the means, if we had it, of more sorrow; but a subdued and broken will under chastisement is all right in desiring mercy. It knows this character in God and desires that it may be exercised, if possible; and it can plead its integrity in this case, for the desire is right when submission is complete, that goodness is felt to be in God. So here, “For thy law is my delight;” and judgment is the portion of the proud. There is the sense that the proud will is the subject of judgment. In the time of grace the Christian desires that will may be changed. Yet he knows faith is not of all. Here the desire that they should be ashamed is according to the righteous character of God. The faithful one keeps himself apart and meditates in God's revealed will. But there is the desire, not only of the favor of God, but that those who fear

God should turn to the afflicted one. There is something special in these. It is not that he seeks them, though this be right. There is energy of affiance in God, and he seeks Him only, nor leans on another, but delights in their association with him. It is not that he was not a companion of those that feared God's name, but here he seeks his comforts from God; and as Job's acquaintance came to him again when the testimony of God was with him, so it is here. Only whatever the comforts of God, his desire is to be maintained in integrity. There is no thought of blessing out of the way of God's word. So shall the servant of God not be ashamed (ver. 73-80).

Ver. 81-88 goes farther. The pressure of the power of evil is greater and the cry more earnest, but the word is fully trusted. This blessed revelation of God Himself, of His will and favor, that in which He cannot lie, maintains the heart through all. How precious is it—the fact of having a revelation of Himself as sure as Himself! With this two grounds of appeal—the extremity of distress. He is dried up like a bottle in the smoke; but he dare not forget God's statutes. But a poor, short-lived creature, it was time for God to lay to his hand, if he was to taste of mercy. And the sorrow he was suffering was both the pride of man and was not according to the word which God made good and owned. Yet that word was, all of it, faithful and the persecution wrongful. It had gone very far. He was almost consumed in the land, the very place of promise and God's power; but he forsook not God's precepts. Mercy, too, is looked for as life-giving to himself. It is not only comfort from without, but the restoration of the soul itself, and so is it kept firmly, and with good courage, and confidence, the testimonies of God's mouth. Thus sorrow itself and great pressure, where there is integrity, become a plea with God.

Another aspect of the word is now before the soul—before God in heaven itself. There it is settled forever. There where He is, it remains in its own character of God's settled and expressed purpose. But God has acted out of heaven, though. His purpose be settled in it. His faithfulness, His abiding by what He is and has said, continues through the changing generations of men. Hence when we have His word, we can reckon upon it as sure as what is in heaven, and changes not as God Himself. He established the earth and it abides. All continues as God orders it; for—and it is another important truth—all that does exist is the servant of God. If even He has given them fixed laws, why do they abide in them? Because they depend on Him. They are His servants. All are His servants; but then the soul has its strength in this word. Here is a moral, willing obedience in a renewed heart, and when circumstances were all adverse, it were hard to hold good unless the moral side of the law had its power. God seemed out of the circumstances, but the inward delight in the law of God kept it fast. We have, I think, something more, though this be interesting as a testimony to a renewed heart and true to us. We glory in tribulation, knowing its working in us, having the love of God shed abroad in our hearts, as it is witnessed in the gift of the Son, by the Holy Ghost given to us. “All things work together for good to them that love Him.” How truly Christ held to God's will, in the highest sense, against all adverse circumstances—even to wrath. This power of the word in sustaining the heart, in sorrow, in its inward quickening and restoring power in the new man, gives purpose of heart in the consciousness of its divine preciousness. And this leads up to God in the consciousness that we are His. I do not say it creates the thought, but it leads the heart to the consciousness of it; and hence to look to Him who is faithful to save and deliver, and that, as ever here, in the consciousness of integrity. “I have sought thy precepts;” and this must be so. Want of it enfeebles all confidence, though God may have mercy. One sees how constantly the soul is seen in the presence of oppressing enemies; for

the remnant will be so in the last days. In one sense we always are, but it applies often in evil days. “The wicked have waited for me to destroy me.” But the soul waits in peace, occupied with God's testimonies. And this does give peace and enables the soul to leave all to God. Another pressure of the soul is universal failure. Not that there is no integrity; but the heart would be disposed to say so under the pressure of it. But there is no fulfilling, completing—such is the force of the word—the will of God even in those who undertake to walk in it. But if the heart turn to the word, it has quite another effect. This very failure, though never justified, leads to see how perfect, how complete, and wide God's commandment is—how it reaches to everything in which man can be engaged—everything in the relation of the creature to God—all moral relations (ver. 89-96).

Ver. 97-104 is the affection and value he has for the law, its known experienced value. He loves God's law in itself. It is of God to him, the revelation of His will. It is his meditation all the day. It is not for the fruit he got from it, nor the wisdom it gave him towards others; he loved it for itself. This characterizes the new man. But its effect when loved for its own sake was to make him wiser than his enemies, however subtle and cunning they may be; there is a path which the vulture's eye has not known— “simple concerning evil, and wise unto that which is good,” which outreaches and baffles the adversaries of God and the godly man. They can form no estimate of the principles of those who fear God. But this supposes constancy and consistency in them. “They are ever with me.” It is divine wisdom, and immediately so that it gives a discernment, because it acts on the soul itself and forms it, and is perfect in every respect which no human teaching however godly can. This may be very useful as drawn from and leading to the word; but even in the case of the highest gift nothing gained by it is in the faith of the soul with God, until it is learned there; it may be pointed out, interest the heart and mind; but to possess it, it must be learned with God. “They shall be all taught of God.” Nothing teaches like the word of God, sought out and searched in holy subjection, and received as a new-born babe. We have thus understanding—divine wisdom—as to our mind and path; so it gives more wisdom than human experience, when God's precepts are kept. It becomes a positive motive; it is preferred to every evil way: we leave them all for that one which is God's way, because the heart has learned to delight in that. We see too how directly the soul connects itself with God in grace here, and has the consciousness that it is of God, gives the word authority. “I have not departed from thy judgments, for thou hast taught me.” This has great weight in the soul, when the power of God's word has been realized. What has been taught of man, may be left for man; but what has been taught of God, will never be left for God; and for whom else shall we leave it? It has the bond of faith and authority for the soul. It comes from and leads to Him. The soul returns to the thought of the sweetness of the word to the taste. These divine communications are the delight of the soul. It is not merely duty, though that is owned, but they are sweeter than honey to the mouth. Through God's precepts the heart itself is formed; learns to discern good and evil. It is not merely obedience to a law, but moral discernment grown up in the heart and will. By reason of use, the heart being attached to God's word, the senses are exercised to discern good and evil, and every false way is hated.

It is remarkable to how many things the word applies. In the last section the heart and affections were engaged in it for its own sake, leading to wisdom. Now it is a guide to our path through the world in which we walk, a very different service. It “is a lamp to my feet and a lantern to my path.” This it is. It is the means of a right walk, not merely because it sets the heart right, but as casting light on this world; yet not merely light on this world, such as it is, but on our path through it. So

Christ does not merely detect by practical righteousness, but he that follows Him has the light of life. It shows the path of the law, to us of divine life, through the world. But withal it never loses the character of obedience. Here, of course, in Jewish form: “I have sworn and will perform it: I will keep thy righteous judgments.” Yet here, I think, with a decided moral estimate of their character in contrast with man and the world. It is not testimonies here, that is for oneself; righteous judgments are the contrast of God's ways and man's ways. He then turns to his trials through which this path must pass. Affliction is here seen not as coming from the hand of God, but as affliction. The former he had to learn and did learn, his will being bound (see ver. 67, 71, 75). So it was the wasting of human strength (ver. 81, 83). Here it is viewed as affliction on the path which was lighted up for him by the word; and he looks for strength and revival through the word from God in his soul in that path. But the desire of the heart is not here deliverance, sweet as it may be, but that, in turning to God in this path of righteousness, the free-will offerings of his mouth may be accepted. He can bring, as kept there, and God's thoughts in him, free praises to God: that was not interrupted through affliction. He was brought low—had been astray, but walking now in rectitude of heart, desired that these outgoings of his heart, fruit of the word's power, might be accepted. This is all right. It is not the joy of present salvation. There is all through the consciousness of having been astray; only the heart is set right. The word has power over his ways; he feels it as a light in these be has entered on; and, though in a certain sense under the fruit of his old ways, his heart set right, can go forth in praise; can it be accepted? Such is his desire, and surely it would be. But the lowliness of the desire is right, as the desire itself is the fruit of grace. It is not the simple-hearted praise of one in known relationship when it flows forth unhesitatingly as the natural and necessary fruit of blessing. As he praises, so he looks to be taught in God's ways, in contrast with evil. Purpose of heart then characterizes his path. His state of affliction and even danger was great, his soul was continually in his hand; but this did not alter his purpose, he does not forget God's law. He was not so absorbedly in the danger as to put this out of his mind. This is a blessed witness of the power of the link with God which grace gives, and how what is known of God, where faith is in exercise, is paramount to the strongest effects of circumstances and the power which Satan can exercise! What God gives to the soul is kept in remembrance in spite of it. Craft and subtle wiles were in his path; and to an upright mind this is trying and painful, but his feet were steadfast in the way. They were set in that way to dishearten in it, but the word had its own power within; and the full secret of this was, he had taken God's testimonies as his portion forever. It was not present delight which may influence the mind and be lost as in a moment; it was a divinely-given estimate of the good and divine truth that was in them. Hence, when really held by grace, it abides, and is not affected by circumstances. The terrors of the enemy and his wiles make the soul cling more closely to what is of God and truth from Him. They have been and are themselves the rejoicing of the heart; only we say more— “nothing shall separate from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Hence obedience was the purpose of the heart, in its continual practice or as a perpetual bond. So indeed with us. Still we say rather, “Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.” Yet even that leads to equally perpetual obedience as our very element and state as men (ver. 105-112).

This section is simple in its character. The soul states its. own condition, but then looks out to see God's intervention according to the word, hoping in that, but withal apprehends God's judgment on the disobedient. “I hate vain thoughts, but thy law do I love” —thoughts, I suppose, of man's understanding and reasoning, but God's word he loved. The soul thus turned to God from man's

reasonings, God, and God only, is his hiding-place and shield; he hopes in His word. So in turning to men he refuses evildoers, his mind is made up, he looks to be upholden to the end, and not disappointed in this hope founded on the word. But this desire is more precise; that is, he looks to the Lord to hold him up in the way, and be will be safe. He needs not only to be guarded, but kept morally upright—God's strength and grace to sustain him: otherwise the enemy would have the advantage over him; but thus kept be would constantly heed God's commandments. But he sees God's judgments on those that went away from them. That by which they sought to beguile men turned out to be emptiness and vanity. Deceit is, as regards men, falsehood—what was vain and false in itself. God rejected them and treated them as naught—as dross. This encouraged the heart in God's testimonies, whose way the heart had kept, in spite of the wicked who puffed at them. But there was fear, and just fear, in the prospect of these judgments. We indeed shall be above them, taken out of the hour of temptation which shall come on all the earth, but encouraged by the word and even by the judgment in looking up to Min from whom it came. And such is ever the case in this psalm. Nothing can be more natural nor more true than this righteous fear. The expression of the apostle, (how perfect is Scripture ever!) in view of deeper judgments, if less outwardly terrible, shows that while he would not directly be in it at all, he was not unconscious of it. “Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.” It only awoke love (for he would not come into judgment), but he knew its solemnity and terror. It acted in sanctifying power, manifesting him as a present thing to God, but where one passed through it, though not reached by it, fear was right. So “Noah, being warned of God, moved with fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his house” (ver. 113-120).

# Practical Reflections on the Psalms: Psalms 119:121-176

(Psa. 119:121-176.)

Ver. 121-128. There are three points in this section. He is fully in the presence of the power of evil, his regard is to Jehovah Himself; the energy of evil in its moral character only attaches him increasedly to God's word and testimonies. This is the effect of nearness to God, because His presence keeps the heart free and confident, and maintains the sense of value for what is in the word. There is, I think, progress here. In 82, it is, “when wilt thou comfort me.” This is not so here, though Jehovah's mercy is earnestly sought. He appeals on the ground of righteousness to God's protection, but, with this, if waiting in anxious desire for deliverance, yet for the word of God's righteousness, more, I think, than faithfulness to promised deliverance, as 124 shows. When delivered, his heart would be set free in obedience. But he looked for more than deliverance, or measuring this by the evil he was under. His heart had got to God, and he looked to be dealt with according to His mercy. This is progress too, and, I think, shows consciousness of integrity on which God has set His seal in the heart. When under the sorrows of God's chastening hand, we look for mercy, for deliverance: grace and caring for His favor leads us to it. But it is left to Him, as wholly undeserved; the pressure of the power of evil is felt as deserved, and deliverance from it is mercy enough; but when this has wrought its effect, when the heart has been purified to think more of God, and His holiness and will, and less of the sorrow and evil from without, so that it springs up from under it, so to speak—when the heart is morally restored, (and God's place in it in contrast with the sorrow is just the test of it,) it measures what it seeks for by God, into whose knowledge, revealed within, it has, so to speak, got back. Hence, in what follows, we see the fruit of this reconciliation with, or restoration to, God. The soul has got into the place of uprightness, and it says, “I am thy servant.” In such a shape we have not had this vet. Holy desires, confidence, true confession we have had—the general expression, “Thou hast dealt well with thy servant.” But this is another thing. He presents himself to God directly as being in this relationship, and place; “I am thy servant.” It is perfect submission, but one who holds the place, God owning him in it, and he knowing that He does. This is saying a great deal. What a ground to ask from God, understanding that we may serve Him! For what a thing it is to serve God rightly such as we are! No doubt it is a great encouragement being able to say “I am thy servant:” so the parable of the talents, where confidence in Him, who had enabled them to serve, was the spring of service. But there all was happy and right. Here the soul was only getting back to say “I am thy servant” after long chastening for wanderings. Verse 126 shows the same growing confidence and taking the blessed title of one free with God. God's law is precious to Himself; not a tittle can pass from it till all be fulfilled. And when the believer can look out of himself, it is a plea with God. It is time for Thee: “they have made void thy law. What a principle it is that God's authority must be maintained, so that the extreme of evil gives the assurance of deliverance. But it makes God's law exceeding precious. The love to the law (and here this is the egression of God's will) grows with the growth of the power of evil. We feel more how precious it is, how sure it is, how it comes from God; and what makes His intervention precious as against the power of evil, makes His word precious against the

development of evil itself. There is a double feeling as to this. The commandments of God are loved above all that could be precious to man. There is decision of moral judgment. All God's precepts are taken as absolutely and the whole of what is right, and every way of vain falsehood is hated. The decision of good and evil is absolutely by the word.

Ver. 129-136. The soul has now got into a place where it not only obeys, and tastes the goodness of the law, but estimates its value in itself. There is intelligence. “Thy testimonies are wonderful: therefore does my soul keep them.” God's word getting into the heart gives light: even to the simple they give understanding. Thus they become to the heart the subject of earnest desire; the soul is engaged with the excellency of them. It was a thirst produced by them; not a filling of the heart, though a desire formed by them. There may be intelligence, obedience as regards the path we walk in on the way, and hunger and thirst after righteousness, a moral forming and tilling the desire, but the satisfying it will be only when the promises are fulfilled and God takes His place, of whose mind His testimonies speak. So with us, though in a higher way; for it is Christ, and a heavenly cry Himself. Hence the cry is for this mercy ordering his steps, delivering from oppression; and one sees he is in the midst of evil—only looks for God's face to shine upon him, and to be taught. He has deep grief, because the law is not kept; but this seems to flow more here from the sense of the excellency of the law, than from love to the persons who failed.

Ver. 137-144. But the righteousness of God's law, and the key it gives to God's ways, leads to the recognition of what Jehovah is who gave it. “Righteous art thou, O Lord, and upright are thy judgments.” That is the way Jehovah deals with a case, or the moral decision which He utters as to it. His testimonies He had commanded according to righteousness and faithfulness. This characterized them. The contempt of Jehovah's words had roused his zeal so as to consume him; he became as an earnest adversary, in collision with evil yet in power, as Christ in the temple. But whatever the evil around, there is in one rest and comfort for the heart when the word of God is known and loved. “Thy word is very pure,” try it ever so, it is only more proved to be purity itself; the heart loves it as its resting place and joy. And it gives greatness and courage to the heart. One may be small and despised, yet one has the courage to keep God's precepts in spite of the power of the world or its scorn, for they are God's words—what God is as judging evil and good; He is everlasting. His righteousness is everlasting, and His law truth. It is not here, surely, the truth that came along with grace by Jesus Christ; but in the presence of all else on the earth, which is a lie, that is truth, true religion, God's mind about everything in contrast with man's thoughts and all he sets up to be; and God will make His judgment therein revealed, good forever. (Comp. Isa. 42:3.) It is not the absolute revelation of God as He is; that is in Christ. But it is the revelation of God's judgment as to man as to good and evil, and that will be made good forever. Executed judgment will be verified. Those that have sinned against the law will be judged by the law; just as those that heard Christ's word will be judged by it. The tribulation of the power of evil will take hold of the remnant, but there will be the comfort of the commandments being their delight in the inner man. So we in all sorrow, in the evil day in a yet higher way. And now he arrives at the point we have touched upon. “The righteousness of Jehovah's testimonies is everlasting.” They come from God, His will and judgment concerning man; and that He will make good forever. What he has to look for is understanding; then he will live, guided in the path where life is found, found even when the wicked are cut off: yea, never so found here below as then. This is true of government as to us, yea, even of Christ, ("as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in His love"). As to life,

it was in Him, and in our case we have it by Him: so all that live; but it was only brought to light by the gospel. What was presented to them as the governmental way of life, and will be so literally at the end, is the governmental way of blessing for us here below.

Ver. 145-152. Here the soul expresses, and expresses to God, the sense of its dependence. This is an important point. We are dependent, know ourselves to be dependent, and remain quiescently so. This shows want of interest in that for which we are dependent, and want of reckoning on God's faithful love. If we did, we should cry. “If thou knewest and who it is thou wouldest have asked, and he would have given “Here he cries with his whole heart, and declares his purpose of obedience to Jehovah's enactments. Then he looks for deliverance that, having, he may keep, them, no hindrance and his heart so disposed. There was diligence in the cry too, for the word, which led his heart, was trusted, but it was not only for the cry to be delivered he was diligent, but to meditate in Jehovah's word itself. Deliverance, no doubt, was sought, but the word itself is loved. All this goes together necessarily in the soul. Deliverance is to be with God, freed from transgressors of His law, from rebellious oppressors. The meditation of the law is to be with God, and the word which makes us hope is the testimonies we delight in. Still he looked, as we shall in true-heartedness, in distress, (so did Christ Himself) to be heard, and according to the kindness of Jehovah, but with the desire that the work of power might be wrought in him, to be quickened, receive life according to the mind of God, that is, which had its nature and desires according to God's judgment. He does not speak as dead, but of moral quickening. We know it must be a new life. The sense of the present power of evil was upon his soul. Jehovah only was his refuge he must draw near to. This is beautiful, the true only resource which gives a perfect principle. “I waited patiently for the Lord” —perfect submission to His will; no deliverance sought until it was so, till His will brought it; but faith knew Jehovah was near and the path plain. All His commandments were the one true path of security and of God. Jehovah's testimonies were founded forever. They could not change; they will be made good. Only God must come in, and that was his cry and demand here. These verses are a cry for deliverance, but it must be, if true and of God, according to His word and making good forever its truth, in its moral testimonies, and as the foundation of hope.

Ver. 153-160. The soul of him who opens out his heart to God is much more in presence of the persecutors and enemies, God's deliverance and of the need of help, than in the beginning. There what the law was for the heart was more in view. So it ever is. With Christ the word of blessing begins; at the end he is in presence of the enemies and looks for deliverance. So Paul: he begins with carrying out of the blessing; at the close he has to do with persecution and desertion too. So ever, when good is persevered in, because the testimony of God in every shape and faithfulness draws out opposition, and the place of the word in the world, not in the heart, is more distinctly, felt. Still there is no uncertainty of heart. Salvation is needed, i.e., present deliverance, but it is far from the wicked. But where righteousness of heart and way is, the affliction is a ground of pleading with God. But, with deliverance, quickening also is sought, the practical power of life according to the word and revealed judgments of God. Righteousness is sought in liberty and power when righteousness is loved in the heart. External security in the word is sought, but internal power too. In the thought of Jehovah's tender mercies quickening is sought according to God's judgments. The felt goodness of God leads always to the desire of His will. When the purity and blessedness of His word is thought of with delight, His loving-kindness is thought of as that in which He should

quicken us. His word is so precious, we look to grace to form us freely into it. Truth and perpetuity characterize the word. I question whether “from the beginning” is the sense, and if not rather the sense the whole contents, but cannot now say.

Ver. 161-168. The soul goes something further in this portion. The heart stands in awe of God's word—a godly feeling. It comes with God's authority; yet he rejoices in it as one that has found great spoil. This, i.e., the connection of these two, characterizes the true, full apprehension of the word. It is God's—a most solemn thing; the soul trembles, as it is said, “at thy word.” It comes with divine and absolute authority; but as it is God's word, and we have a new nature, and are taught of God, we delight in an unspeakable way in that which is of and reveals Him. Nor is there any indifference as to good and evil, the law being taken as the truth or true measure of what is right. He hates and loves—hates lying and loves the law; not merely what is right, but God's authoritative expression of it. And all this begets praise, because the heart rises up to the source of these things. It is not merely that we have what is good; we have it. from God. He praises Him in the relationship he was in with Him. These are Jehovah's ways with His people. But the expressed will of God has another power when really received: the heart is in peace. It is a known perfect communication from God with which the heart is satisfied, and, if it trusts in God, circumstances cannot stumble the heart then, because it has and enjoys the mind of God which no circumstances can affect. There is no stumbling. I have what is perfect from God, know it to be so, and enjoy it in a new nature. That is affected by nothing without.

Another element of a godly walk besides obedience is found here. “All my ways are before thee,” but this leads naturally to obedience: but the heart and conscience is all before God. It is a most important principle. So Paul, “We are made manifest to God;” only this goes further. He looked at complete, final judgment of men, and for that knew the righteousness of God. And it was not merely his ways before God as to his earthly government. He himself was manifested, as men would be manifested, before the judgment-seat of Christ, who judges as Son of man—perfect, every secret emotion, the heart itself brought out.

Ver. 169-176. When men have gone astray, cries and supplications go first, praises and testimony after. Still the cry and supplication is a godly one, though it arise from need. He seeks understanding, intelligence, not exactly of the word, but according to it. It is that wisdom in discernment which those taught in God's word have. They see clear in what is before them. No doubt it is God's mind and will they discern; but they discern in circumstances. They walk not as fools, but as wise. The word has formed their judgment. Then the soul looks to be heard and delivered. Still its delight is in God's revealed will. It will praise when really taught them of God—for thankfulness comes first—for it is our own portion first of all; and from God; then we have liberty to speak of it to others. This is an important principle also: no testimony, no preaching, no teaching, even if the matter of it be all right, is right teaching, when the soul is not filled for itself first from God. We must drink for ourselves that rivers may flow, Indeed all else dries up the soul. “That thy profiting may appear,” says the apostle. It is only fresh, good, and powerful, when it is the soul's own portion first with God. The help of God's hand, the longing for His salvation, is not merely that we may be delivered. That may be sought, if only it be sought, in some bye way, not God's way. But when the heart is in God's precepts, only God's salvation is sought. So Christ: “I waited patiently for the Lord.” There was submission to God's will. God could not come in till His will was done, so that His glory should be made good in coming in—till His counsels were fulfilled and

perfect judgment wrought by His coming in. And this the soul had learned to desire, though often out of sorrow. There was Christ's perfectness in this respect—there our path in submissive uprightness. Then the soul praises God, God Himself in it, and God's own judgments help us. This is a principle of great perfectness and great blessing. Yet here, though brought to this, yea because brought to this, the people then—some when occasion arises—acknowledge that they had gone astray (for that is their case and is the condition of the whole Psalm, the law being now written, in desire at least, in their hearts,) and gone astray like a sheep wholly lost. The humbled and repentant remnant, (and, I repeat, we, when we have wandered from God,) look for God's seeking them, for they were upright in heart, mindful of His commandments. This gives the key to the whole Psalm—Israel gone astray, the desire and love of God's law in their hearts, but their circumstances and condition not yet set right by Jehovah's deliverance, but their hearts set right that He may come in His word, and His deliverance being their desire, and His word the ground of their hope. In the restoring of any soul we have an analogous process, specially when under chastisement. It does not seek comfort without restoration, where uprightness of heart is. Only if we know the Lord, we stand in Him as our righteousness. This they could not speak of as established or their hearts in it. They were only looking for it when delivered. It had been prophesied of: Jehovah would be their righteousness. Gracious and true as this is, our place is infinitely higher.

I have thus closed this running notice of Psa. 119, of which I feel the poverty. But I feel every day more, that, true and applicable as this may all be to the government of our hearts, we are far away from Christian ground here. Nothing makes it more sensible than the Psalms. Neither the Father, nor divine righteousness, is known in them, nor that whole class of feelings, blessed and holy as those feelings are, which flow from them. May we remember we are Christians!

Chapter 198

# Practical Reflections on the Psalms: Psalms 120-131

(Psa. 120-131)

Psa. 120 These psalms of degrees all treat the circumstances of the restored but undelivered remnant; our part now is to inquire into their moral bearing. The first psalm declares their state and resource. “In my distress I cried unto Jehovah, and he heard me.” The character of evil is spoken of: deceit and hostile power. It was grief of heart to have constantly to say to this. But such was his condition. He was dwelling in the midst of evil. It was his sorrow, and distress to him. He sought peace: they were for war. It is the spirit and character of the Christian in the midst of the power of evil, which, when called out by the presence of good, shows itself thus. Judgment, however, would come on the false tongue. It is the simple expression of the grief of a soul, peace-loving and peaceable, having to do with the wicked deceit of man. The resource is calling on the Lord, who hears.

Psa. 121 Where should the soul look? To the hills? (Comp. Jer. 3:23.) Help was to be found in the Lord. I suppose it is: shall I look to the hills? My help is in Jehovah, and Jehovah would surely keep me. He slumbers not, nor sleeps. The point is, Direct me away from all false and vain hopes, and set forth the one true object and resource, surely to be reckoned upon, and reckoned upon to keep all evil away. Only we must now note that the liters' application of this is not now just. Christ has been reckoned among transgressors; and we have to go on not looking for absolute deliverance: yet we are to be assured that the hairs of our head are numbered God withdraws not His eyes from the righteous now; but we do not look in result to be kept for earth, as the Jew rightly will in the path of faithfulness. Yet our Father does watch over us with unceasing vigilance. We may be at peace under the shadow of His wings. Our instruction is, in the midst of every evil, to look only to the Lord.

Psa. 122. The Lord's house, i.e., His presence and worship in the place of His rest, is our desire (for us, heaven). But love to that place of God's dwelling is accompanied by the sense that all this is united in blessing. It is loved, not only for the Lord's own sake, the center of all, but for all the saints' sake, for our brethren's and companions' sake. This cannot be the first thing, but it is the first circle round the true center—love to all saints. Heaven is loved, but it is loved for the sake of the dwelling-place of Him with whom we have to do—our Father's house. If heaven is dear to me, that is what especially makes it so. We desire even the Church's good now for the same reason. We do take our place in heavenly places. They are bright and holy: we rejoice in it. But the house of God is the center there for our hearts.

Psa. 23 The heart waits on God for deliverance. So we. There is pressure on the heart by the presence of the power of evil. We wait continually upon God for the coming of the blessed Lord to remove it all. The contempt of the proud will cease. All will be wholly changed to the soul's rest.

Psa. 124 God alone keeps His people. The great point all through here is to look to Him alone. And it is our part along our path, and specially in these last days. All other refuges will give in

something or another. A wrong direction to the soul will lead it into a false path, makes its state less holy in purpose, less pure and wise in walk. God can make use of everything, because His motive to bless us is always in Himself, and He disposes of everything. Whereas we are formed in heart by the objects we have, and must adapt ourselves to what we lean on.

But then (Psa. 125) trusting in the Lord is perfectly sure. A divine and almighty hand secures us. We know from many passages, the Lord may see good to let us suffer, but not a hair of our head shall perish. When His time is come, the rod of the wicked shall not be on the lot of the righteous. He may let us suffer for our God, or for His name's sake; but even so it is not according to the will and power of the wicked, but according to His own. Only this supposes one walking in His ways.

Psalm card. We find here a partial restoration, leading to look for full blessing. God may have delivered the soul, too, from the alienation and sorrow of its evil days, when it has gone wrong, backslidden, without its being yet fully restored. God comes in in goodness on repentance, encourages us, brings blessings we never could have hoped for, re-establishes the soul in the place of blessing, makes His favor so far manifest, so that we feel He is for us with great joy. Yet it is not the peaceful flow of favor in communion with Him, as if there was nothing but favor naturally enjoyed in the place we are in. Just as to Jacob at Peniel, God blessed him, but would not reveal His name—blessed, but did not reveal Himself. The soul gets the blessing from God, finds so far His favor; but it is not in communion, nor does it receive the communication of what He is, so as to be able, going forth from Him into the world, to be a witness for Him in it. This is our true place. No doubt to be blessed and restored, when we have gone astray, is great mercy; but our place is to be peacefully in communion where God has set us with Himself, and thus the vessels of His revelation of Himself to others. And this, in the Jewish form of it, is what our psalm expresses. But there is another principle also. In a world where the power of evil is, sowing time, in which we meet the evil in possession with the word, is a time of tears. “I have given them Thy word, and the world hath hated them.” (John 17) Christianity was sown in the tears of the Son of God. It is the fruit of the travail of His soul which He will see in that day. So in all service, (and we must make up our minds to it), where there is to be real blessing, there must be the sorrow of the world's opposition, and even in the Church the greater sorrow of trials, of failure and shortcoming where we desire to see Christ fully represented. But, going forth with the precious word, we may reckon on bringing our sheaves back with us.

Psa. 127. This psalm tells us that God alone gives the increase. All labor, all toil is vain; except the Lord Himself and His hand be in it to work and bless; as the people said of Jonathan, he hath wrought with God this day. But thus the diligent efforts of evil-doers result in nothing, and (blessed be His name!) He gives rest and peace to His beloved without all the toil and labor with which the reckless men of this world seek it in vain.

Psa. 128. But if the Lord's blessing alone can keep or give success, they who fear the Lord can count upon it. And this is true. It does not exclude persecution, nor does it exclude discipline and the exercise of faith. But when we walk in the fear of God, we are in the path of peace even here. “Who is he that shall harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?” It does not mean a prosperity which consists in gratifying our lusts, but in the peaceful enjoyment of divine favor here below. But there is one joy above all others, here spoken of as the then fruit of godliness—the seeing the Lord's people, and the Lord's habitation, in prosperity and peace, manifestly blessed of

God. This, as regards this world, is the highest, most constant wish of the heart. Blessing shall come to us out of God's dwelling-place, the place of faith on the earth, before the final temple of glory is built and we see blessing resting on it.

The details are, of course, Jewish, present outward blessings. This is the final blessing promised in the place of distress. And on this faith counts in the evil day and time of distress. Joyful to receive any anticipation of it in the Church of God now, and in this detail it applies now, we know that the peace will be perfect when God shall have accomplished His counsels. We do look for it before, but we are sure of it then, for He wills the blessing of the Church. Zion is the place of faith. It is not the temple on Moriah, but where David placed the ark when he had brought it back. The Lord is owned there. So we; we have the blessing in the seat of grace in power; we shall have perfect rest:

Psa. 129. The soul looks back and sees God's faithful dealings all along the road—a blessed thought! How sweet it is to turn back and see, while we were obliged to walk by faith, and it was as though He beheld not, the eye of the Lord has unceasingly waited on us and ordered all things! It is the effect of integrity to be able to do this. It is true that be who could say, “Few and evil have been the days of the years of the life of my pilgrimage,” could also say, “The angel that redeemed me from all evil.” And it is blessed to see His faithfulness, even when we have failed, when our unrighteousness commends the righteousness of God. Still, it is another thing when in the path of God through trials and difficulties, (perhaps doubts and fears of success as to service and making good what was committed to us), we can trace the good hand of God all through. And here sorrow and trial are looked at, the hostility of God's enemies against God's people. But it was in vain. God, even if He had chastised, had been faithful and now had manifested His righteousness, faithfulness to His own ways and promises, the expectation He had raised, the trust He had called for. He had cut asunder the cords of the wicked. We may expect it. He will chastise if needed, though He does not afflict willingly; but He will make good the expectation of faith, He will deliver and bless; and the expectation of the proud shall be as the grass upon the housetop.

Psa. 130. The last psalm considered the sorrow and suffering of those that are the Lord's, and the pleasure of the wicked in their oppression. This refers to the chastisement and evil to which I have alluded above in commenting on it. The sorrows have their character to the soul, not in the oppression of the wicked, but in the consciousness of sin with God. The oppression is unrighteous, the pleasure of wickedness; but while, when God restores, we can see this, yet restoration is with God and in looking to His mercy, owning—and yet in spite of what we have deserved—and looking, with a heart which has the sense of its sin, to His deliverance. For here it is not forgiveness in the sense of justification, though allied to it, but of government. But it is the question of the Lord's marking iniquity, not of oppression, though that were the outward rod that brought iniquity upon the soul from God's hand. But the Lord is cried to. No turning, to gain release, to the oppressor; that is in character apostasy, and accepting the power of evil and making terms with it. The soul is in the depths, but it refers it in integrity to its sin, cries to the Lord in faith as one who forgives; waits for the Lord to come in when He is pleased, so as that the deliverance is righteous, and His favor too, and His word is trusted in. “Let Israel hope in the Lord,” he concludes, and this glorifies His character as above evil and Himself good; and till deliverance has that character, it is not looked for. With Him is mercy and plenteous redemption; mercy to the faulty soul and plenteous redemption. Thus there is truth in the inward parts, and God's true character and His

active power in complete deliverance are known. How far better than compromise with evil itself!

Psa. 131 gives us another character of the returning soul—the soul right with God. It is not speculative or haughty in mind, does not reason about matters. It walks in meekness as a weaned child and waits for deliverance: it hopes in the Lord. But activity of mind as to what ought to be and managing matters, which are really in God's hand, does not go together with true hoping in Him in lowliness of heart. And this is often a great trial of faith when we see the power of evil.

Chapter 199

# Practical Reflections on the Psalms: Psalms 132-134

(Psa. 132-134)

Psa. 132. This psalm is important as showing the position which all these psalms of degrees occupy. We have, indeed, the house, as in Psa. 122 and 127, the former of which seems to refer to the temple; yet I think hardly there as yet accepted and built of God, as Psa. 127 shows. The remnant were rejoiced at the thought of going to the house and Jerusalem, and we have it clothed with the thoughts of faith. But the Lord had not yet built it. For all the songs of degrees are the expression of the godly ones' thoughts and feelings between their external restoration, when the sour grape is ripening in the flower (Isa. 18), and the full restoration to the Lord's enjoyed blessings, their enemies being cut off by judgment. It is all Isa. 18, but with this we have Zion and David—the interference of power in grace, connecting the hearts of the remnant with Jehovah as a present thing, and giving the present testimony that His mercy endureth forever. For David placed the ark on Mount Zion, and had this song first sung after the ark had been delivered from the Philistines, and brought up from the house of Obed-edom. Israel in responsibility had failed, and God had delivered His strength into captivity, and His glory into the enemies' hand. Now it was brought out, and sovereign grace, for His name's sake, (first by a prophet, and next properly by power in grace, by a king), acted in behalf of Israel, and gave a new link and ground of relationship in the ark on Mount Zion. This was not the temple, the place of settled peace and prosperity; but it was a link with God renewed to faith, David being the center. David's son, as the true Solomon, would give in time the full blessing; for David did not, after all, build the house. So the place of rest here is in the heart and in hope; what we have is the person on whom the blessing is founded. (Compare 2 Sam. 7 and 1 Chron. 17) We have David brought before us as the great dispensational root and character is, or consequently of the blessing, but the house is the subject, a dwelling-place for the mighty one of Jacob.

Hence, also, it is not wilderness blessings. It is not, “Rise up, Jehovah, and let thine enemies be scattered;” and, “Return, O Lord, to the many thousands of Israel.” (Num. 10:3, 6, 6.) It is not “Arise, O Jehovah, into thy rest, thou and the ark of thy strength.” It is Zion which is God's rest forever. This it is He has chosen; there He will make the horn of David to bud. The person of David's Son, royal grace in Zion, is thus what characterizes the blessing. Whatever house is built, David and his trouble is remembered, not Solomon the typical son of David, and his house. In truth, Solomon's faith was personally every way inferior. He went to Gibeon, not to Zion; to the empty tabernacle, not to the ark until afterward. David's heart was on the house. It was all right. But God built his as He replied to him. It is the personal grace of Christ that is the center of all, and the faith that, when the outward blessing was not yet there in peace, firmed the true link with God.

What a blessing for the remnant then, and this is in principle our case now, and especially in these latter days! His tabernacle and His footstool are more than the temple. Hence, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, the tabernacle, never the temple, is taken as the figure and shadow of the blessings of faith, though not so the very image. Still God's rest is desired, i.e., that He should rest, and so we

worship in His house.

Let us see a little in what particulars this is brought out. The answer of God is in everything beyond the desire. There are three requests. The first is that Jehovah should arise into His rest, that Jehovah's priests may be clothed with righteousness. This became them, it was the right desire. The righteous Lord loveth righteousness. His countenance beholds the upright. How often had they been otherwise! The second is, that Jehovah's favor and blessing might be such that the saints might shout for joy. The third is that for David's sake Jehovah should not turn away the face of His anointed. As to David there is the positive promise, and the conditional one. The answer then comes. Zion will be His rest forever, He hath desired and chosen it; her priests will be clothed with salvation, her saints shout aloud for joy. There the horn of David will bud, his crown flourish on him—the true David and David's Son, the Beloved.

And now note the principles. The afflictions of faith are the true path of blessing. A rest for God is the desire of the new nature; for sin, disorder only has disturbed that rest, and note that rest which has its place in His relationship with His creatures, for in Himself He ever rests; but He must rest in holiness and love, in the state of the creatures, with whom He has to do, being according to His mind and love. This the heart desires. It is God's rest, nor can the heart rest till then. But this is according to the way of His presence; in Israel covenant-promise and governmental glory; for us our Father's house, God's rest according to His own nature, holy and without blame before Him in love, and in glory. That it is in the Beloved, the true David, the Anointed, the Christ—this both secures and gives the true character of the blessedness in, with, and like Him. That note, that simplicity of faith, its proper energy, leaning not on the past which is ruined or to be forgotten, but on what is before us as its object and on only dependence, on divine leading as to it—simplicity of faith, wrought as it is by God, leads into the place of God's desire and God's election. David brought the ark to Zion, but Zion God had chosen, had desired for His habitation. This in us is identified with a new creature, being made partakers of the divine nature. In this faith lives, and acts, and judges. It is in the saint a new nature living on Christ, as its object and food. And it learns and knows the place of God's rest herein. For David and Zion are really identified each in its own way with one another. Thus our new nature, God's desire, God's election, God's rest, and Christ Himself all coincide. But the place of Christ's glory, which is God's rest, where He dwells, God owns as His forever. “This is my rest.” And faith looks at all connected with it, priests and saints as God's— “thy priests” and “thy saints.” But then He taking Christ for all, and now the place of His dwelling and rest and habitation, (i. e., for us, the Church which is His habitation, His tabernacle, His city holy Jerusalem)—He having thus so associated Himself with her (comp. Eph. 3:21; and Rev. 21:3) looks at the priests and saints as her priests and her saints, thus specially showing His delight in her, His identification with her, His priests are her priests, His saints her saints, as that to which they belong. Then it is He sets up the glory of David's horn, the glory of the power, a rule of the Beloved; and this (while David is the foundation, His everlasting glory the result), is the subject of the Psalm—Zion—for us, the Church, the heavenly Jerusalem. This is His rest, His dwelling place forever, His desire, what He has chosen. And if He fully glorifies His Anointed, as He will and must do, it is there He will do it. Though His name flourish in Himself (for His person must be the ground and center of glory), yet its place is in the city of grace and glory. Her priests, her saints will have salvation and abundant joy. One cannot say her David or her Christ; that would be out of place. His dignity is our personal glory, but it dwells here as the place with which it is associated,

and all the rest can be called hers. The glory is His, the place of it the chosen city of God—for us, the Church, the heavenly Jerusalem.

There, too, (Psa. 133) blessing and unity are, but here after the analogy of Aaron; the lowest skirt of his garment partakes of the anointing of the head and this one Spirit makes the unity according to which (Eph. 4:8,) they ought to dwell together. The blessing, too, was there. The abundant dew of Hermon, i.e., abundant as on Hermon, fell upon the mountain of Zion. This fellowship was rich in blessing from above, as the desired refreshing of abundant dew fell in the everlasting hills. For in Zion Jehovah had promised the blessing. The anointing of the Lord, the Holy Spirit, and the refreshing of goodness from on high in abundance, shall accompany the unity of Israel in Zion. How far more deeply true was it on the Church, when the anointing of the Holy Spirit and His full ministration of grace by the word revealing heavenly things enriched and gladdened the unity in Christ which that Spirit formed! Alas, where is it now? Yet it is our privilege.

These psalms of degrees close by a summons to bless Jehovah. (Psa. 134) There in the sanctuary they were to bless; on the other hand blessing is pronounced out of Zion upon him who has gone through the sorrows and endured. It is Melchisedec blessings, only in Jehovah's sanctuary, and out of Zion where grace has set power to bless. It is the full crowning expression of the result of these psalms; the points, able to bless Jehovah in His own sanctuary, and the godly man blessed out of long desolate Zion—but where Jehovah now dwells. The city over which Jesus could weep, whose dust Jehovah's servants had remembered, was now the seat of Jehovah's sanctuary, and, what was more, of Jehovah's presence. This will not be fully ours till we are in our Father's house. But then, though praise will surely go up unceasingly, we shall not have need to call on others to bless. We are kings and priests, as indeed we bless now as such in spirit, and as more than that, as dear children, holy and beloved. It is in the holiest of all, where no Jewish priest could enter to bless even in figure, that we stand in reality, and bless Him in whose presence and light we stand there. Night we cannot say then, for “there shall be no night there;” now we praise in Spirit here, saying, “the night is far spent.” And as to our souls, the darkness passes, the true light now shines. But it is in the holiest we bless, in God's own presence, and hence in heaven. We may well say He has set us in a wealthy place. And while on earth it will then be Jehovah the Creator who will bless out of the chosen place of grace in power, He who gives eternal life, and in whose knowledge it is possessed, blesses us as brought home into the possession of it, in the seat of the unclouded knowledge of it, where what He is, as the power and source of it, is fully displayed. To know the Father and Jesus Christ whom He has sent is eternal life. The Father has life in Himself, and, in the Son, man here below was life. He was it with the Father before the world. We have it in Him, and there in that which that life is, and therefore enjoys, as a holy being enjoys holiness, a loving being love, we shall possess the divine fullness in God of that which we delight in. And it is the God of redeeming love, the Father and the Son, not simply the Creator of heaven and earth. Such is our place. We enjoy it now by the Holy Ghost, but it is now but in earthen vessels. Still we are called to be “holy and without blame before Him in love,” and children with the Father, and our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. The accomplishment of promises in grace is much, the enjoyment of communion is more. The Psalms of degrees are the progress of Israel in the land, out of sorrow and through sorrow, to the full blessing in Zion, which forms the crowning result, Jehovah being there.

Chapter 200

# Practical Reflections on the Psalms: Psalms 135-138

(Psa. 135-138)

Psa. 135 gives the more general praise of Israel, not so much priestly praise, but then it consequently brings out the place of the people as such with God. They are in the courts of God, there as His people, praise Him, for He is good, and it is pleasant. We do praise Him as priests in the sanctuary. But we praise Him also as on earth in the sense of His goodness, and praise is pleasant. His name is known; that is, His revelation of Himself, so as to be known to us. But there is more: we sing, as we do all else, as the elect of God, holy and beloved—an immense privilege. It is not only that God is good, what He is in nature; but we are the special objects of His favor and delight. This, when known, is an immense delight. As people of God we know it, and for ourselves as part of it, but, when personally brought home, it is of divine delight to be the peculiar treasure of God, and that not as a national election but according to His own nature, the personal objects of His delight. It is known, it is evident, as of pure grace. It is what gives it its value. Faith recognizes it as true, rests in it. It is a doctrine of Scripture—the faith, but in relationship it is great delight. But we know withal that He is great, and though we know Him as Father, yet we do know Him, realize His presence, as exceeding great, and as supreme above all; and the heart delights in this. Our God is above all. It is more general for us than for all Israel who could speak of other gods, but the absoluteness and supremacy of God for the heart remains true. He is sovereign in His actings everywhere, a comfort when we have to traverse in weakness a world of wickedness. He disposes of everything. He has smitten the power of evil and brought out His people, and brought them into a heavenly inheritance whence the powers of darkness are expelled. This is true for us now, as in Eph. 4 and Col. 2, though not for the possession of the inheritance. And we reckon fully on the final result. And it is looked for presently, though no day or hour be known. This as to Israel is brought out here in a remarkable passage. The original promise in which God appeared to Moses as taking up Israel forever in grace, His name of memorial forever, is cited; and the prophetic declaration in Deut. 32 of what He would do when Israel had wholly utterly failed—judge His people and repent Himself concerning His servants. The idols are naught. It is in the place of royal rest that praise is found, the Jerusalem where Jehovah dwells. And so for us, the Church and even the individual saint knows itself as the heavenly dwelling-place of God, the bride; and now we dwell in Him and He in us, as we know by the Spirit, and collectively too are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit; but it is as a new heavenly thing, as that which is heavenly, as that which remains.

Psa. 136 celebrates a blessed principle in connection with Zion, the place of sovereign grace in power. Our having the place of praise and thanksgiving depends on this, that His mercy endures forever. Ichabod had been written on Israel; the ark where the blood was to be placed on the day of atonement, that Israel might have a place with God, was taken—as far as Israel went, lost. But God's mercy endures forever, and David, so soon as he sets the ark on Zion, establishes this song there, celebrating the alone Jehovah, the creator and wonder-doer of His people. His mercy does endure forever for us. Christ and the Father's love in every way secure our blessing and ourselves

for it. But while glory awaits us, and He will confirm us to the end, we possess that in which He confirms us, even eternal life as His children. The life we have and know it, the inheritance we have nothing of as yet, but are assured of and being kept for it. And in this wilderness we can abundantly say, His mercy endureth forever. But it is only along the road we say it, because we have eternal life. Only if a soul wanders from Him and is restored, it can say with special application, His mercy endures forever.

Psa. 137. There is a double application of this to our souls. Nothing can make us forget the heavenly Jerusalem, the house where God and the Lamb are the temple, and where they dwell. All the glory of the world is nothing compared with that heavenly home. But the Church on earth, which will be it in glory, arrests our hearts; we see it desolate and her walls cast down, her children scattered or in captivity. But the saint's heart is still there. The outward worldly glory of Babylon cannot efface the attachment and love of heart to the Church as God founded it on earth; and even the judgment of those who corrupted it is looked for with joy by the Christian. But of the individuals a Christian could not do that—it would be revenge—but of the whole power of evil.

Psa. 138. But the enduring of God's mercy forever brings out a blessed apprehension in the heart of many other truths, which make God's character known, and His word precious as revealing it and as sure, so that the whole heart praises. And this is a very important element. Not will for some blessing, not even thankfulness for that which we do desire, while the main current of the heart is elsewhere than with God; but such a learning of God as makes the whole heart praise Him, and this is always in circumstances which makes the whole heart want Him (as it will be with Israel in the latter day). This may be learned gradually by emptying of self, or in times of deep trial when help fails, and thus self is broken up within. Hence, too, when God is thus known, He is praised in presence of all the pretentious power of this world, which seemed to make those that leaned upon it happy and enriched. We praise with the whole heart, we praise before the gods, all within; all without has given place to God known and revealed in His word. Lovingkindness and truth are the great traits in which He is known, just as grace (a fuller word) and truth came by Jesus Christ, who is the living Word. There they came, and we know their fullness and perfectness in Him; here they are learned by experience, and it is lovingkindness in nature and circumstances, not infinite and perfect grace in itself. But God had here made good His word. His faithfulness had exalted itself, and taught the saint how right he was in trusting God when all seemed contrary. But this involved His goodness also in caring for us and persevering in His love in spite of failure. His word taught us to trust in Him, was in its nature a call to it, revealed His goodness to sinners to this effect, but called us to wait on Him to this effect, to trust Him though it set us in a lowly place, apparently far off from all our desires and left evil in power to try our faith. So it was with Christ and those who followed Him. But there is another point. The saint led by this word, and guided in his thoughts by it, cried and was answered; and, before the public answer came forth by power, God strengthened with strength in his soul. How true this is of Christ even, and of the Christian! But this gives the assurance that all shall have to own the power which we have trusted in the time of darkness. We have had God's mind, followed Jesus, done God's will (by power) before power came in to deliver and make that will good. But every knee shall bow to Him to whom our knees have gladly bowed. But they shall praise and bless His name (for those are looked at here) who own that power truly in that day. Thus the word revealed God as the object of trust, and there His faithfulness came to make good all that He had led the heart to trust in. The word gave

both—revealed God and gave that to hope in which it was fulfilled. This brought out another character of goodness. The Lord, high as He was, had respect to the lowly. He is too high to make a difference of man's exaltation. If we look down from heaven, all is flat upon the earth. But there are high and low here, and God thinks of the lowly. Trouble, too, comes on the faithful, but the goodness and the promise give the issue according to the word. Nor is this quite all. God will perfect what concerns us, make good in blessing in and to us all that was in His heart, and which He had revealed in His word, in relationship and communion with Himself. Over all, through all difficulties, and, beyond all, His mercy endureth forever.

Chapter 201

# Practical Reflections on the Psalms: Psalms 139-142

(Psa. 139-142)

Psa. 139. But it is not without the most thorough searching out of all that we are. But this, where there is confidence, is a great grace; for He who alone can do it, and does it according to His own perfectness, does it to purify us from all inconsistent with Himself—His own mind, and hence with our blessedness, which is in communion with Himself. I do not think that the psalm goes beyond creation and God's knowing perfectly His own work, though there may be a known analogy to the Church. It is the conscience brought into the sense of God's perfect acquaintance with everything in us. All is under His eye and He actually sees everything. It is not only He sees, but He searches. He is there with us, however offended, in all our ways. This produces uneasiness. Adam innocent could not have thought of it. There was no reflex act in himself to judge how he was going on; no thought consequently of what God had to see. He enjoyed and blessed or might have done so. But where there is a knowledge of good and evil, a reflex act on what passes consequently in our hearts, the eye of God that reaches all its recesses, knows all, makes us uneasy—i.e., makes the disturbed conscience uneasy. God is everywhere and in every corner of my heart, and darkness and light are all the same. The very fact makes us uneasy now in our natural state; for fear and moral fear has entered in and is become a part of our nature. Still, where He is known, there is confidence, and here integrity of heart gives confidence. Not here the peaceful confidence of known redemption and living in a nature the fullness of which is Christ himself; but the state of heart which gives confidence, as being the integrity of the new nature. And this knowledge which searches the conscience is drawn from creative power. We are the work of His hands. Here it is man as man, so that the earth out of which he was fashioned at first is as the womb out of which we were born. God has formed us, be it in the womb of dust or of our mother, the place where we were nothing, before we were. The same God has ever thought of us along the road, and here confidence has been acquired, though thus acquired it reaches to all God's creative knowledge and power. If He sees in the dark, He keeps in the dark when we awake, and so it will be in resurrection too. We are still with Him—He knows our thoughts, but thinks of us when we think not. Thus if God knows all our thoughts, and long before His are precious to us, to such the putting down of evil is the sure expectation, yea the call for judgment on the haters of the Lord, whom we therefore abhor. Christians do not desire their ruin as souls, nor does God; but looked at as wicked, as haters of the Lord, one does desire their removal by judgment—abhors them as such and rejoices at their being taken away from corrupting and destroying the earth. But if this desire of their judgment be holiness and righteousness, not will, we shall desire the full searching out of evil in ourselves. It is the hatred of evil as under the eye of an all-seeing God. But it is exceedingly beautiful to see this integrity of heart, brought into the full light of God's presence (once shrunk from as searching all), now it desires the thorough searching of God, that it may get rid of the evil that it hates. Note, too, mere integrity will not suffice without God to find out evil. An honest, natural man may use his conscience, but as the natural eye must have light to search with, so we the presence of Him who is light. He who had kept the commandments for his own conscience from

his youth up, shrunk from that which searched his heart and its motives. So we, even if desirous of knowing the evil of our hearts, bring God into the work, and seek Him to do it. If not, there is not integrity.

Psa. 140. I have only for our present purpose to note that it teaches, in the relentless and crafty malice of the wicked, to cast oneself wholly over on the Lord. The saint cannot rival the world in craft and plotting but there is One above all who knows the end from the beginning—to Him we have to look. The character of the Lord's people in presence of this wickedness is to be remarked; they are the afflicted, the poor, righteous, and upright. And they can reckon upon the Lord against the evil doer and the wicked man. Jehovah is owned as his God. So we acknowledge God fully as ours in the revelation of the Father and Jesus our Lord. He is owned, that is, in face of the world.

Psa. 141 looks indeed for deliverance, but more for rightness of heart in trial. The desire is to be with, near God, that God should draw near. The heart is with Him—is right with Him. He does not say deliver, as his first desire, but “give ear to my voice;” that his prayer may be incense, the lifting up his hands as the evening sacrifice. He seeks too (and how needed it is), that in the pressure of evil God should set a watch before his mouth and keep the door of his lips. We may be true and right in principle on the Lord's side; but how does an impatient or pretentious and reproachful word mar the testimony, give a handle to the enemy, and, so far, set the soul wrong with God. No point is more important than this for the upright. He who can bridle his tongue, the same is a perfect man. He looks to be in no way drawn away into the paths or society of the wicked. What he wants is to be kept in uprightness. If the smiting of the righteous be needed, he will rejoice in it, as an excellent oil to anoint him, and honor him as a friend. Grace accompanies this. When calamities come upon God's outward people, for of such it speaks here, who have been the enemies of him who has sought to walk godly and keep himself from evil, his heart yearns over them; there is no rejoicing or triumphing over them; his prayer ascends to God for them. He looks too to the overthrow of those who had power over them, smitten by the enemy, as that which shall break down their pride for good, so that they would hear his words; and he, whatever trouble he might be in, knew their sweetness. The distress was deep, evil in power, but his eyes were unto God. But again we find here that what his heart is on is the nearness of his soul with God; “leave not my soul destitute.” This is a sure mark of the renewal of heart. So the thief on the cross does not even think of his sufferings, but asks Christ to remember him in His kingdom. It is a full picture of uprightness of heart, in a soul which, having been away from God, is morally restored but still under trial.

Psa. 142 is the expression of extreme distress, refuge failing him—no man easing for his soul. He cried unto Jehovah with his voice. This, as we have seen, is more than trusting Him. God is known in the revelation of Himself; so we look to the Lord and to a Father's love. But in crying with the voice there is confession of His name, and open acknowledgment of dependence and confiding in the Lord. The heart can open itself out before the Lord—not be careful, but make its requests known. It is a sure sign of confidence making our trouble known—a great thing to leave such with God. But there is another comfort here; be was in the path of God. And from this grew the sense, of immense importance in the times of trial, that God knew, acknowledged, and had His eye on, as accepting it, the faithful man's path. This is a fountain of strength and comfort. It supposes faith—that realizing that one's way is pleasing to God suffices. The spirit may be overwhelmed by the pressure of enmity and desertion, but the soul is in peace, resting in the approbation of God.

# Practical Reflections on the Psalms: Psalms 143-145

(Psa. 143-145)

I pass over here the desires of judgment as dispensational, as we have often seen. In this we have the soul bowed down under the trouble, but in principle set right with God as one chastened for sin, only in the midst of those hostile, but brought to uprightness. It looks for mercy that it may not be under judgment from God, but that God may be a deliverer, and looks for it as in heart belonging to God and His servant. It is broken by the affliction, and trusts God, and seeks His way. It transfers the evils, so to speak, from God to the adversary, associating itself in heart with God, and looking that God should own it and take up its cause as against the power of evil which He had used as a rod. We have this experience when we have suffered from malicious enemies, but through our own fault. The heart true with God when thoroughly subdued and set right, accepting the punishment of its iniquity instead of excusing itself; can then look to God to take up its cause against the malice, but not till it has set God's glory above itself. The soul then clings to the enjoyment of God's lovingkindness in a subdued and softened spirit, and its motives are purified, which is the very object of the discipline, not merely its ways, but its motives, and so power of communion, which is directly in relation with our motives and state of heart. There is a strengthening of the bond of the heart with God, and His will is sought because it is so. “Thy Spirit,” he says, “is good.” The heart lives in the sense of what the Spirit works in us; His influences in the heart are good. The soul has found where good is. There is accordance between the heart and the things of the Spirit, and it is felt, and true delight is in the soul in it. So we say praise good; it is right pleasant, felt to be pleasant, and pleasant because it is right. There is the sense, kip of divine favor with it. But withal the soul seek: to enjoy it, where all is in harmony with it; where its exercises and fruits will be natural (for he was in the midst of unholy enemies). For us this will only be in heaven. The heart is separated by trial to God through grace, and in uprightness owns it cannot stand in the judgment, and looks for divine favor and deliverance.

Psa. 144. I have only a remark to make here. All these exercises make us learn what man is, and the whole bearings of good and evil. When man is seen, known, judged, and is delivered, there is an acquaintance with the whole scene which makes God's patience, goodness, and ways known and perfect in our eyes. “Man is like to vanity,” but we sing a new song; happy are the people that are in such a case. We, indeed, have a far more radical acquaintance with this. It is settled at once by one act in the cross, and we reckon ourselves dead and alive unto God through Him that is risen. It is a new creation, and we are children with the Father. Still every one does not learn it like Paul, and in every case it must be learned experimentally. Only a simple mind laid hold of by Christ, which, therefore does not confer with flesh and blood, learns it easier and walks in the power of it, Only, alas! how many like to be Jews, and live only to die at the end, and so learning it, instead of dying and then living as alive to God, and so pass into Christ according to the power of that life, whether they wake or sleep.

Psa. 145 looks back and shows the soul (for I do not speak of dispensation here as such: it is the Spirit of Christ showing what passes in the millennium; but it shows the soul) recounting with praise and thanksgiving, the works and ways of God, where it can look back—the greatness of God. But then in these ways the character of God has been fully displayed, and the soul has learned that blessed lesson, knows what He is. See verses 8, 9, 14-20. This is a great blessing. All that we have passed through exercises us, breaks our will, makes us know ourselves. We have learned by it, and, in the preparation of the heart, it gives what God is. Israel learned themselves in the wilderness, but here they learn God, if they had hearts to understand it. First, what He is, and then in what He shows Himself such to others. Not only His greatness that indeed has been shown in bringing all to His own ends; but He is gracious, good, thinking of others in love, and full of compassion. He is slow to anger—perhaps the heart has complained of that sometimes in trial, yet we need it—and of great mercy. Yes, we are often Jonases, though we need or have needed as much mercy as Nineveh. But what should we have lost to say nothing of losing ourselves, if our God had not been all this? But this is the God we have to say to, and when we are delivered, we delight in Him, such as He is. No doubt by faith we delight in His being such, but we have to get our wills broken, our heart set right in its desires, tempers, and whole state, to delight fully in God who so long suffers evil which we hate, and the evil doers who thwart our desire of good, but with which our will mixes itself, and taking, perhaps, its most subtle form. “Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of; for the Son of man came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them.” He was the manifestation of God in forbearing love; and we have to walk in love as He showed it, offering Himself up to God, in nothing seeking His own will, committing Himself to Him who judgeth righteously. Finally, in peace we shall heartily rejoice in God as such. And it is His nature and character; He is good to all, His mercy is over all His works. Compare Peter, the apostle of God's government and judgments. (2 Peter 3:9, the epistle that applies judgment to the wicked. He is, too, the faithful Creator. 1 Peter 4:9. One sees in this passage, as elsewhere, how the Epistles of Peter take up the government of God as the Psalms, only introducing redemption.) First, then, we find mercy. The Lord occupied with the need of men, all that fall (that is weakness); those that be bowed down (that is oppression). Then even, as he says in Jonah, “and very much cattle,” He it is that takes care of and provides for man and beast. But then, further, there are moral character and relationships in which He has to do with men. He is righteous in His ways, takes account of all that is due to others, and also to Himself. He Himself thinks of others, for this also is righteousness in Him, and there is gracious consideration in His works, no evil. His ear, too, is open to the cry of those who seek Him—fulfills the desire of those who fear Him. He preserves those that love Him. He is thus interested in every want, and takes notice of all our ways. Thus the exercises of our hearts will have caused us to know Him.

Chapter 203

# Practical Reflections on the Psalms: Psalms 146-150

The following psalms are the hallelujahs of a delivered people. Some elements of God's ways in general may be however found here, because God in the deliverance has shown whom He thought of and His care for them.

Psa. 146 It is the wisdom of trusting the all-enduring, ever-living Lord that is spoken of. “Put not your trust in man:” his breath goes forth: all his thoughts are gone. Not so with God. Not only He has power, but He is faithful—keeps truth forever. And again, His tender mercy is brought out for the comfort of those that are in sorrow. The oppressed, the hungry, the prisoners come before Him, are the objects of His care and power; the blind He gives eves to, raises up those that are bowed down. All this is comfort of heart to those that are in sorrow and trial, that are oppressed. But farther, He loves the righteous, so that men, whatever comes upon them, can trust in Him. The stranger whose heart may feel sick where he is, the fatherless or widow whose sustaining props are gone, He preserves and relieves. The heart of the righteous has its sure confidence, of the bowed down and those deprived of earthly stay, the sure hand of a God who cares for them, because they are such. It is what God always is.

Psa. 147 The great principle in all these psalms is that the one true God, the Creator, and He who ministers to every creature specially known as the God of His people, and is known by His delivered people to be righteous, full of compassion, and good. His ways and character have become known to the delivered ones; but He is the God of Israel, as we say our Father, or the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. All this is largely brought out in this psalm—the ground for trusting Him in every trial, but for seeking Him and walking in righteousness, for He takes pleasure in those that fear Him. But, besides this, another blessing is spoken of, belonging to His people, and so to us, His word. This is the first of blessings. He gave it to His people. He had not dealt so with any nation. There is a difference between us and Israel here. This in itself is true of both; but the Jew was shut up in his own system. The temple was a place of resort for all nations, but for Jews even there was no access to God Himself, no knowledge of Him by the revelation of Himself. The law told them what man ought to be, God's dealings taught them many a lesson if they would learn it as they do here; but the way into the holiest was not made manifest, and there was no going out with the testimony that God is love. They learned from His ways on earth, but did not know Him in heaven and will, not as we do, even in the millennium, though mercy and redemption will be clearer for them. We do; we know God as light and love. We shall be in the Father's house then. Hence while we have the word which reveals Him who has sanctified himself, a man in heaven apart from the world, we have known God's love issuing and in the power of eternal life. We know the Father in the Son, and then God as love, yea are in Him and He in us. Hence we have a gospel ministry, and every one is a witness of divine love and heavenly righteousness. We have no priesthood here, save as we all are, but go with boldness into the holiest, our great High Priest being ever there. The word is in this respect another thing for us, though still God's word. We have the word for others because it is the true knowledge of God Himself in grace, a heavenly word. Some other elements of goodness are spoken of in this psalm, though the general tenor of it

be the same. He heals the broken in heart, He binds up their wounds. There is not only tender compassion in grace, but remedy, and, more and more, He establishes securely, strengthens the bars of the city of God, and blesses His children in her. Thus we have a richer and fuller unfolding of mercy in this psalm. The general principle is the same. God's ways revealing what He is in its effects of goodness and righteous government, a knowledge of God by His statutes and judgments; but not the revelation of Himself and introduction into His presence as He is, nor knowledge of Him as Father. It is indeed in contrast with it. See Eph. 1:3-5, where we have the Christian's place, as in verses 19-23 our relationship with Christ, to which add chapter 5:25-30.

Psa. 148. With this remark I may merely note the character of this psalm. All creation is called to praise God, but with the additional word, He exalts the horn of His people. It is more than deliverance and mercy. He exalts them in the creation as the people of His favor on earth. He is the praise of His saints, a people near Him—a blessed thought, but how far more blessed to us who will be near Himself, unveiled in His house and in His presence! Israel is near the Creator, as His people on the earth. We with God our Father in heaven like the Lord Jesus His only-begotten Son. In this, as in the following psalm, deliverance is not spoken of, for there is progress in them. First, mercy and deliverance, favor to the tried righteous within her; then the horn of His people exalted, and Israel a people near Him; and now it is joy and triumph.

Psa. 149. He takes pleasure in them, and they are His weapon against His enemies, the high praises of God in their mouths and a two-edged sword in their hands, executing the judgment written. We see at once how we are on the Jewish ground of judgment in this world. There is a delight in the setting aside of evil by power, even for the Christian. “Rejoice over her, ye heavens, and ye holy apostles and prophets;” but this only when the Church gets on prophetic, not on her own, ground. Hence the Father is not more spoken of in the Apocalypse than in the psalms. Where the relationship is with the Father, there it is carried out in love. And this difference, often noted, is as distinct and plain to the spiritual mind as possible, and of all importance to make the psalms intelligible and set Christianity on its own true ground. The Christian is not a Jew; the revealed name of God to him is not Jehovah, but Father, as Christ so markedly states.

Psa. 150 gives the full praise to Jehovah in a double character, the sanctuary and the firmament of His power, for His ways which come from the firmament of His power were always according to the sanctuary in which He governed Israel, and made good the revelation of Himself there. So indeed with us, He makes all things work together for good to them that love Him; but it is according to the heavenly place to which they belong and to which He is bringing them. Christ is in the firmament of His power now. He is praised for His acts, praised for His greatness manifested in them. Jehovah is the theme of praise—Jehovah the God of Israel, but Jehovah the Creator and Sustainer of all—the righteous Judge. But here it is Jehovah, God in His sanctuary as we, after all we have received in a higher way, glory in tribulations and finally in God Himself—not in what we have received. It is not even here, Praise our God, just as that was, but it rises higher. “Praise God in his sanctuary.” The deep sense of what God is goes out beyond the relationship in which we are, though it is relationship with Him in the highest way that we have. Our Father's love, ours and Christ's, is sweet, but we joy in God. Blessed be His name!

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Chapter 207

# Rahab

What an instance does the case of Rahab afford us of the long-suffering of God being salvation, as Peter speaks!

The camp of Israel had accomplished their journey, a journey of forty years. At the beginning of it, a mixed multitude followed them out of Egypt. Very soon after they had entered on it, and were clean delivered from Egypt, Hohab, the Midianite, joined them. But now, at the very end of it, yea, something even beyond that, when the desert had been fully traversed, and the appointed or penal term of forty years was fully spent, in an interval of delay or longsuffering, the ransomed of the Lord lingering on the confines of the desert and the land, this harlot of Jericho joins them.

This is full of meaning. The entrance of Israel into Canaan was to be the judgment of that people. But the moment is delayed. Was it that the Lord was slack concerning His promise that the inheritance of that land was to be made sure to the children of the Genesis-fathers? No; but this delay was salvation. God delayed the day of visitation on the peoples, that He might call His elect to repentance.

This history is a vivid expression of that great principle. Joshua, however, does not appear to have been in the secret of God's grace; as Peter was not in the secret, of His grace to the Gentiles, nor Paul in the secret of His grace to Europe. (Acts 10; 16) It is to spy out the land Joshua sends these two men. No mission of mercy to the people seems to animate his action or guide his thoughts. But the grace of God, in a way unlooked for by His people, worked then and works still. It passed over to the Gentiles before Peter did; it passed over to Macedonia before Paul did; and it now crosses the Jordan before Joshua.

But further. If Joshua be not in the secret of God's grace, the spies whom, he sends cannot be in the commission of it. They are, however, prepared for such a service. This is truly blessed. They were not entrusted with such a business, or under orders concerning it; but they fulfill it at once without reserve, without suspicion as to their title to do so, and in all possible confidence and decision. Precious beyond thought this is! They heard nothing from their captain about such a thing, but they pledge deliverance to Rahab, and make the security of that Canaanite as ample and as perfect as that of any Israelite in the camp, as rich and full even as their own. God was their title, though uncommissioned by Joshua; for, in His eyes, the feet of the publishers of grace on the mountains, even on defiled Canaan, are beautiful. (See Rom. 10)

Who can tell the gospel-comfort of this? But again. The spies themselves, in a day or two afterward, enter the land in quite another character. They were now going there at the peril of their lives: in a day or two they would go under the conduct of the ark and in company with the glory. They were now going as the witness and the channel of blessing to a poor sinner of the place; in a day or two they would go to execute the judgment of the Lord and to share the spoils and the inheritance. They were now in weakness and danger, thankful for the shelter of some stalks of flax to hide them front the pursuer: but they were speedily to be in victory and honor in the same place.

Wonderful in its value to us is all this, in its consolations and encouragements.

Further, however, as to Rahab. Let the glory thus enter the land, and the judgments conduct their solemn work, she is safe. She had believed the word of the spies about the scarlet line, and been faithful to them in the hour of their weakness and degradation.

This is to be much observed. She had not uttered their business, and she is, therefore, as safe as they are; that is, she had been faithful to them in their time of weakness and danger and degradation; and now, in the day of their victory and strength, when all things are changed, she is as they are, their victory is her victory, their security is her security, their inheritance her inheritance.

“Our life for yours,” say the spies to Rahab, “if ye utter not this our business.” How strikingly the great principle of the gospel expresses itself there! For faith was demanded by that word of the spies, as faith is that which is true to Christ's humiliation, and weakness, and sorrow. It is faith which understands that precious gospel mystery. It is faith which holds to Jesus in the hour of His cross. Christ crucified is faith's secret. The abandoning of that secret would be death. “If ye continue in the faith,” says the apostle. To give up the hour of the Lord's weakness—for “He was crucified through weakness” —is to forfeit everything. But faith is true to that mystery, as Rahab uttered not the business of the spies, nor betrayed them in the hour of their degradation, weakness, and peril.

This, surely, is full of meaning for us.

And again. Her pledge was in the midst of the scene of judgment, but it had been appointed by the executors of judgment. It was they who had passed it to her. No necessity could be higher. As in the paschal night of Egypt, the sword is borne by the hand of Him who had ordained the blood on the lintel. No security could surpass that. But such as it, and equal to it, is the security for a sinner by the gospel. As it is written, “herein is love made perfect that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because, as He is, so are we in this world.” We are in the world, the place of judgment, and Jesus is on high; nevertheless His safety is ours “as He is, so are we in this world.”

Chapter 208

# The Records of Inspiration

I BELIEVE in the fullest way in the inspiration of Scripture; but that does not mean, that all that it contains was inspired in the mouths of those who uttered it. We have Satan's words, wicked men's words, human accounts of divers facts recorded by inspiration, but not themselves inspired. A revelation should give (it is what it means) the perfect presentation of the divine mind on the subject of which it treats, to one spiritually capable of understanding it; but in doing this, as to man, as to Israel, it must give me a true, real picture of what man, what Israel is. And this it does, not merely by a dogmatic statement, but by a large historical development of what man has done, what he has felt, what he has been in various circumstances, under various advantages, and in states of progress through the revelations already afforded him. If the Bible had merely given us God's judgment, we never should have had the same testimony to conscience as we have by its affording us man's actual history, under the various dispensations of God towards him. But to do this, I must have him as he was, his feelings expressed as they were in him; whether without God, or under the influence of piety, yet ill-informed in God's mind; or animated as to his heart by God's Spirit, yet the result a mixed one, and taking the forms of thought and feeling, which were and must have been such as his state of moral education would have produced. Otherwise it would not have been the true and needed account of man; consequently, not a divine one.

In the midst of all this, we get positive revelations from God, given in order to act upon men in this state. In this last case, I get inspired testimony of what God's own mind is. Yet even here grace has adapted it to the conscience and spiritual information possessed, and God's dealings with men in such or such a state. If He deigned to deal with them, thus He must have done, in condescendence, for their blessing. He leads them up and onward indeed: but it is them He is to lead. A gracious father speaks to his child according to what suits it; yet never what is unworthy of himself: it is worthy of him to suit himself to them. So has God dealt with men, with Israel. How else could He have dealt with them, if He meant them to be morally developed?

Thus in the Old Testament we have a perfect, divinely-given picture of man, under this gracious process, in the various relationships in which he was placed with God, so as to get his whole condition fully brought out, that by a divinely-given history we might know ourselves, and at the same time the whole course of God's dealings, and what man was under them, till his need of perfect and supreme grace should be manifested, and God manifested in Christ as the supreme grace he needed, and man and God get into the relationship which was in His full purpose, according to the security of the unchangeableness of His nature, and the perfectness of His love. When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. Hence it is said, “For the forgiveness of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare at this time His righteousness.” He dealt with them for the full development of His ways. He received them according to His knowledge of the perfect work to be accomplished in Christ.

Now God has given us a perfect revelation of all this. But we should not have the knowledge either of man or of our God Himself, and of his wondrous and all-perfect and patient ways with us, if we

had not men at each step exactly as they were; it would not be the truth else. The statement of morality simply by God, would no doubt have shown what man ought to be. That we have in the law. But it would not have shown us what man is; nor that, under the various dealings of God. Now we have this; and, I repeat, to have it, we must have man, even when under the influence of God's Spirit, just as he was under it; the effect produced being according to the degree in which his own soul was acted on, the medium in which he lived, and the measure of revelation afforded him.

Such was Deborah's song. It is not a communication of God's thoughts, but of Deborah's feelings. Doubtless her heart was moved by the Spirit in thankfulness for the deliverance of God's beloved people; but there is not a sign of its being a communication from God to that people. Now such a song may vary in the spiritual conformity to the highest measure of light which is possessed—may be more or less mixed with man, and may be colored by the general condition of the people, and the nearness of the individual's soul to God. It may express much greater nearness, because the mass are far gone from Him—as in Hannah's, whose weakness is entirely cast on God, and hence points vividly to Christ; or in Simeon's, whose soul can go in peace, because the hope of his devout heart is fulfilled in the midst of the desolations of Israel; or (if God interferes in outward mercy and gives a temporal reviving, because He will not destroy, but make Himself known, and that in mercy to His people), the thanksgiving or the praise will descend to the measure of the present interference, by which God has hindered His people from having their remembrance blotted out of the earth.

Such is, in fact, Deborah's song. It does not rise above it. If I am to know what Israel was then, it ought not—if I am to know the way of God's dealing with them, it must not—pass beyond it. Israel gradually sunk; and the character of deliverers and deliverances sunk, till God, had to come in afresh in Samuel and David, when “He had delivered His strength into captivity, and His glory into the enemies' hand.” How am I to learn this, and know what was the real condition of the people and the truth of God's dealings were, if I do not have them just as they were? A song of David, of Simeon, or of Hannah, would have been morally out of place to celebrate the deeds of Barak the son of Abinoam, and of the prophetess of the palm-tree in Mount Ephraim. The thing objected to is a perfection in the revelation. I judge many things in the revelation by a clearer light. I learn many things in God's ways. How could I if they were not there? The skeptic neither states the fact correctly, nor reasons justly from what he observes. It is never given as “an inspired psalm.” It is only said, “Then sang Deborah, and Barak the son of Abinoam.” I pass a moral judgment on many things in the Old Testament, because God has given us the true light, and the darkness is now passed. But how does that show that it is not an inspired revelation that has given me them? I judge them in the perfect light. But it is He who is light who has given me them to judge of, and the light to judge them by. He means to inform my spiritual judgment, and to reveal His ways to me, to show me that He has never ceased dealing with men, that the world has not gone on without His knowledge. He has given me the key to everything, and therefore He has afforded me all these elements with divine perfectness, on which and by which my judgment is to be spiritually formed, and my senses exercised to discern good and evil, as man has learned it through ages, or as it has been displayed and developed in his history; while Christ has given the perfect key by which to judge of it all. Hence Paul says, the Scriptures are “able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” And so when poor Peter would have put Moses and Elias in the same rank with Christ, they disappear, and “a voice came from heaven, saying, This is my beloved

Son: hear him. And.... Jesus was found alone."

Then I do get direct addresses to the conscience at the time in the prophets, and the directing the eye of the saints, suffering under the evil state of God's people, to that better day, which the Christ who should visit them as the dayspring should bring in, to set all things right. They looked on to it, and were saved by hope, as we are—if not so clear a hope, yet as true, and indeed the same, though only partially revealed, and in its earthly part—yet so as that heaven was necessarily brought in by it. Abraham rejoiced to see Christ's day; and he saw it and was glad; and, a stranger in the Canaan which had been promised him, he looked for "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God," in the glory of which he will enjoy the blessings of the inheritance of his children in a better and sweeter way than those who shall actually possess them. The Old Testament is gained, not lost, thus; we have it from our God's own hand to instruct us. What happened as proofs of God's present interference in a temporal way to them, which was what suited their state and God's government of the earth, is spiritual instruction for us, written for our learning, which is what we want, that by which we can more fully know God; while all He teaches in it is perfect, and from that I learn His ways.

Chapter 209

# Repentance—What Is It?

I judge repentance to be a much deeper thing than is thought. It is the judgment of the new man in divine light and grace on all that he who repents has been or done in flesh. Law may be the means of bringing the soul to it; but, though salutary, it is made for the unrighteous. The full knowledge of Christ gives a far deeper hatred of sin. And such is the holy ghost's way: all else, if true, is imperfect. “He shall convince the world of sin, because they believe not in me.” To have hated good, seen no beauty in Christ to desire him—a nature which could do this is worse even than the lusts which the spirituality of the law so justly condemns. Lawless, law-breaking, and god-hating: such is the flesh's character in scripture and the order of its manifestation for showing what sin is. Hence repentance will, in one sense, deepen all one's life as the knowledge of God grows. It is not a quantum of sorrow, nor even a perception of separation from God by sin. That leads to it. It is the soul of man judging divinely of sin, and that in the consciousness it had been self when God is known in grace—at any rate, in some measure.

Chapter 210

# Resurrection

(John 11:25-27 1 Cor. 15)

There are two very distinct ways in which resurrection is viewed in Scripture, not only in the person of Christ, but also as affecting us. In the first portion that was brought before us, (1 Cor. 15:20-28,) we have one of these aspects, and in the verses just read, and still more in John 5, and elsewhere, we have the other. Now it is exceedingly comforting to our hearts to know this kind of twofold witness that the grace of God has given us to the blessed manner in which He has secured our title. But I refer to it, not merely as a question of our title, but of Christ's glory; for we are here to exalt His name. And there is no one way in which He more shines out, and the glory of God in Him, than in the character of the raiser of the dead. In John's gospel it is presented thus—He is the Son; He is life, everlasting life; and as we read in the epistle, “He is the eternal Life that was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.” Before there was any creature, He was with the Father, and in Him was life. Death consequently had no power, and yet we know that He came to die. But in this point of view, He came to show the triumph of the power of the life that was in Him over that death which He was pleased to undergo. So that we could not know the special character and power of the life that was in Christ, not merely unless others had died, but unless He had died Himself. And it is in this way that St. John loves to regard it, and was led by the Holy Ghost to do so. Hence, as our Lord Himself said, “destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” And so again, when He was not thus speaking figuratively, (though we have the Holy Ghost's own interpretation of the figure,) in the well-known passage in John 10, where He shows that as the good Shepherd He was about to lay down His life, and to lay it down for the sheep. Again, He tells us that He lays it down that He might take it again. Now, there He speaks as the conscious Son of God, who had such power of life in Himself, that death was only met to be forever defeated.

And the truth of this appears both in John 5 and in chapter 10. In chapter v. death is viewed as taking its course. We are told there that as truly as now we have the words of the Son of God, and we believe in Him that sent Him, and receive His testimony about His beloved Son, so truly we have life, everlasting life. Nor is this, as He shows, to be marveled at, because the hour is coming when it will be so proved; when it will be no longer a matter of faith for our souls to rejoice in, but when it will be evident to every eye: in His own words, “the hour is coming, when all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and “shall come forth,” &c. It is the all-important thing for soul and body; for soul now, for body then. “All that are in the graves shall hear his voice and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of judgment.” There, death's force is not shown us as so completely broken, but what at first sight it might appear that the saints were all obliged to submit themselves to it, in some shape or other. So that a further revelation of the truth of God was necessary in order to bring out the full power of the life that was in Christ; and He has given it us in the verses that were read from chapter 11. There, says the Lord, “I am the resurrection and the life.” So that it was simply the question of His own will, and of the purpose of God, though He came to do His will, and He only put forth that power at God's bidding. “I am the resurrection and the life.” The full power of

victory over death was in Him. “He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and he that liveth and believeth in me shall never die.” Observe, that in all this there is no thought of the work of Christ, no presenting His sufferings, no allusion whatever to His manhood, He speaks solely and simply as a divine person. And before the power and glory of His person, death must disappear. Whoever believed in Him—whoever heard His voice—shared the blessing that flowed from the glory of His person. Death was defeated in principle. This was true now for faith, and it will be proved true by and by. He has only to come, and whoever then lives and believes in Him will never die. Death for such, was completely gone.

But, moreover, in 1 Cor. 15 we have another and an equally beautiful view which our souls need to keep along with the other. And here comes to view the utter ruin of those who receive this eternal life, and who are destined to be raised out of their grave to share the glory of everlasting life with Christ; or who, if living, will be taken up at once without passing through death at all, for the participation of His quickening power. Those that so rise were sinners; they were lost sinners, they were guilty and dead. What can meet this? It is blessed and glorious to know that Christ can meet it. But how has He done it? He has become a man. It was man that wronged God. It would not be a sufficient answer to God that He Himself as such should come down in power, and put an end to all the sin and misery that is in the world. It is no question of power, but there was more that was needful, according to the counsels of God. He has deigned to become man; and thus it is man is now the very vessel and object of the thoughts and counsels of God. Man is no longer the object of the judgment of God merely, but the scale is turned, and in and through Jesus man is the blessed object of the favor of God; man now is what He is occupied with, and it is in man that the great scene is being wrought out before all heaven. No doubt the great secret of it is that blessed Man who is on the throne; and on the throne as the One that was humbled and suffered here. But He owns the relationship He has with us that are here in all our weakness, and trouble, and difficulties. In all our sorrowing, toiling course, His heart is toward and with us. He is there in glory, yet He owns us fully here. How different is this from our spirit who love to think of something that will exalt ourselves, that is, or looks great, something that is outside us, yet connected with our own power, or honor, or worthiness! But what Jesus owns is His tie with us, and with us in the hour of our greatest weakness. We are here slowly going onwards, very slowly. We walk here most unworthily of Him; but He recognizes us fully, and, besides, has given us the joy of knowing that in that very nature where we feel our weakness which wrought ruin and was so rebellious against God, and which is still seeking to drag us down and bring in vanity and folly, in this very nature, and in nothing so much, though, of course, without its taint and evil condition, has Jesus brought all honor to God. The divine nature needed nothing. No testing was required there. But He became a man as perfectly as he who sinned and died: and “as by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.” And thus it is that He has shown us now, not merely that He is a divine person who has this life that baffles and destroys death, but that as man He has done it. He won a title for us in that death in which He bore the judgment of our sin and put it away. But He is risen, and therefore we come together not on the day of the death—that showed our shame, and sin, and ruin, though we do remember Him there—but on the day of His resurrection. But what we have here now, is not merely that as a divine person He raises Himself, (He does not raise Himself as a man,) but it is as a divine person, that we read in John: that He had power to lay down His life and had power to take it again; but as man, God raises Him. And there comes in the righteousness part. It is a question of God being true to that blessed One who had brought such

honor to Him through His life and death; and therefore it would not have been according to the glory of God if He had raised Himself as man. It was a part of God's righteousness, so to say, who has an obligation, by reason of the work of Christ: and therefore there is this discharge of it—God must raise. There is the first act of the righteousness of God. He could not leave His Son in the grave. He sets Him at His own right hand, and has brought us into the joy of knowing that we shall be with Him there. And, O, that during the little time of waiting for Him, our ways, our lives, our heart, may be true to Jesus. We have not many more opportunities of glorifying and serving Him. We have, alas! and easily, the sad opportunity of dishonoring Him. It takes a little while, a very little moment, to put our shame and dishonor on Jesus. And we have but a little while. Oh, may it be turned to the praise of His name. And may we treat the world, not as an enjoyable scene, or a place where there is anything to desire, but as a system that is crucified to us through the cross of Christ. Has the Lord given us deliverance from sin and from hell, that we may be happy in this present evil world? Does His cross warrant the thought, that we may seek to enjoy Christ and the world too? Does not “the whole world” lie in wickedness, yea, in that wicked one who led it on to cast Him out and crucify Him? A baser desire, or a more impossible one, never entered the heart of a believer, than to love Christ and the world at the same time. And let us remember, that it is not only in great things that the world may become a snare to us. Its spirit may enter in the mere things we put on ourselves or our children; in the least matters we desire, allow, or cultivate. Do not suppose that we have to beware of the gross world only. Of course we have to keep ourselves clear from that at all cost; at the cost, if it must be so, of a right hand or a right foot. Better go maimed with the Lord, than the whole body be cast into hell. And if souls deliberately turn away from Christ to the world, what possible ground is there to think that they have any part or lot with Christ? It is one thing to slip and hate oneself for it; it is a very different thing to abandon the Lord and Savior because present things are preferred. We may see a poor soul with strong prejudices and feeble intelligence walking in the world and even in its worst form, the religious world; and yet we may trust that the heart is with Christ. Doubtless such have been found where Satan's throne is; and even Jezebel, the false prophetess, plies her cruel and adulterous trade, that is, even in Popery. But this marks them in spite of their ignorance, and their false position—whoever is born of God seeks after the height of his faith, and clings to the truth, to the best of his light. Are we perverting the truth to our own self-destruction? or cleaving to the Lord for His glory and for our soul's good? I do not say that in every single act a person does thus walk; but this is the character of every one that is born of God, “he doth not commit sin.” And as to persons who deliberately allow that which they know to be contrary to the Lord as their character and course of action, there is no eternal life there. There are none so blessed, but none in such danger, if the Lord has caused the light of His glory to shine upon us. If He has shown us Christ as the victorious man—victorious over death and every enemy—He has done it that we should witness for Him in increasing devotedness and in growing power against the flesh, the world, and every enemy of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord make and keep us faithful, but in the dust.

Chapter 211

# Thoughts on Revelation 4

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

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

There are three subjects distinctly marked in the first chapter as comprised in this book. First, The glory and manifestation of Christ Himself, the things seen; second, The churches, “the things which are;” third, The things hereafter, or “after these,” i.e. the things which do not belong to the position of the Church in its testimony down here as a corporate body, but after it is as such spewed out of Christ's mouth.

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

Another characteristic there is, as connected with “the things which are.” The Church is a witness for God. In the first church we see this ceased to be the case; and at the close of all, when it has entirely lost its character as such, Christ Himself, in the fullest and completest sense, presents Himself to take the inheritance, and takes up the character which it should have maintained, viz., the “Amen, the faithful and true witness.” Then, as having taken up this character, He assumes the government of this world again, and that is quite a different thing from His walking amongst the churches in His judicial character upon earth, passing judgment upon those things that should have been a faithful witness of Him. Then the prophet sees Him in heaven, having done with the Church upon the earth. He is not seen there as Head of the body, but as the “Lamb that has been slain:” the One rejected upon earth is upon the throne in heaven, from whence the judgments are to proceed. This is a most solemn moment. We see how the world is all going on under God's eye, and with what patience He has been bearing with it.

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

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

The earth then was set aside when the rejected Man took. His place in heaven. The Jews were the immediate instruments of His rejection; but man, the first Adam, was utterly set aside through this act; and the Jew was to be brought to see that in the flesh dwelleth no good thing, and that heavenly grace was entirely in connection with the new Man. He is gone into heaven, that “He might fill all things.” He came down in grace as the last Adam, that He might bring in glory; and thus when the Church is being formed, we get this double character: the heavenly Man taking His proper place in heaven, the earthly man judged. It is henceforth all new. “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.” We know not Christ any more “after the flesh.” It is as Head of the new creation that we are united to Him. “The first man was of the earth, earthy; the second man the Lord from heaven.” The second Man has ascended; “but in that He ascended, He descended first into the lower parts of the earth.” He has ascended as the second Man to take His glory with the Father. As the result of all this the Church is looked upon as dead and risen with Christ.— “sitting together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” The new character for those who thus belong to Him is to manifest this heavenly Man by the power of the Holy Ghost down here; and thus the Church becomes the living witness of Christ's rejection on earth and acceptance in heaven.

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

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

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

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

But it is not the Lamb executing judgment; nor is it the Word of God either. But we see the throne before He comes out. It is the interval between His having done with the churches on earth, (for there is nothing left in the Church to judge,) and His coming to the earth again as the Faithful and True Witness.

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

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

Verse 4. “Seated on thrones.” The symbols here represent the saints in their heavenly condition, but not as the Church, Christ's body. They are “kings and priests.” In this chapter we see them as kings; in the next as priests. The one is their kingly office, the other is their priestly character as worshippers. The moment God is going to deal with creation, the saints are seen sitting on the throne with Him. What a wonderful place is given to us! We are a “royal priesthood,” &c. We do not belong to this creation, but are a kind of first-fruits of His creatures. The glory and profit is all His, though, the blessing is ours.

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

“The Spirits of God.” The imagery is taken from the temple. What a place for us to be in! “Know ye not that ye shall judge angels?” Do not think that these things are too high for you: they are not the highest. You must bring the heavenly character of them down to every-day practice. When Jesus was on earth, the lowly man here below as “sent into the world,” He brought down the principles of the heavenly spirit in all His ways and words— “the Son of man which is in heaven.” And He says to His disciples, “Ye are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” This sweeps away every principle of conduct which cannot connect us with Him whom the world has rejected. The world hates what is heavenly in it. It cannot bear the testimony of what it has done. We are called to be nothing in the world. We must be contented to be despised; and find Christ in such a way our heavenly portion, as to have no ambition to be anything where He was nothing. “How can ye believe who receive honor one of another?” &c. Our calling is to manifest the spirit and temper of the heavenly Christ.

“Seven lamps of fire.” All this is judgment—sevenfold perfection, but sevenfold judgment. It is not here, as in Zechariah, the “eyes of the Lord, running to and fro in the earth,” &c., but consuming everything that does not suit the presence of this heavenly throne. It is a solemn thing, this judgment from heaven. “The leaves of the tree shall be for the healing of the nations.” Our whole relationship with God is founded on grace. We dwell in Him and He in us. The revelations of the

Spirit of God to us are about Him as our God, and heaven as our home. “The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost,” &c. Stephen, full of the Holy Ghost, looking up to heaven saw the throne, and Jesus on the right hand of God; but the character is very different here. Not all that makes delight and blessing, but the Spirit itself is as “lamps of fire.” What will the earth do when heaven has this character of judgment, when there is neither throne of grace, nor patience, but all is judgment?

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

“They were full of eyes before and behind.” The figure is very intelligent; it means secret intuitive intelligence—seeing all before and behind. Nothing escapes the eye of God and the power of God. Where man cannot see, He sees. All things are naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. “They had each of them six wings,” as in Ezekiel, and this signifies rapidity of execution of God's counsels and purposes; alacrity in the service on which they were sent. They cry, “Holy, holy, holy.” This is something distinct from worship. The four creatures are found worshipping in chapter 18; but it is not so here. God is celebrated here in power and glory. The elders, whose hearts' affections are drawn out in the appreciation of the Lord, fall down and worship; but there is the celebration of power besides—the public celebration of it. All creation will be the perpetual celebration of the holiness, and wisdom, and power of the Lord God Almighty.

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

redemption in the succeeding chapter. The one being a picture of the power of God in creation, the other in redemption, both are shown out before the revelation of the judgments which will bring in the glory.

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

The second point is, that when God Himself in His majesty is brought out, it does not excite fear. There they are in His holiness, set in the light, not in spirit merely, but in fact. They are made “partakers of His holiness;” and when they hear the living creatures, which rest not day and night, saying, “Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty,” worship is excited, not fear. “Glory, and honor, and thanks unto Him that sat upon the throne,” does not leave them seated on their thrones; and they “fall down and worship Him that liveth forever and ever.” Such a sense they had of the glory of Him who sits upon the throne, that it took them out of their own personal glory, and they used it only to celebrate that glory which they have to acknowledge.

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

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

Mark two things: the entire prostration of heart before God, and the blessed intelligence of the titles of God. How it does take the poorest of this world out of the miserable tinsel of its corruption, when God reveals Himself thus to the heart and understanding! The selfishness of man would shut him up into narrowness of spirit, instead of being taken up with God.

Are we not glad to have crowns to lay at His feet? “For thy pleasure they are, and were created.” It is God's delight, and God's good pleasure that is the spring of everything. If I am right with God, I say let Him have His way. If I am away, I shall not like Him to have His good pleasure; but to let Him have it is the only spring of blessing. The Lord give us to know Him in this way; and we can say that in Jesus and by Jesus, we do know His love; and, through the good pleasure of His will, we have been made His children, adopted unto Himself. When the Lord Jesus was born, He became the link between God and poor sinners, for He was the gift of God's love in “good will to men;” in Him, dead and risen, we are through the Spirit brought to God. The Lord give us rightly to estimate Jesus! With Him in our hearts, all will be simple, all will be peace, all will be love.

Chapter 212

# Thoughts on Revelation 5

WE saw, in the fourth chapter, the throne of God set in heaven, the great purpose of which was to bring into the world the Heir of all things—as is expressed in Heb. 1, “when He bringeth in again the First-begotten into the world.” This purpose, for which the world was set, is not as yet accomplished; for the First-begotten is not actually brought in till chapter six. At the end of the third chapter we have the Lord's own testimony as to the failure of the Church on earth, in that it is spewed out of His mouth. Then Christ takes the place the Church was unable to maintain, that of the “Amen, the faithful and true witness.” And thus, the Lord's judicial power having ceased among the candlesticks on earth, we find in the fourth chapter a throne, not of grace, but of judgment, set in heaven, round which the glorified saints are sitting on their thrones, perfectly undisturbed at the thunderings and lightnings, that are issuing forth from the throne; but when the majesty of God is celebrated, they cast their crowns before Him and fall down and worship Him as Creator. In this fifth chapter we get the things between the spewing out of the Church from the mouth of Christ, and the judgments preliminary to His taking His rightful throne on the earth.

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

“I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book,” &c. Here we see the purposes of God in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne: they are in the right hand of power, that they may be accomplished, for He who sits on the throne is able to bring them in. There is great comfort in this thought too, that however dreadful the judgments may be, and truly they are terrible, the book is in the hand of God: so that when we read of the seals, the trumpets, and the vials of wrath, we see them in God's hand, as the settled expression of the accomplishment of His purposes; so, too, when we see that the Lamb that has loved us, and given Himself for us, is the One to take the book in the same quietness with which God holds it in His hand.

The natural mind, and we are still in the body, would tremble at these things, as it is said in Luke's Gospel, “Men's hearts failing them for fear, for looking after those things that are coming on the

earth.” But faith gets its settled place in the purpose of God, and is not afraid; it sees all to be in the hand of God, and for His glory. God, in the stability of His own power, holds the book upon the throne, for God alone knows His own counsels, and faith recognizes this. Thus He who has loved us and washed us from our sins, in His own blood, is Christ, who is the wisdom of God, and the power of God, and the unfolder of these purposes of God. These things do not apply to the Church, but the Christian is to have an understanding concerning them, for he has “the mind of Christ.” When anything comes out in the way of prophecy, the Lord unfolds it to us, that we may intercede with Him about others. It was so with Abraham, for after God had called him out of his own country, and set him in the road of faith, revealing Himself to him, and giving him the promises, then God shows him other things which did not concern himself. He tells him His purposes as to Sodom, beside giving him the second promise, “Unto thy seed will I give this land.” The Christian is entirely out of the scene of judgment here. No doubt the Christian gets the present judgment of evil, while walking down here, in the shape of chastening for his profit; but when judgment is spoken of prophetically, it always refers to others. Take Enoch who prophesied, saying, “The Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints to execute judgment,” &c. He was walking with God, and had the secret of God's counsels as to the judgments that would be executed, and yet not at all as applying to himself, for he was to be taken away out of it all; and this is true of the Church of God. These terrible judgments from the throne do not touch her, though she is to be the vessel of testimony as to what is coming and in the place of intercession, as Abraham was. “God said, Shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I do?” Then when Abraham gets the knowledge of what God is going to do, be gets into the priest's place of nearness to God, and begins to plead for Sodom. This is, in a higher sense, the place of the Church, as far as she has faith for it. “We have the mind of Christ.” In this sense it is that the Christian is a prophet, having the mind of Christ; and also as having the spirit of intercession he is a priest; and, likewise, be is the vessel of ministry for carrying the gospel to poor sinners; and he will reign when Christ reigns. At present, the Church, having received grace, through the cross of Christ, is the messenger of grace to those who are ready to perish.

But now we will turn to our proper subject, for in chapter v. we pass into fresh ground again. When God begins to unfold His purposes, Christ must come in, for not only does all belong to Him by divine title, but He is also Heir of all things by divine appointment. Therefore, when we have the redemption of the purchased possession, the taking the inheritance out of the hands of the usurper by judgments, we find the book of God's counsels, as the conveyance of the inheritance to the rightful heir who won His title to it by His work. Consequently when the book of God's purposes concerning the inheritance comes on the scene, we also get the Son whom “He hath appointed Heir of all things.” It was customary among the Jews, (Jer. 32:11) on conveyance of property, to have two books, an open one in which were title deeds, &c., and a sealed one laid by, in order that no mistake might be made; and this book which God put into the hands of the Lamb, was a sealed one, “sealed with seven seals.” “And I wept much because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look therein.” Of course there could not be any thought of looking therein as to how God would accomplish His purposes; for I would here remark that where the heart is brought near to God, it is not that there is a disposition to pry into these things, for that would be sin; but when we find God has purposes to reveal to us, it would be sorrow not to know them. But some might say, surely salvation is the all-important thing, but I ask, Is not that settled? That ought to be the question, most surely, if it be not yet settled; but if I am a child, I have the

interest of the family at heart, and, therefore, when that which concerns the First-born is brought out, I am interested in it, because my affections are drawn out by it. For there are affections which flow from this relationship itself, as well as those resulting from the fact of being saved. Of course, it is nothing but idle curiosity to be looking into prophecy before the great question of salvation is settled between the soul and God. When the conscience is set at rest before God, there will then be liberty for the exercise of those affections which flow out from such relationships. But still there are affections flowing from the relationship itself, and felt in measure, it may be, as soon as that relationship is effected in the soul, and before the soul itself is conscious of its portion. That is, we often meet with those whose hearts are towards God, without having settled peace in their souls. Take Job, for instance: he said, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.” God was breaking him down, and breaking him up, just to shew Job what he was all the while. Job had full confidence in God, although his soul did not know real peace. Affection was there, and when the soul got peace, then the pent-up affections flowed out. For I do not mean to say that there is no affection until the soul has got peace; but when the question of salvation is settled, then there is unhindered liberty for the affections to flow out. And when the soul has got peace, then it is ready to learn in quiet communion with God, all that He is about to do.

“And one of the elders said unto me, Weep not.” It is most striking how much these twenty-four elders are found occupying the Church's place of nearness to God; and we constantly find intelligence in these elders—not merely worship, but intelligence. They are always the persons who are the vessels of understanding— “made kings and priests.” The Church has a much higher kind of knowledge than that of the prophets, who prefaced their messages with a “Thus saith the Lord.” What the Lord had communicated to them, they delivered, and after they had delivered their message, they had to search into its meaning: for, as Peter says, “Not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto) on.” So, here, we find John in the character of a prophet had not the same kind of intelligence as the elders; he had just so much light given him as was revealed at the time, just so much as was needed for the delivery of his message, and no more. But now that the Holy Ghost is come down, and the full revelation is given of the mind of God in His written word, the Church, as such, having the mind of Christ, not only knows the message, but knows the mind of Christ about that which is revealed.

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

the king, exercising all power. So, likewise, the Church will share the power with Christ, for she will reign with Him, and will be the sharer with Him in everything, the essential glory of the Godhead excepted. Our proper portion now is not power, (I am not here speaking of spiritual power to overcome evil,) but now is the time for the Church to manifest wisdom in the understanding of the ways of God; having the Holy Ghost, which, as the Lord said, shall guide into all truth; but this must be through the written word, as the written word of God is the only depository of the truth of God. Therefore, it is the great instrument in the hand of God for communicating this knowledge through the teaching of the Holy Ghost, although at the same time He may be pleased to make use of various channels to accomplish it.

“The lion of the tribe of Judah hath prevailed,” &c. Thus we see that where there is the desire in the heart according to God's mind, He cannot fail to satisfy that desire. If the desire is expressed, even to weeping, it is infallibly answered with a “weep not;” for this reason that Christ has done that which will enable the mind of God to be communicated to every seeking soul. But this could not be before Christ came, as the Lord Himself says, “Blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear, for many prophets and righteous men,” &c. But the moment the work of redemption was accomplished, and Jesus sat down at the right hand of God, the Holy Ghost was sent down in testimony of the acceptance of the work and person of the risen Man, now in glory. And, therefore, now, whenever there is a desire in the heart according to God, it is always met and answered in the power of the Holy Ghost; for if Christ is revealed, then it is God's mind that we “should grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ.” But then there must be a lowly mind to receive it: “The meek will He guide in judgment, the meek will He teach his way.”

“Behold the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David,” &c. In the first place we get here the special definite counsels of God, as to the center of His purposes on the earth. Judah was the one in whom the promises were centered. When Jacob blessed his sons, he said, “Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise.” (Gen. 49:8.) The general promise at the beginning was, “the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head.” Then all was vested in Abraham's seed, “In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.” The line became narrower and narrower, Judah was chosen from amongst his brethren, and last of all the family of David; as it is said of the Lord, “He shall sit upon the throne of his father David.” It is not a throne in heaven, as governing creation, but a throne set upon the earth, to govern the earth. “When the Most High divided to the heathen their inheritance, He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel.” He is called the Lion of the tribe of Judah, because it is by power that He will accomplish God's counsels.

He is the “Root of David.” David, looked at as a type, and as a responsible man, had failed, and his family failed also; and this has always been the way whenever God has put man in a place of trust. But God cannot fail, and He must raise up a seed to David according to His promise. At the end of the book we see the Lord spoken of as the Offspring of David, as well as the Root, but before He can be manifested as the Offspring, He must be proved the Root. For He is the root and source of all the promises of God. In Him they are “yea, and amen,” whether for the Church of God, or for Israel. If David bears fruit of blessing, he is not the root, though he may be the stem; if he bears fruit, it must be through Him who is the root.

The Lord, meanwhile, takes another character, that of the Lamb. “In the midst of the throne stood a Lamb, as it had been slain” —the poor lowly one with the marks of humiliation. “As the sheep before his shearer is dumb, so he,” &c. In the “Lamb as it had been slain,” we find the Lord taking up a dispensational character, because of redemption; and thus we find Him as the lowly, uncomplaining, unresisting sufferer, in a world of sinners, and that is where real power is found. It is the same for us now; we dwell where evil prevails, and it is our place to suffer as Christ suffered, to have discernment between right and wrong, and to suffer, rather than yield for a moment to the evil. “In the midst of the throne stood a Lamb.” Although He was the suffering Lamb as regards the earth, still His real place was upon the throne itself. How blessed is the thought that Christ fills all things! If I go down into the lower parts of the earth, I find Him there. If I reach up to the throne of heaven, I find Him there; and not only as God, but as the One dealing with good and evil. What a blessed thing it is to find all this in the One who is so near to us! He who said, “I am among you as he that serveth,” He who washed the disciples' feet, is not going to cease to serve them; although He could not continue in companionship with them, He serves them still; yea, He will yet “come forth and serve them.” He who was one with the Father, to whom as the Son God had given everything, humbled Himself to be the servant! How blessed to see our full and perfect association with all that love and righteousness could bring! Oh! it is a solemn thought that there is no place in heaven above or in the earth below that is not filled with the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, except indeed in one sad exception, that of the heart of the poor, wretched, unbelieving sinner. There is no place from Calvary to the throne of God, that is not filled with the love and righteousness of God, as manifested in Christ; and if we could always give up to the knowledge of this, what quiet peace of heart should we enjoy! The very peace of God Himself would be keeping us, for we could get into no place or circumstances, sorrow or suffering, but we should find Christ there; and, as we were remarking, if Christ be between our hearts and the suffering, instead of the suffering getting between our hearts and Christ, we shall find the place of suffering to be the best place on the face of the earth for us, as all suffering will then bring us nearer to Christ. There is no middle place. The bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the High Priest for sin, are burned without the camp. (Heb. 12:11-13.) You must take up the cross outside, if you get the heavenly place inside. There was a veil over God for Israel, but we have liberty to enter into the holiest of all by the blood of Jesus. The veil is done away in Christ, and to us it is the throne and the temple up there, and the cross and the Lamb down here. Those who are in heavenly association with a risen Christ must have the cross down here, because we are alive and accepted within the veil. All that is precious is there. The Church is brought to see sin as God sees it—brought into the light as God is in the light, and, being cleansed from sin, gets into the sanctuary through the rent veil. That is our proper and only place, the earth being entirely shut out from us, excepting as we are just strangers and pilgrims through this wilderness world. And just in proportion as we practically know the cross down here, will be our enjoyment of fellowship with Christ up there in heavenly places. Light fills up all the space between the cross and the glory. There is no possible place that we can get into but we shall find Christ there; for to simple, single-eyed faith there is no spot between the cross and the glory, be it earth or be it heaven, that is not filled with Christ.

When John gets into this church-understanding, (as we may call it,) he sees a “Lamb as it had been slain;” and he sees power given to the Lamb, for in seven horns and seven eyes we have the perfection of power and all-seeing wisdom which is given to the Lamb, before a single seal is

opened. And before we get the unfolding of God's purposes, we have the presentation of the person of His Son. It is just this in God's dealings with a soul: the eye of the soul being fixed on the person of Christ is the way in which it gets peace; as before you can get peace of soul through the work of Christ, your eye must have rested on the person of Christ. It was so with the thief on the cross, with the poor woman of the city who was a sinner, who stood at His feet weeping. The soul must first be fixed upon the person of Him who has made the peace, before there is the knowledge of the work which has wrought the peace. Before it all, and after it all, it is Himself that is presented.

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

“A Lamb, having seven horns and seven eyes,” &e. It is not said here ten or twelve. The number “seven” denotes divine perfection; the number twelve denotes human perfection in its administrative power—there were twelve apostles, and twelve patriarchs. The seven eyes show the wisdom which sees everything; and the seven horns denote power. A horn is used throughout scripture as a symbol of power, whether in speaking of an individual or a kingdom. We will now refer to a few passages as showing the importance of the expression, “seven eyes.” The perfect harmony of this blessed book is a wonderful testimony (were it needed) to its divine origin, as no human skill or intellect could have preserved the connection between passages written 2,000 years apart. But we see the secret of it is, that the divine mind is running throughout the whole of Scripture. (See 2 Chron. 16:9.) “The eyes of the Lord run to and fro through the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of those whose heart is perfect towards Him.” Simply rely on the Lord in everything, just to do His will quietly, and He will show Himself strong on your behalf. Then in Zech. 3:9, “Upon one stone shall be seven eyes.” It was the figure of the establishment of God's authority in Jerusalem. Then in Zech. 4:10, “The eyes of the Lord (not in Zion merely, but going further out,) which run to and fro throughout the whole earth.” Besides seeing the general truth of the providential vision of God, we see that in a future time, when the true Branch is introduced, perfection is established in Jerusalem as the center of peace and blessing. Then these seven eyes will be established in Jerusalem as the center of peace and blessing. Meanwhile God is dealing with the earth, taking notice of everything, and manifesting His power in governing all things. And our place and portion is not that of power, but that of suffering with Christ. “If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him.” But in Rev. 5 we find these eyes of God in the midst of the throne in heaven. We hear nothing about the Father with the children, nor Christ as the Head of the body, with the members; but it is the rejected Lamb upon the throne of judgment in heaven, as He is not yet come forth to take His earthly throne, but on the throne of judgment “set in heaven,” having these eyes of wisdom and intelligence to unfold all God's purposes.

Now, then, having the person of the Lamb set before us, we get Him taking the book; and what a picture of full peaceful power (full power is always peaceful) when He takes all the purposes of God to unfold and accomplish them! It was not so when He took the cup of trembling; then He

said, “Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say?” And in order that the blessed purposes of God towards us might be fulfilled, He passed through that dreadful hour, the very thought of which made Him say, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.” He came under the full power of the wrath of God, for our full, perfect, and eternal blessing. It is the same Lamb in the midst of the throne, that drank the cup of wrath to the very dregs, that there might not be left one drop of sorrow, or trouble for those who know Him, which enabled Him as the slain Lamb, and at the same time, as the Wisdom of God and the Power of God, to take the book and unfold and accomplish all the deep purposes therein contained. (Ver. 8-10.)

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

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

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

Thus while we have seen the character of the Lion of the tribe of Judah to have been fully maintained, God never giving up one iota of His justice and holiness, at the same time through His wondrous wisdom, by the very rejection of the Lion of the tribe of Judah, poor sinners of the Gentiles are brought in. The gifts and calling of God are without repentance; therefore Israel will be restored according to His word. But meanwhile, He is bringing in Jews and Gentiles in a heavenly way. Redemption does not set aside the Lion of the tribe of Judah as the future source of blessing to Israel, but all kindreds of the earth must celebrate His praises in redemption.

“And hast made us unto our God kings and priests,” &c. We see here two things, royalty and priesthood. Besides the joy of being with God, as we have seen, we are also the nearest to God in power and worship. As the kingship brings us nearest to God in power, and the priesthood brings us nearest to God in worship, it is the blessed person of Christ, the slain Lamb, that introduces poor sinners into such high and blessed privileges; for Christ being made king and priest, we also are made kings and priests. All that Christ is made we are made, in Him now in the day of grace, and with Him then in the day of glory. We have the joy of this even now in our souls when walking close to God; but being still in bodies of sin and death, and thus still linked to the old creation, we groan being burdened: the presence of evil makes us groan. But when the throne is set in heaven, it will be for the deliverance of all that is now under the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God—not the liberty of grace, but the liberty of glory. Now the souls of those who believe are brought into the liberty of grace, and in the glory we shall be delivered from the body in which we now groan. Now it is the power of the Holy Ghost sustaining us against the streams of evil, but then it will be the exercise of divine power setting the evil aside. The Lord will reign then. If the Lord were ruling in direct dominion now, should we have all the misery and wretchedness that is around us on every hand? God does reign in one sense now, and in a most blessed sense for His children, for the very hairs of our head are all numbered. Yet now, as it is said, “One event happeneth alike to all, the righteous and the wicked.” But when Christ comes in power to take the universal dominion as the Son of man, He will discern between the righteous and the wicked, the evil and the good. Then the wicked will not prosper. The sun of grace has arisen in our hearts, and now it is given to the righteous to suffer for Christ's make. But when the Sun of Righteousness ariseth on the earth, when power comes in, in direct dominion, then a man shall be a covert from the storm. Now man does not know where to find a hiding-place. “The dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty.” But then the earth will rejoice in the fruit of the reign of Christ. Now we are to suffer with Christ, then we shall reign with Him. “When the heavens do rule,” then the saints of the Most High take the kingdom and reign with Christ. We are

not to be reigned over, but to reign with Him. Our joy will be in and with Christ, but our official place will be reigning with Him.

Ver. 11, 12. “The voice of many angels saying, Worthy is the Lamb,” &c. We do not find the same measure of intelligence in the angels as in the elders. The angels do celebrate the glory and honor and worthiness of the Lamb, but we do not find them wing that little word “for,” as was used by the elders, first, in connection with creation, “For thou hast created all things,” &c.; secondly, in connection with redemption, “For thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God,” &c. The Church is much nearer to God than angels, being one with Christ, and our bodies the temples of the Holy Ghost. This can never be said of an angel, although they are infinitely above us as creatures. “They excel in strength and hearken to the voice of His word.” Christ never died for an angel, and therefore took not on Him the nature of angels, but was made man for sinners; nor did He send the Holy Ghost to angels; and though they excel in strength, and as creatures are greater in power, still what is this to the display of His grace to a sinner? It is in redemption that God is fully glorified, and therefore it is that the redeemed ones get the nearest place to God, because in them redemption is unfolded. What amazing grace it is that could take up vile, depraved sinners that we are, and place us nearer the throne than those holy ones that never sinned, and always do His will!— “that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us through Christ Jesus.” Ought not our hearts to be moved by this? We cannot understand the loving-kindness of God, if we do not know the value of redemption. Affections flow from the apprehension of it, and praise will be the result. The lispings of a babe are acceptable.

But our hearts ought to be able to tell an angel what Christ has done for us, and why He is so precious to us. We shall be associated with Himself in the very presence of the glory of God. The angels are round about the throne. They know what power and blessing mean, for they ascribe it to Him who sits upon the throne. They see the glory of the person of the Lamb; but they know nothing of redemption. That word never comes out of their lips. How wonderfully we see that everything has its place in the counsels of God!

In verse 13 we see creation joining the full and universal chorus, ascribing glory to Him who sits upon the throne. They are in everlasting companionship with that divine glory. Not only do they worship Christ as God, but as the Lamb. It is as that glorified man that they acknowledge His Lordship. He is “God over all” truly, but takes a peculiar glory as Son of man, and this peculiar glory that Christ has got by redemption, will never be dimmed. As the Lamb He will always have it. Praise to the Lamb forever and ever! The very one whom we have loved, whom we have seen with our eyes by faith, whom we have handled as the Word of life, will be the object of eternal and unceasing adoration. What a thought it is! And we learn what the thoughts and counsels of God about us have been, when we see this company in the everlasting glory. He who became as one of ourselves; He who stooped to take the lowest place, and as having no sin to be made sin for us, is there as the universal object of praise. The place peculiar to the Church will be that of worship. It is a most blessed scene! The great thing that our hearts should rest upon, is the blessed character of the counsels of God as regards the Church, for we see the Church to be so thoroughly identified with Christ, that the moment God is going to bring in judgments for Christ, we find it has its place with Him in heaven. If the Church is His body, His Bride, He cannot leave it behind, IT being the fullness of Him who filleth all in all. There is no unfolding of the book, no sound or sign of that judgment which is to be brought in, until we have been in perfect peace around the throne, before

the Lamb, praising for redemption, that glorious, wonderful work of redemption. And while the rolling tide of judgment sweeps along, and like the deluge, rises higher and higher, until there be not one mountain-top left uncovered to escape upon, what we have to do, is to sing of the glory of that redemption, which has delivered us from the wrath to come. The Lord grant us to find in those things which redemption has wrought out, not merely peace of soul, but understanding of all God's counsels of glory about the Lamb who has accomplished it all.

Chapter 213

# Thoughts on Revelation 6-7

The ways of God with the church and with the world are always intended to have a practical application to our own individual souls. The expectation of the coming of the Lord changes the moral bearing of everything. There may be many a detail we are incompetent to explain, but we get from God a positive revelation which gives another aspect to all else. “the wise shall understand.” knowledge is not given for the sake of mere increase, but to “profit withal.” there are general principles which set the church right on many things. If I have been working for the conversion of the world through the spread of the gospel, what a different thought is presented in the three unclean spirits, like frogs, gathering the whole world together to fight against God!

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

When Abraham was on the mountain, God came and told him what was going to happen on the plain, things in which he himself was not at all concerned. This thought is of great importance, because, with the thought of being in the judgments, no wonder we should be like the men spoken of in Luke 21, whose hearts fail for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth. “Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked.” (Psa. 91) When Abraham rose in the morning (blessed morning for us!) and saw the smoke of the cities going up, where was he? On the mountain, where he had stood before the Lord, and where the Lord had talked with him. Our place is not like Noah, floating on the waters while the judgments are abroad. For him it was a question of being moved with fear and preparing an ark to the saving of his house; but we are destined by grace to be as Enoch, after walking with God here, looking down from heaven on things below. He prophesied of the Lord coming “with ten thousand of His saints;” but his own portion was on high. There will be a remnant on earth saved as by fire through the judgments; but this is not the Church. What a place this puts the heavenly saints into! What a character it gives to the Christian who should be ever expecting Christ! We are not of the world, even as Christ was not of the world; we are quickened and risen with Him. By and by we are to be caught up into our place as associated with Christ, before He visits the earth to make inquisition for the blood that has been shed from righteous Abel to the blood of Zacharias. What God is going to do upon the earth is not our happiest study, but it helps to keep our affections set on the right objects. The Christian can say to those who are busying themselves about the politics, the riches, the hopes, the improvements, of the world, “See where your world is going to end! it is not my world at all.” There may be a carnal seeking for detail in the study of this book, but to know these

things from God solemnizes the heart and puts the world into its proper background as a doomed system. God does communicate his purposes to us now, as He did of old to Abraham.

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

To get the moral influence and right understanding of these things it is most important to remember that the Church is a heavenly body connected with the Lamb in heaven. I believe there has been, in a certain measure, a lengthened accomplishment of the opening of the seals. This is a general principle in Scripture. Thus our Lord could say, “If ye will believe it, this was Elias which was for to come.” John said, “even now are there many antichrists,” but this was in no wise the fulfillment of all that was true about the Antichrist. It was not yet the person, but it was evil and error which had the moral stamp of him who was coming. Antichrist is the great characteristic of the “last times,” growing out of the corruption of the last good thing that God brought in before judgment. When the heavenly thing that God sent into the world was, as a dispensation, spoiled, Antichrist entered. “He is the Antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son;” he also denies that Jesus is the Christ. It is the activity of the false spirit, instead of the true. Could anything more be revealed than the Father and the Son? The presence of many antichrists was not the accomplishment of the coming of Antichrist, but it was and is a state which answers in spirit and character to it. When such a state is tried to be proved the full accomplishment, (as in the historical scheme,) Christ is not put in His right place in connection with it all. But, from this book doubtless, we may discern the elements of all that evil which will hereafter be ripened—the principles now, but not the accomplishment till by and by. The spirit of Babylon is in Popery: but Popery exclusively is not Babylon. We go morally wrong as to what God is about, if we do not keep in view the great end which He is unfolding in the Revelation, viz., the introduction of Christ into the world as the “First-begotten,” and this too, as the “Faithful Witness,” after the failure of the Church to be the true witness.

The great thing is to know, by God's teaching, what God is occupied with. Suppose David had gone and put the ark into the tabernacle after Ichabod had been written upon it, it would not have been piety, however it might have been thought so; to do so, would have been like going back and saying, “It is not Ichabod.” God was going to supplant the tabernacle and set up the temple. The ark had been carried into captivity, and God had let it go. How could it have gone into captivity without Him? as David says, “He forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, and delivered His strength into

captivity, His glory into the enemies' hand," (Psa. 78:60, 61,) and this because He had given up the people. This is all simple to him who understands. "The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those that are revealed belong to us." If a person is not spiritual, he cannot understand: he has no moral or spiritual power to discern God's mind. But where there is spiritual discernment, things get simple and clear as daylight. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant." Where there is the fear of the Lord, there will be the understanding of His word and mind. But the word of God will not be simple without subjection to him.

We will now turn to the progress of the evil as it will be in the latter day. The first thing is the general providential coming in of trouble and sorrow. Symbols are a regular language conveying certain universal ideas. It is important we should be clear as to the abstract principle. The sun, for instance, used in Scripture continually, as a symbol means supreme power. It is said, "the Sun of righteousness shall arise," &c.; but it may not be always used for Christ. Sometimes it might be used of God's enemy. (Ezek. 32:7.) It simply means the ruler of a given system. Trees, thus employed, signify the greatest in a kingdom as distinguished from the grass. The horse denotes imperial power in aggressive exercise; and a white horse is that power victorious. Thus victorious, subjugating power, whether of Christ, or Antichrist, &c., might be represented as a white horse. Other features enter and decide who is meant.

In chapter vi. 2, the rider on the white horse goes forth conquering and to conquer. Then war comes on. (Ver. 4.) Then comes a "black horse:" here we see anxiety as to provisions. The color denotes mourning. Verse 8 is the "pale horse." It is distress among nations, closing in with God's accumulating judgments, famine, &c.-what He calls His "four sore judgments" in Ezekiel. Then the fifth seal opens to us what has been going on in the earth. It is a very definite scene. We see the souls of those who had been slain like victims for God; therefore they are under the altar of burnt-offering. Mark what they say, for this shows who they are: they cry for vengeance. They who have been killed for God at the time meant are in the spirit of retribution. They have not the blessed hope of being taken up to glory, but they cry, "How long dost thou not avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth." They had been mixed up with the dwellers upon earth; they have suffered from them, and it is upon these they cry for judgment. It is a blessed thing to see divine deliverance from the power of evil on the earth. In Psa. 94 we see the same thing, in a lower measure, but the same spirit. "O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, shew thyself . . . Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee?" God was going to set up the throne at Jerusalem, and these godly ones caught the tone of the coming day. We do not say, "How long shall the wicked triumph?" (though we anticipate in spirit the Lord's setting aside of evil) but, How long before thou takest us to thyself? How long before thou takest thy Bride to be with thee in heaven? The difference is very great, and so are the practical results in communion and ways. And mark another thing, They are told that they must wait. They find their place, and the white robe is given them, but they have to wait until others are killed, and the number fulfilled, (i.e., those who would not worship the beast, chap. xv.) They have thus a partial answer, but not a full one yet. The sentence of judgment is not executed yet, because iniquity is not filled up to the uttermost. They are getting the silent fruit of righteousness and their place above, but not judgment, because there is a distinct epoch to come in before. In chapter 20:4, the other class is completed, and then there can be judgment to the uttermost.

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

Before the judgment comes out, the Lord shows His saints all cared for. In the first eight verses of chapter vii. we see the sealing of the elect 144,000 of Israel, (12 being a mystic number). In verse 9 onwards, we see the countless company out of every nation under heaven. These are distinct from the elders who have intelligence. One of the elders says, “these are they which come out of the great tribulation.” The Church always has intelligence. “We have the mind of Christ.” What are the blessings of this remnant? Simply relief. They have neither joy nor intelligence like the elders. It would be a great comfort to have rest in this way, but that is all. They have been through tribulation, and they shall now have no more of it; but we do not find them filled with the Spirit, worshipping in the fullness of joy: “Thou art worthy.” &c.

By and by will be fulfilled in the crisis of the world the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be delivered out of it. So will these Gentiles also. They cry, “Salvation to our God which sitteth on the throne and unto the Lamb.” This is to me a proof that it is not the Church here speaking, for there is nothing of the Father. The place and character given to their salvation is that it is from God upon the throne. It is real salvation of course, but of a different character. It is not they who go in with Christ into the Father's house, or are coming with Christ to the judgment.

It is the throne of judgment, and God has delivered them from the great tribulation; “Therefore are they before the throne of God,” and “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” In the gospel we may say God is doing all this for us now; He wipes away all tears from their eyes, and gives rest to our hearts now. Tears we may have for others, but not for ourselves. The saints are going in triumph to heaven; they even sit with Christ in the heavenly places, while here. They have got nearer to God in a different revelation from this. They have lived near Christ—members of His body; in an atmosphere which this language will not suit.

How much of our hearts should seek while seeing God's government and care, to get into the peaceful, happy consciousness of the place that Christ has given us; that our souls may live in the enjoyment of our common portion in Christ. It is not vengeance we look for; or such deliverance as this, but Himself. The soul, knowing this, has a quiet, happy, peaceful sphere, separate from all around. It does not want the world nor the things of the world. It can say, “I know whom I have believed.” “To depart and be with Christ is far better,” not for a term to our sorrow, but that the very radiance of Christ may shine in full power into the soul. Stephen, looking up, saw heaven opened,

and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. It is a terrible world we are passing through: vanity that attracts the flesh, and misery that rakes the heart. But in Christ we get that which makes the vanity tinsel. When Jesus walked through the world He saw nothing but trouble and misery in it, while He came to bring in blessing. “He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” Alas! for the man who is not this, but finds pleasure in vanity, and that which is contrary to Christ. It is not with ill will, not with scorn that the saint looks at this poor world, but his heart is weaned from it, and he does not want it. A heart that is weaned from the world can pity what is great in it, if Christ is not known, and can comfort where there is sorrow, because he can speak of Christ as the remedy who came to pour oil and wine into the rent sin has made. He can pity what is great, because it is not Christ, and He can comfort what is sorrowful because it is Christ. Let us seek to get through this world in His spirit and mind, carrying Him with us.

Chapter 214

# Righteousness and Law

Further Remarks open Righteousness and Law, with Answers to different Objections. London: W. H. Broom.

The following extract will suffice to introduce this pamphlet to the reader:

I close by stating, as briefly as I can, what the real question in all this controversy is, and what I believe to be the truth as to it. My opponents hold that we are all under the law, and that Christ, born under the law, kept it for us, and that this is the way we are justified and obtain righteousness. It is well my readers should recall that all this controversy arose from the preaching of Mr. Molyneux, in Exeter Hall, who declared that if a man was born again of the Spirit, and washed in Christ's blood, still he could not go to heaven; that there was written on heaven's gates, Do this and live;" that we are sanctified by the Spirit, cleansed by Christ's blood, but had positive righteousness only by the law's being kept. As to which, remark it is not merely that the law is a rule of life which is asserted, but specifically that righteousness comes by the law. All this I reject, founding my opposition on the plain and repeated statements on the Word of God. It is making a righteousness in flesh for men in the flesh by the law to which they are, as in the flesh, subject; and, moreover, at the same time, excusing their fulfilling it actually, by another's doing it for them. But, specially, it is a first Adam righteousness, a righteousness for man in flesh.

Now, I believe that it is not the mind of God to set up righteousness of man in flesh, or to set up sinful flesh again in any way. He has put the saints in a wholly new position in the second Adam, passing sentence of death and condemnation on the flesh never to be removed. Christ, as come down here, in the likeness of sinful flesh, but perfectly sinless, come under the law, in the place and circumstances where man was, but having entered into them by a miraculous birth, as every Christian owns, was perfect in this place, glorified God in it. And all that perfectness was needed for God's glory, and for His being our Savior; but He did not do it to set up man in the flesh again, (flesh had proved in His death its hopeless enmity to God,) but to bring man into a wholly new state, (where even Adam innocent had never been,) by resurrection, Himself the first fruits. The Old Testament saints having to await our entering into it to be made perfect with us. The Lord Jesus gives us a place, not under law, but in resurrection, and finally with Himself risen Hence the blessed Lord, to glorify His Father, yea, God's own nature in this behalf, not only, as I have said, was perfect, and kept the law in the midst of temptations, glorifying God in every way in life, but through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, bearing our sins and the wrath due to them, taking the curse of the law on Himself—thus cleared the believer perfectly, having by one offering perfected forever them that are sanctified. We, believing in Him, are clear, justified from all things which attached to us, in our position of men in flesh. But flesh in His death is judged, condemned, and sentenced forever. But this was as not all. He glorified God perfectly in dying. Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him. Hence, raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, God has glorified Him in Himself, and straightway. This is witnessed in His resurrection and, we may add, ascension. But He is raised again for our justification and appears

in the presence of God for us. Hence we have justification of life, and from him risen a wholly new life, standing, and nature, though we have the treasure in an earthen vessel, standing before God as to acceptance, in the acceptance He is in, by His glorifying God in what He stood in for us, on the cross. We are not in the flesh at all; not in the flesh. but in the Spirit; and the Spirit of God dwelling in us, we know we are in Him and He in us. It is a new creation, where what belongs to the old things is passed away. Hence, when in Christ, we reckon ourselves dead to sin, to the old man, and the law, alive to God by Jesus Christ thus risen and gone on high, when had by Himself purged our sins. Our place in the Spirit is wholly in Him, according to the power of the life of the second Adam, risen front the dead. We are dead and our life is hid with Christ in God. This it is connects inseparably godliness and justification. Christ is both righteousness and life to us. We are in Him for one, He in us as the other, the Spirit given to us giving us the consciousness of it (John 14) This, and not our being under law, is the true way of godliness. It is not the imposition of human righteousness on flesh which world it not; but the display of the life of Christ in us. Against that as the Apostle says, speaking of the fruits of the Spirit, there is no law. The safeguard of this is not changing the principle and putting us back, under law, which Scripture forbids, but the precepts, commandments, example of Christ, the government of God, and the discipline of the church itself.

Our acceptance is in the whole of the work of Christ, and in Himself who has done it, and that according to the value God has, and has manifested for it, in virtue of which Christ sits at His right hand, and we in Him. To return into flesh and law, is to ruin and subvert all this. It is not Christianity. The man who only sees that Christ has died for him, knows what justifies him from all his sins as a man in flesh, has the ground of peace, and is a Christian; the man who sees that he is risen with Christ, and in Him, in God's presence, according to the glorifying of God by the man Christ Jesus, knows his acceptance in the beloved, and the character of it. Christ is his righteousness. He knows what the righteousness of God is—that He is made it in Christ, who was made sin for us. He who brings us buck under law, brings us hack into flesh, and subverts the whole truth. It may be only a blunder in His mind, and he may sincerely trust in Christ's precious blood, and he a Christian; but all is obscured and muddied by his views; he cannot stand in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free. He does not know what it is to be dead with Christ; to reckon himself dead; nor risen with Him; nor sitting in heavenly places in Him. All this is dark to him, as we have seen in those who have written against this view. Being dead to sin they openly deny, save as dead to their guilt, to which, on the contrary, they ought to be ever alive; and being in resurrection in Christ, is a hopeless riddle to them.

Chapter 215

# Christ Is Righteousness

Christ is righteousness, and if is imputed to us, for it is not our own bring. But the point which is always avoided is, that imputing righteousness has the sense in scripture of accounting the man righteous (and not seeing this is at the root of the fallacy of all they say), not of something done which is imputed. It might be in that way or not; but it does not say this; it is not in its meaning. It is not somebody else's righteousness imputed to me, but my being accounted righteous. Many being constituted sinners by one man's disobedience is not saying that the individual's sin was imputed to them, but that they by him all entered into and stood in that standing before God into which he got by that one sin. All are looked at as in his loins, and as alienated, and in sin before God. It is really the opposite of imputation of a particular act, as far as this passage goes

Chapter 216

# Scripture Queries and Answers: 2 Peter 1:19-21

Q 1. Is the similitude of Christ's service in heaven after the order of Melchisedec or after the order of Aaron?

If Christ's priesthood is solely of the Melchisedec order, how can it be Aaronic in its character?

The Aaronic service, presented in the Hebrews, is it solely a contrast, or is it also a similitude of the Lord Jesus Christ? O. P.

A. 1. We are expressly taught in Scripture that Christ is "called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec." (Heb. 5; 6) Nay more, we read in Heb. 7:11 of another priest that should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron. But, observe, it is here a question of order, not of exercise There was one undying Priest, not a succession. Hence, When the exercise of priesthood is in question, the pattern of Aaron is employed, not of Melchisedec. That is, there is a sanctuary, and intercession within the veil, founded on the shedding of blood, not the bringing out bread and wine to the conqueror over the previously triumphant kings of the earth. The Melchisedec priesthood will be exercised in the millennium.

There is contrast as well as resemblance traced in Heb. 5-10; for the Aaronic priest, like the rest of the Levitical institute, was the shadow and not the image itself of the things set forth.

Chapter 217

# Scripture Queries and Answers: Christ's Service in Heaven

Q. 1. How is John 2:20 to be reconciled with Dan. 9?

If Christ had been received instead of being cut off, when would the seventieth week have come in?

Will Elijah be the preparer of the way, as was John?

J. H.

A. 1. There is nothing that I see to reconcile between John 2 and Dan. 9, for the seven weeks (forty-nine years) refer to the building of the street and the wall, not of the temple—still less of that building begun by Herod the Great.

The cutting off is not tied to the sixty-ninth week, but is predicted as that which should be (it is not said how long) after the sixty-nine weeks. This leaves a margin which some have filled up with a seventieth week. But the fact is, that if Christ had been received, there could have been no such period as the seventieth week.

John Baptist's coming was only Elias to faith, or “if ye will receive it.” His coming in power will he actually before the great and terrible day of the Lord, as the other was in spirit before the day of grace.

Chapter 218

# Scripture Queries and Answers: Difference Between the Church and the Body

Q. In Eph. 1:23 the Church is said to be the body of Christ. Is it correct therefore to say the Church is in ruins? or is there a difference between the Church and the body? H. C. P.

A. While the Church is the body of Christ, it is also the house of God, and may have in this point of view vessels to dishonor within it, and be in the gravest disorder. If one spoke of the ruin of the body, (or even rending the body,) the language would be exceptionable. But the ruin of the Church is but a brief expression of a state predicted, and even begun, God's account of which is spread over a large part of the New Testament, especially the later Epistles and the Revelation.

Chapter 219

# Scripture Queries and Answers: Isaiah 28-29

Q. 2 Peter 1:19-21. - Can the prophetic word here be said in any just sense to include the revelation of the mystery? or is it not rather in contrast? Why the change from “we” to “ye” in verse 19? What is the meaning of “the day dawn” and “the day-star arise in your hearts?”

MAOHTHI.

A. The change from “we” to “ye” is very simple. “We,” Peter and all, possess the word of prophecy; the °” ye” applies to those he was exhorting. The mystery is not in the passage at all; but the “word of prophecy” is here in contrast, not directly with the mystery (though that connects itself with this), but with the day-star and the day dawning. Prophecy is a light in a dark place, this world; and refers to the events happening in this world and the judgment. And it is very well, as regards this world, to take heed to it. When the day is come, it will he Christ revealed judgment on the world (comp. Mal. 4) and resulting blessing. But there is a better hope for those who watch, and in contrast with judgment: the dawn and the star not seen by those who only appear When the sun is risen, but for saints who look for Christ before He appears, not warned merely and detached from earth, but associated in heart with Christ in heaven.

Chapter 220

# Scripture Queries and Answers: Luke 18:10-14

Luke 18:10-14.

Q. (1.) What is the instruction conveyed by the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican?

What is the force of “with himself,” in verse 11?

What is meant by “afar off,” in verse 13?

What is to be understood by “be merciful?” Is the English Version faulty here? Is propitiation or reconciliation expressed by the Greek?

What is meant by the word “justified?"' Is “rather” introduced without warrant? Is the sense, justified perfectly, or comparatively? Are we taught here that the publican went down to his house “justified” in the doctrinal sense of Rom. 3; 4:5; 8? T.

A. (1.) The parable teaches God's judgment of those who trust in their own righteousness and despise others, as the introductory verse expressly says. The entire context shows the setting aside of self for the kingdom of God; of self in any form you please. Self-righteousness is excluded in this parable; self-importance is rebuked in the incident of the little children blessed of Jesus.; self, in the way of amiable nature, moral habits, high position, and large possessions, is treated as null and void in the rich ruler. The greatest advantages, humanly speaking, of flesh and world, are a hindrance, not a help, to the kingdom.

(2.)The phrase, “prayed thus with himself,” (πρ■ς ■αυτ■ν,) means that he prayed to this effect, not aloud in the hearing of others, but silently. We can easily see from what follows, that there was neither heart nor conscience in the matter, unlike the broken, humbled, publican; but communion with others was hardly in question in either case. What God wanted and valued was the conscience in His presence, and this the publican evinced, not the Pharisee.

(3.) The standing of the publican “afar off,” was a just and simple expression of his distance from God as a sinner; and the more appropriate, as though touched of the Spirit and penitent, the work was not yet done which brings nigh to God.

(4.) Hence, also, I believe that the English Bible quite rightly renders ■λ■σθητ■ μοι “be merciful to me.” No doubt, it differs from the expression ■λ■ησ■ν με, in verses 38, 39, as the special differs from the more general phrase. But there is nothing in the Greek, any more than in the English, which implies that the publican was here pleading propitiation, still less reconciliation. Undoubtedly, in God's mind, mercy could only be shown to a sinful man in virtue of the foreseen atonement of the Savior; but the phrase itself, in the mouth and supposed condition of the publican, does not go beyond his heart's appeal for God's pardoning mercy to the sinner before Him, if ever there was one. (τ■ ■μαρτωλ■) So in Psa. 25:11, David cries, “For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon (■λ■σ■ in the LXX.) my iniquity, for it is great.” A doctrinal reference is not the point in either, though we know, of course, that there was only one way whereby the cry could be

answered. The mere word no more necessarily teaches “propitiation,” than the Englishman does who talks of “propitious weather.” Compare the use of the kindred word ■λεως in Matt. 16:22.

(5.) There is no ground to infer that “justification,” as taught in Romans and elsewhere, is meant in the expression, not only for reasons involved in what has been remarked already, but yet more, because our Lord does not say that he “went down to his house justified.” We must beware of taking from Scripture no less than of adding to it. Now the sense here is not absolute but comparative justification, just as in that expression of Judah in the Septuagint Version of Gen. 38:26, δεδικα■ωται Θ■μαρ ■ ■γ■ “Thamar is justified rather than I,” (i. e., more righteous.) “Rather,” or “more,” is decidedly implied by the commonly received reading, ■ ■κε■νος. For my own part, however, I cannot but prefer πα■ ■κε■νον, the reading of the Vatican, Sinai, and Paris (No. 62) Uncials, supported by some good cursives and other authorities. This probably gave rise to ■ γαρ ■κε■νος by a blunder of the scribes, which found its way into the great majority of copies. Beza's MS. (D) is almost a paraphrase as to this, μαλλον παρ αιακεινον τοω φαρισαιον. But every variation proves that the sense intended is that the publican was justified in comparison with the Pharisee, and therefore that the doctrinal allusion is out of the question.

Chapter 221

# Thoughts on Second Corinthians

In the midst of the fears and warnings of the Spirit concerning the churches, we may observe that He is alarmed for them on several and different grounds, as expressed in different epistles and by different apostles.

1. He specially warns them respecting Judaizing, i.e., religiousness, or the observance of rites and ordinances. This fear is expressed in the letters to Galatia, Colosse, and Philippi.

2. He fears for them respecting the working of an infidel mind, the mind which, corrupted by reasoning, denies mysteries. This is seen in 1 John 4:1; 2 Peter 3:3, 4.

3. He fears for them also on the ground of abusing grace, or licentiousness, the practical denial of godliness while boasting in grace and liberty. This is seen in 2 Peter 2 and in Jude.

4. He fears also worldliness.

It is this last feature of fear filling the mind of the Spirit about the saints or churches, and shaping apostolic ministry, which has just struck me in connection with 2 Corinthians.

This is a distinct character of fear. It is not an apprehension of religiousness, or infidelity, or licentiousness corrupting the churches; it is formally distinct from each of these. The Grecian style may have exposed the Corinthians specially to a simple worldly attraction, to the pretensions of a man of refinement and station and independence, who had much in the flesh; that is, from nature and from circumstances, that was attractive and showy. This was worldliness.

The fear about Corinth was not respecting religious or Judaizing influence. Neither was it (at least in the second epistle) from the working of an infidel mind, or from the sports of an unclean and lustful nature, but “the god of this world” was feared by the apostle.

A certain man appears to have gained attention, who had much more both from nature and from circumstances than the apostle; and the saints at Corinth were moved by this. He was, I believe, as modern language speaks, a gentleman. He had a fine person and an independent fortune. He had many advantages of that kind; and the Corinthians were under that evil influence—to some extent they had been beguiled. They were looking on things after the outward appearance. They were suffering a man vaunting of himself, and lording it over them, and taking occasion by some low and worldly advantages he possessed from nature and from circumstances to be somebody.

Such a bad condition the apostle has to contend with. Affection and confidence toward himself had been withdrawn in measure, because he had no such advantages to boast. And surely he was fully purposed not to affect such things at all. It is true, he would be independent as well as the other, but it should arise from his working with his own hand, not from advantages of fortune, as we say. And though he had certain things of which he might boast in the flesh, he would glory rather in his infirmities. He would be “weak in Christ,” i.e., in fellowship with Him who was “crucified in weakness,” that all his strength might be spiritual, or resurrection-strength.

The natural advantages which this man had he used, taking to himself the importance and value which attach to such things in the world. And some of the saints were corrupted. But against such association be protests in chapter 6, “Be ye not unequally yoked,” he says. And the manner of this man he exposes more fully, setting his own way forth as contrary to it, in chapters 10 - 12.

And in doing this, in offering himself as a practical witness of a way different from this man of the world, we may notice these particulars:

The apostle refuses to know himself, or to be known by the saints, save according to his measure in the Spirit, and not as he was by nature or in the flesh.

He glories only in either his infirmities or in such dignities as separated him from all worldly estimation, as his rapture into paradise; for the world would not understand such honor.

Such an one does the apostle present himself in contradiction of the man who gloried in the flesh. We may know how hard it is to follow him in such a path, in a willingness to be weak that we may be strong; in his decision to know Christ in the weakness of His cross, so that whatever strength he knew might be as of resurrection. (Chap. 13: 4)

I dare say, some were tempted to undervalue the office or apostleship of Paul, because he had not the advantage in the flesh of other apostles. He had not companied with the Lord in the days of His flesh; and in his own flesh he had a thorn. This may further have exposed him to observation by those who judged after the flesh. But the apostle was willing that his ministry or office should remain unrecommended by anything the world could appreciate. He valued only that power of God, that power in the Spirit which accompanied his ministry, and which was fitted to tell on hearts and consciences, power which linked, him with the Lord in life or resurrection.

Every symptom of weakness in man's account gathered round the blessed Lord in the day of His crucifixion: desertion and denial by those who should have stood with Him, the enmity of man in every form in which it could have expressed itself, the forsaking of God, all the malice and purpose of Satan. This was the full exhibition of all that was weak, miserable, and despised in the world's account. None were for Jesus, all was against Him, and even nature seemed to join. But Paul was willing that his ministry should be in moral sympathy with His.

Generally, as to this epistle, I would say, it might distribute itself as follows:

Chap. 1-2:13. In this portion the apostle speaks of his trials in the gospel, and answers objections made to him because of his not having visited Corinth a second time.

Chap. 2:14 - 7: 4. This is a parenthesis. The apostle presents his ministry in several characteristics of it.

Chap. 7:5-16. Here the apostle resumes and pursues the point from which he had departed at chapter ii. 13. He expresses his joy in the Corinthians, and in the grace that was in them.

Chap. 8, 9. This is quite incidental.

Chap. 10 -13. The great and leading purpose of the epistle occupies these chapters. The apostle contemplates the way of a certain injurious teacher who had acquired influence at Corinth, and he intimates the fruit of that influence; largely, also, exhibiting his own way as a teacher in

contradiction of him who was then corrupting the saints.

This may be read as a general analysis of the epistle, I believe.

I might observe, that the apostle's commendation of the Corinthians in chapter 7, previous to his large and fervent rebuke of them in chapters 10 - 13, may remind us of the way of the Spirit in His addresses to the seven churches in the Revelation; for in each of them there is a beginning with a commendation, and then (when called for) an enlarging in the way of rebuke and condemnation.

Chapter 222

# Fragment: To See God

In reading 1 John 4:12-15, notice that if no man hath seen God at any time, yet faith enables the apostle, and should enable us, to say, we have seen God; and so seeing Him in the gift of Jesus, we can testify too.

Chapter 223

# Fragment: Self-Occupation Degrades a Saint

Occupation with self is real degradation in a saint of God; exaltation morally is the humility that abandons self to be filled with Christ.

Chapter 224

# Fragment: Service for Christ and His Love to Me

It is an unspeakable privilege to have any work to do for Christ; but if He sees in me something tending to exalt my flesh, He must lay me by and make me to be satisfied with His approbation, He may say, as to Philadelphia, “I know thy works,” and then say nothing about them. Are you content with His approval? to hear Him say, “have loved thee?” This is what the heart has to be satisfied with; not from any service in which He may occupy me, but in the calm, settled confidence that Christ loves me.

Chapter 225

# The Sheaf of First-Fruits

(Lev. 23:9-14; Luke 24:44-53)

The sheaf of firstfruits was, typically, Christ risen. “On the morrow after the sabbath” it was waved, and that was the first or resurrection-day.

In the ordinance of waving it we observe the following particulars:-

1. The Jew, i.e., Israel as a nation, was to bring the sheaf to the priest.

2. The priest was to wave it before the Lord, to be accepted for Israel.

3. Israel was, then, to offer a burnt offering with its meat and drink offering.

4. Israel was not to eat of the new corn, in any shape, till this was done.

This ordinance, very simple in its materials, was very significant of the way of a believer or of the Church touching the resurrection of Christ, as we see that way presented to us in Luke 24:44-53.

The disciples bring the sheaf, i.e., they apprehend and believe the fact of the resurrection. (Ver. 44, 45.)

Christ, the true Priest, teaches them that this resurrection was for them—that the sheaf was accepted of the Lord for them, and He gives theta a blessed pledge of this. (Ver. 46-51.)

They make their offerings, because of this, offerings of worship and joy. (Ver. 52.)

They know of no eating, no feast, no communion, but in connection with the waved sheaf, or risen Christ. They occupy the temple only as in company with that very story. (Ver. 53.)

Such is the simple and direct illustration of this beautiful type, which the earliest moment, 1 may say, in the experience of the saints after the resurrection of the Lord affords us.

The principal point of attraction, at least, at present with me, is in Luke 24:53, connected, as it is, with Lev. 23:14.

The disciples can do nothing but rejoice in the wave sheaf. It affords them their one commanding, absorbing thought. They fill the temple, not as worshipping Jews, with sacrifices and remembrances of sins, but as believing souls with thanksgiving for the resurrection and the remission of sins.

It was the first day of harvest with them. They have lost sight of the temple, save as the due spot for rendering of on the leaving of the firstfruits.

And in all this we have another form of owning, as David did in his day, a new place of service. (1 Chron. 20) The wave sheaf or Christ risen tells us, like Oman's threshing-floor, that “mercy rejoices over judgment.” David, therefore could not seek the former altar, or the high place at

Gibeon; and so the disciples here forget the old temple, or the temple in all its wonted services, except that which belonged to the first day of harvest.

The resurrection had already done much sweet service for them. It had removed their fears, cleared up many a doubt and perplexity, gratified their poor wounded affections, anticipated the toil of their hands at the great stone of the sepulcher, and the value of their spices for the body of their Lord. But now it does the sublimest service of all for them: it changes their religion. As it had already rolled away the heavy stone for them from the door of the sepulcher, so does it now roll away a yoke which neither they nor their fathers had been able to bear. It builds a temple for them fairer than Solomon's. They serve now in the sense of the victory of Jesus, in the waving before the Lord of the sheaf of firstfruits accepted for them. “They returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God.” Their's was now, as the Church's still is, the religion of the victory or resurrection of Christ.

Chapter 226

# Scripture Query and Answer: Christian's Sinning-Remedy

Q. Do not the Epistles of John clearly prove that a Christian does not live without sinning, and that when he sins he ought to confess his sin to God?

2. How does our being forgiven if we confess our sins (1 John 1:9) agree with 1 John 2:12, which says, “I write unto you because your sins are forgiven you,” and many other similar passages?

Does the forgiveness or confession imply that we then have the fruit of forgiveness in restored communion? or more than this? or something different from this?

Does the passage, “He that is clean needeth not save to wash his feet,” throw any light on the forgiveness of those already saved?

Is the prayer of our Lord's—that Peter's faith fail not—an instance of His intercession?

is there any relation between our confession of sins, and the Lord's intercession for us?

What is the nature of Christ's intercession? Is it asking God to forgive us, (and, if so, how does this harmonize with our being now forgiven,) or asking for restored communion, or what? Is John 17 an instance of intercession?

To what and when does John 16:25-27 refer? “At that day ye shall ask in my name, and I say not unto you that I will pray the Father for you, for the Father himself loveth you.”

In Christ's being able to save us from our sin, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for us, is it, “save us from our sins eternally,” or “save us from all the dangers of the way—to the end?” And what has intercession to do with it?

Is there any connection between Christ being our Intercessor and Satan being our accuser, seeing (from Job) that Satan has access to the presence of God?

11. What is the meaning of Christ being our Advocate? (1 John 1.) Is it in the sense of pleader, or more as a friend at court?' (It has been translated “Patron.") It is connected with “if any man sin.”

M.

A. I do not think 1 John supposes that a Christian does not live without sinning. It shows that a holy provision is made for him, in case he does. It declares he cannot say he has no sin, but sinning is put in the past. James, however, declares de facto we all offend in many things.

2. 1 John 1:9, speaks neither of the time of our conversion, nor of our failures after it. Like John's usual statements, it is abstract confession, which, and which alone, is true integrity of heart, and actual forgiveness goes together. We are personally forgiven all trespasses, and stand abidingly in the power of that forgiveness, so that nothing is imputed to us personally (that is so as to put our persons out of grace). There is the present grace wherein we stand. But as regards the government of God it is another matter. Then I read, “If he have committed sins, they shall be

forgiven him.” Hence we are to pray for those who have sinned not unto death, to confess our faults one to another, and to pray one for another. Hence in its place the Church, and Paul in his, could forgive sins, as we read in Corinthians. There was a binding in heaven of what was bound on earth, and a loosing in heaven of what was loosed on earth. So, when at Paul's first answer all men forsook him, he prayed that this might not be laid to their charge.

3. The Lord's warnings to His disciples that, if they did not forgive, they would not be forgiven, equally apply. It is not a question of justification with the believer, but of present relationship in divine favor, which some seem to forget altogether. It is not merely that we have the fruit of forgiveness in restored communion, though that be true, but the positive present aspect of God, as a governor in relationship with him, He its displeased with certain things, may cause me to die through His displeasure, if I do not judge myself—has done so, as we learn in Scripture, both historically and doctrinally.

4. The passage in John 13 (as does indeed the red heifer) shows distinctly the way of cleansing when a man has defiled himself in his walk. He is cleansed by the washing of regeneration once for all, but needs to wash his feet and must have them washed. And this it is which carries up, farther than mere discipline, the forgiveness of the Church. We are to wash one another's feet, but we need this washing in its place to have a part with Christ. God takes care we shall be clean, but we must be clean to be with Him, not by renewed blood-sprinkling in respect of imputation, but by washing the feet with water, that we may have truth in the inward parts with Him, and have no defilement of walk on us.

5. I do not know what the question as to Christ's prayer means. It was intercession. The character of intercession may be different now that He is on high, and refer to a different standing in which we are, but praying for him was intercession.

6. The Lord's intercession for us produces, as its result, the fruits of grace, of which confession is the fruit in every honest heart.

7. Christ's intercession is to make good our present state in conformity with the place justifying forgiveness has placed us in. It is founded on ‘righteous' and ‘propitiation.' These being perfect, our faults, (instead of bringing imputation, or being allowed to harden the heart and produce falseness in the conscience,) call out His advocacy and the soul is restored. Forgiveness in the absolute sense is righteousness, as regards clearance from all imputation of sins of the old man, but in Christ, we being in heavenly places according to God's righteousness, everything inconsistent with our relationship to God as brought there is a just cause of God's actual displeasure. God is not mocked; but Christ intercedes for us, and, by that which rests on righteousness and propitiation, the fault becomes the occasion of instruction and a deepened work and state in us. Now, for every true saint, this present condition of our souls with God is the capital thing, founded on the fact that he is reconciled to God, and accepted perfectly in His presence in righteousness. It is being thus in His presence which is the ground of all present relationship with God. God's character is not changed because we are brought perfectly near Him, but that character acts on our conscience, and forms it. We walk in the light as He is in the light; and if we do not walk according to the light, we find it out, because we are in the light; and to this effect Christ's advocacy comes in, We know God's displeasure against sin. I do not talk of imputation. I say it is displeasure against sin; and if we have sinned, apprehend that in the light. It is not merely

loss of communion, but knowledge of God's displeasure with the thing. If we do not walk with God, we have not the testimony that we please God, but displease Him. “The righteous Lord loveth righteousness.” Christ's intercession does not lead to forgiveness, (as to imputation, it is founded on the removal of that,) but regards God's nature and character and our present actual relationship with that. By reason of righteousness and propitiation sin calls out (not satisfaction in us with non-imputation, that is hardness and sin, but) the advocacy of Christ. Sin is taken notice of, estimated as an evil in God's sight, in my soul, but in grace, not in God's favor, however, as simple non-imputation, but in Christ's advocacy active about it, so that my feet are washed. Filth is there: neither I nor God are content—not I, when His word searches my heart. He is displeased when He sees it, and as to my present relationship He does see it. Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Holy Ghost—to God—and God knew it, and was displeased with it; those who profaned the Lord's Supper the same. The discipline exercised was only the expression of it, but it was exercised because of the displeasure. Judging ourselves, we should escape this. Godly sorrow works repentance. Are we to repent and not to be forgiven? Nor rejoice in having it? For this, we must confess. It is absolutely stated, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us.” If my feet are defiled, they are not cleansed till they are washed. Christ's intercession is the proper means of this. If any one sin, we have an advocate.

8. The meaning of John 6:25-27 is this. Up to that, they had never gone directly to the Father, nor in Christ's name. But as Martha said, “What thou wilt ask of God, He will do it.” Now He puts them in direct relationship with the Father, not as if He was to go instead of them and He only could, as Martha said. In His name they were to go themselves direct to the Father. That was when in gracious desires or wants they had to look for something. It has nothing to do with when they had sinned and got away from God in their hearts. Christ's interceding for them is unasked. We do not ask Christ to intercede. He is an advocate through His own grace when we have sinned, not when we ask. I return to the Father in confession, because He has asked. when I went astray; as Peter wept because He had prayed for him, not that He prayed for him because he wept, or looked up at Him. What Christ says is, they should not be asking Him about anything, but go directly to the Father: that is the contrast; not with intercession, when we have sinned or need grace and do not know it.

9. It is not said, as supposed, Christ is able to save us from our sin, because He ever liveth. But He carries through all the snares, difficulties, dangers of the way, and Satan's power; restoring our souls if we have failed; grace to help in time of need, as well as restoration, because He ever lives to make intercession for us—is on high immutably to carry on our cause. For we go through the conflict of good and evil, and have to overcome, though nothing is imputed and we are sure to be kept to the end; but we need to be kept. He will deliver us from every evil work and preserve us to His heavenly kingdom, but we must be delivered.

10. The book of Job gives us a full account of the case in its operation in man, without reference to any dispensation whatever.

He was a godly man, none like him—God saw defect in him. Satan appears on God's speaking of him as his accuser. God withdraws not His eyes from the righteous. He deals not first here with outward sin but inward working of ignorance of self, and then its breaking out through God's ways into actual sin; so that it got out, when brought into God's presence, as a detected thing into Job's

conscience. The effect of the revelation of God's presence is, first, submission, and then confession. “I abhor myself, I have spoken foolishly, and repent in dust and ashes.” And God restores him to full blessing. Elihu interprets these ways. These words are interpreted—one among a thousand to show unto man His uprightness. Job was not upright in the full, true sense of it; there was not truth in his inward parts, though till he cursed his day there was no outward sin, till he abhorred himself and said so, i. e., made confession. Then his flesh became purer than a child's again. What we have to add is this: Christ's advocacy, founded on known righteousness and accomplished propitiation, carries on the administration of this for us in heaven, where we have to be in spirit with God. Such a high priest became us. Next, below, the Church in its ministrations and acts ought to be an interpreter, and deal with the conscience, and administratively wash the feet here below. An individual may be by grace, the Church, (2 Corinthians,) elders, (James,) individuals, (1 John). At any rate, in faithful grace, the Holy Ghost by the word so deals with us. The result is always confession, certainly to God, it may be to man. There is no uprightness without this. If I have sin, know it, and come to God to commune with Him, as if I had none, I am in that a hypocrite— hiding iniquity in my heart. We see here when the accuser comes in. He is the accuser of the brethren.

11. The advocate is one who manages our affairs and carries on our cause. It has been said “patron,” in a Roman sense; because he supplied the need of his clients—was bound to plead their cause and case for them.

Chapter 227

# There Is One Body and One Spirit: Ephesians 4:4

The Lord Jesus, both before His death and after His resurrection, had told His disciples of the promise of the Father—that other Comforter who should come, given of the Father and sent of the Son. (John 14 xv. xvi.) “It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.” For Jesus they had forsaken all; and more, far more than all had Jesus been to them. He was now about to go. What could turn a loss so grievous into positive gain? The presence thereon of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. It is clearly impossible to understand these and kindred Scriptures, of anything short of His personal presence. Effects and manifestations are enlarged on elsewhere; but such is not the theme here; nor could any conceivable spiritual power outweigh the comfort of having Jesus with them. But the Spirit was promised personally; not comfort only, but the Comforter Himself; One who could be described as a teacher, remembrances, testifier, and convicter; One thenceforth and forever acting in and with the disciples, who left heaven after the Savior ascended, and who takes His place, on the ground of accomplished redemption, in the midst of those who confess the name of Jesus and wait for His return. When here below, Jesus alone could speak of His body as the temple of God. (John 2) But now, having borne the wrath of God, and annulled by death the power of Satan, He could righteously send down from the right hand of God the promised Holy Ghost to dwell in the faithful on earth. “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” (1 Cor. 3:16.)

In principle, then, the coming of the promised Spirit was contingent on the departure of Jesus, and, in fact, it was when He took His seat, as the glorified man in heaven, that the Spirit was sent down. Assembled together with the disciples, previous to His ascension, He “commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me; for John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost, not many days hence.” (Acts 1:4, 5.) The next chapter records the accomplishment of the promise on the day of Pentecost. The Comforter was given; the third person of the Trinity was now, permanently, present in them, as truly as the second person had been with them before He ascended to heaven. The Holy Ghost was the grand witness, as His presence in the disciples was the new and wondrous fruit—of the glorification of Jesus in heaven.

Are the operations of the Spirit of God from the beginning denied? In nowise. Creation, providence, and redemption all speak of Him. His energy declares itself in, and pervades every sphere of, God's dealings. Who moved upon the face of the waters? Who strove with man before the deluge? Who filled Bezaleel with understanding, and all manner of workmanship? Who enabled Moses to bear the burden of Israel, or others to share it? By whom wrought Samson? By whom prophesied Saul? It was by the Spirit of the Lord. And, as in their early national history, His good Spirit instructed the people, even so could the prophet assure the poor returned remnant, “According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my Spirit remaineth among you.” Were any regenerate? They were born of the Spirit; and the blessed and holy actings of faith in the elders who obtained a good report, were, beyond controversy, the

results of His operation. So far, the way of God is still, and necessarily, the same. Jesus set not aside in the least the need of the Spirit's intervention. He proclaimed its necessity as a fixed, irreversible truth" Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." But life, peace, and sonship (while all are communicated and known by the effectual working of the Holy Ghost,) are in no sense the presence of the Comforter. The disciples possessed these privileges before the Lord Jesus ascended. They are, therefore, entirely distinct from the promise of the Father, which the disciples did not possess, and which none ever did or could possess till Jesus was glorified. (John 7:39.) The presence of the Comforter is clearly the distinctive blessing since Pentecost. It was never enjoyed before, though the Spirit had wrought, and wrought savingly, as regards believers at all times.

But when Jesus took His seat in heaven as the exalted Head, the Holy Ghost was sent down, not merely for the blessing of individual believers, but for the purpose of gathering them into one body here below. This and this only is called in Scripture "the Church of God;" and its unity, hanging upon the baptism of the Holy Ghost, is "the unity of the Spirit." Matt. 16:18, is the first occurrence of the word "Church" (i.e. assembly) in the New Testament. It is there spoken of as a thing not merely unmanifested and unordered, but as not vet existing. It was not built, nor being built yet. "Upon this rock I will build my Church;" which Church, be it observed, is mentioned as altogether distinct from the kingdom of heaven, the keys of which (not of His Church) the Lord promised to give to Peter.

But, although the unity of the Church, as Christ's body, will only be displayed perfectly in the dispensation of the fullness of times, when God will gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, (Eph. 1:10,) yet it was intended that there should be a testimony to it, produced and manifested by the power of the Holy Ghost in the one body on earth. When the apostle spoke of the saints being "builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit," this was not an ideal or future thing only to be achieved in heaven. It was an actual, present fact, made good here below by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. Hence we read, "to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known, by the Church, the manifold wisdom of God." (Eph. 3:10.) And the "unity of the Spirit," which the saints should endeavor to keep, where was it if not on earth? The saints were there, and there too the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers given of Christ Himself ascended up far above all heavens. There go on the perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry, and the edifying of the body of Christ. It is on earth that we meet with "sleight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive" (Eph. 4:14); and it is there that we "grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, fitly joined together, and, compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." (Eph. 4:16.) It is in this world, and in this world alone, that "all the body, by joints and bands, having nourishment administered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God," (Col. 2:19,) as it is assuredly here that the Spirit would have the peace of Christ to rule in our hearts, "to the which also we are called in one body." (Col. 3:15.)

So, in Rom. 12:4, 5, the apostle writes to saints, who, like the Colossians, had never been visited by him, and therefore, as man might judge, were in no peculiar way connected with him: "As we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office, so we, being many,

are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." Evidently, it is not a tie which was going to be established, but a relationship already existing. Membership is not with a local church, but with the Church, the body of Christ, (Acts 2:47); though, on the other hand, if one be not in fellowship with the assembly of the members of Christ where one resides, there can be for him no fellowship with them anywhere else.

Nor can language be more explicit than that of 1 Cor. 12 "But all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit dividing to every man severally as He will. For as the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of that one body being many are one body, so also is Christ; for by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." The composition of that one body depends upon the baptism of the Holy Ghost. By Him are we baptized into the body of Christ, Jews, Gentiles, bond or free; it matters not. Jesus exercises His heavenly rights. He baptizes with the Holy Ghost; and those who are thus baptized become the immediate and the especial field of His presence and operations—the body of Christ. The diversities of gifts, of administrations and of operations, will not be in heaven. Their province is the Church on earth. It is here that the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man (i.e. in the Church) to profit withal. It is the one and the self-same Spirit who works all these gifts, distributing to each member as He will. For the many members constitute but one body— "by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body." The importance of these last words will be better estimated, on comparing with them Acts 1:4, 5, and particularly the clause, "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." The disciples were believers at the time this was spoken. They had life, and life more abundantly. Jesus, the quickening Spirit, had breathed upon them and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." (John 20) He had also opened their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures. (Luke 24) But none of these things is the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Pentecost first beheld the accomplishment of the promise of the Father. Then and not before, were believers baptized with the Spirit. But it is this baptism which introduces into and forms the "one body." It is the Spirit thus present and baptizing, who began, organized, and recruits the body of Christ. Hence is it that, coincident with the baptism of the Holy Ghost, we first hear, in the Word of God, of this new body and of membership therein. Whatever the privileges, (and they were many,) which existed before, that which is distinctively called in the Bible "the Church of God," appeared here below, as the consequence of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, dwelling in the disciples and baptizing them, Jews or Gentiles, into one body.

The apostle addresses, no doubt, the Church of God that was at Corinth, and it is very clear that the New Testament frequently speaks of assemblies in this or that locality, i.e., churches, (compare Rom. 16:1, 5; Gal. 1:2, 22; Col. 4:15, 16 1 Thess. 1:1; 2:14, &c.) But beside this, Acts 2:47 Cor. 10:32; 12:28; 15:9; Eph. 1; 2; 3, &c.; Col. 1; 1 Tim. 3:15, are instances of another sense of the most important bearing, as may be seen in the epistles of Paul, i.e. the Church, as a body here below, in a breadth as extensive as the baptism of the Spirit. Thus, to take a single text referred to, that entire society or corporation, wherein He dwelt and wrought, was the assembly in which God set apostles, prophets, teachers, &e. Certainly, it was impossible to say that He had set all these in the Corinthian assembly; nor will it be maintained that He is to set them in the Church universal, gathered on high. There is, then, a large sense of "the Church," in which unity is predicated of all the members of Christ existing at one time in the world, whatever might be the

distances separating their bodies; and that, in virtue of one Spirit baptizing them into one body. The body of Christ, like the natural body, is susceptible of increase; but, as in the natural body, the identity subsists when the old particles have given place to new, so the body of Christ is the body still, whatever the changes in the members in particular. He who, by His presence, imparted unity at its beginning, conserves unity by His own faithful presence. He was given to abide with the disciples forever.

In fine, by “the Church” is meant not the aggregate of various co-ordinate (much less conflicting) societies, but a body, the one body of Christ, possessing the same privileges, and calling, and responsibility on earth, and looking for the same glory in heaven as the Bride of Christ. If a man was baptized by the Spirit, be was thereby made a member of the Church of God; if he had a gift, it was to be exercised according to the proportion of faith, for the good of the whole: not ministry, nor membership, pertaining to a church, but to the Church; each joint belonging to the entire body, and the entire body to each joint.

As Israel of old was untrue to its calling, so is Christendom now. The Gentile has not continued in the goodness of God, and has therefore no other prospect than to be cut off, when the due moment comes in the wisdom of God. (Rom. 11) But as once the godly clave to the ancient oracles revealed to the Jews, precisely analogous is the joy and obligation of the believer now. If Catholics and Protestants have, in various ways and measures, been unfaithful to the Word and Holy Spirit; if the scriptural ground of the Church of God has been everywhere lost sight of in principle and renounced in practice, the more incumbent it is for the glory of the Lord, that those who fear Him and love His name, should seek at once, and in all respects, to eschew the prevalent evils they know, and to submit themselves unreservedly to the revealed will of God. Nothing can justify perseverance in known sin. And if God has given the name of the Lord Jesus, not only for salvation, but as the center of His assembly on earth, through the recognition of the Spirit's presence and operation therein, what is any other point of union but a rival and a rebel, which every Christian is bound to disown? What is our resource, then, and what His provision for us? “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” (Matt. 18:20.)

Chapter 228

# The Testimony of God; or, the Trial of Man, the Grace and the Government of God. 1

NOTHING, unless it be personal salvation and the communion of the soul with our God, can be of greater importance, or of higher interest for the Christian, than the testimony which God has given to Himself in this world of darkness. After all, salvation and communion depend on this testimony. What would the state of man be without this testimony? What is his state where this testimony has not penetrated? What an immense privilege to possess the thoughts of God Himself, above all with regard to that which concerns us morally, to be in relationship with God through means of the communication of His thoughts, to be called His friends and to enjoy this privilege as a matter of fact by the possession of the truest, the most intimate testimonies of His thoughts and His affections! And observe that, man being the great object of His affections, these develop themselves in the ways of God with regard to man—ways which even the angels desire to look into.

In fact, man, according to the wisdom of God, is the being with regard to whom the character of God, and all His moral ways unfold themselves most completely and in the most perfect and admirable way. It is not, by any means, the intellectual capacity of man, nor his moral power, which renders him so fit for this, because it is not the judgment which he can form of what God is, that is capable of revealing God—without even taking into account the fall of man. This judgment would always, by the fact that man is an imperfect and feeble creature, be below the truth with regard to God, in the proportion in which man is below God. Moreover, innocent man would have neither the need, nor the desire, to pass a judgment about God. He would enjoy His goodness with thanksgiving. Man who is a sinner is in no way capable of judging rightly either of his state, or of his position as before God; be has not even the wish for it. No, God reveals Himself in His own ways with regard to man. An angel does not furnish Him the occasion for it as man does; an angel has no need of mercy, of grace, of forgiveness, of divine righteousness, of a sacrificing priest, of power which, while sustaining him in weakness, raises him up from the dead. An angel is not, following upon all these things, made like to Christ, the glorious man, identified with his interests by the incarnation. Angels are a witness rendered to the creative and preserving power of God. They excel in strength. We see in them creatures kept by God, so that they have not lost their first estate. Now, grace and redemption, patience, mercy, divine righteousness, do not apply to such a state, but to fallen man they do. Here the angels desire to fathom the wonderful ways of God with regard to man. It is from the heart of man, descended to the lowest step in the scale of intelligent beings, resembling, alas, the beasts in his desires, Satan in his pride, a weak slave in his passions; strong, or at least proud, in his spirit and in his pretensions; having the knowledge of good and evil, but in a conscience which condemns him; by reason of sufferings, sighing after something better, but incapable of attaining it; having the want of some other world than this material one, but fearful of getting to it; having the feeling that we ought to be in relationship with God, the only object worthy of an immortal soul, but at an infinite distance from God in his lusts, and animated by such a desire for independence that he is unwilling to admit God to the only place

which becomes Him if He is God, and seeks consequently to prove that there is no God: it is from the heart of man, capable of the highest aspirations, with which his pride feeds itself, and of the most degrading lusts with which however his conscience becomes disgusted; it is from the heart of man, that God forms the divine harp on which all the harmony of His praises can resound and will resound for evermore.

By the bringing in of grace and the divine power which unfolds itself in a new life communicated to man, and by the manifestation of the Son of God in human nature, fallen man is brought to judge all evil, according to divine affections formed in him by faith, and to enjoy good according to the perfect revelation of good in God Himself manifested in Christ; while man gives God His place with joy, because He is known as a God of love. Man also takes again the place of dependence the only one which is suitable for a creature, but of a dependence which is exercised in the intelligence of all the perfections of God, on which he depends, and depends with joy, as a child on his father, like Christ Himself who has taken this place in order that we may enter into it.

But in order that the character of God, that which He is, may be unfolded in the state of man, and that our hearts and consciences may take knowledge of it, man must pass through the different phases which furnish occasion for God to unfold Himself thus in grace. He must be, on God's part, an innocent and happy creature, by his own will fallen and guilty, and in a state in which all the grace of God displays itself, and in which God unfolds all its riches in righteousness, while His sovereign good pleasure raises man to a height which depends wholly on this good pleasure and glorifies God Himself in the result which is produced, but glorifies a God of love. In result, His sovereign goodness is displayed towards the most perfect misery, and causes to enter into its communion the most perfect excellence.

We are about to examine briefly these ways of God toward man.

God created man innocent, that is to say, having neither malice, nor corruption, nor lust, and without the discernment of good and evil—a discernment he had no need of, for he had only to enjoy with gratitude the good with which he was surrounded. At the same time, he was bound to obey, and his obedience was put to the proof by his being forbidden to eat one tree alone which was found in the midst of the garden.

It has been supposed that he had the knowledge of good and that he acquired the knowledge of evil. To say so is to misunderstand the force of the expression. He acquired the knowledge of the distinction of good and evil in himself. He began to judge concerning that which is good and that which is evil. Eating of the forbidden fruit was only evil because it was forbidden to be eaten; it was not evil in itself. God has taken care that in a state of sin, conscience should accompany man.

Man would have had opportunity, while in a state of innocence, to enjoy the visits of God, and to hold intercourse with God; but God did not dwell with him, nor he with God.

Man did not fall without being tempted. The enemy suggested to his mind distrust with regard to God; and this distrust, separating his heart from God, gave place to his own will and his lust, as well as to the pride which would be equal with God. Now, self-will, lust, and pride are what mark the actual condition of the natural man. Thus, man separated himself from God in making himself, as far as his will was concerned, independent of Him, that is to say, as much as sin can make independent, and as moral degradation does make us independent of sovereign good. In this

state, man could not endure the presence of God. On the contrary, that presence, which cast the divine light on the state of man and made him feel what he had become—that presence which recalled his fault to him and what he had lost, must have been to him of all things the most intolerable. Man might cover himself to his own eyes, from the shame of sin, but before God he knew that he was naked, as if not a fig-leaf had been found in the garden.

The question of God, “Adam, where art thou?” was equally touching and overwhelming. Why, when he heard the voice of God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, with the divine familiarity of a goodness which could enter into communication with an innocent nature, did not man run to meet Him? Where was he? In sin and in nakedness.

Now, the word of God lays man bare. Terrible truth when the conscience is bad!—truth before which all pretense to independence vanishes like falsehood before the truth, only leaving the shameful guilt of the pretense itself, as well as of the folly and ingratitude which have sought after this independence, and in which we have sought to be independent of supreme Good.

Observe here that the promise was made to the last Adam, to the seed of the woman, and that it goes before the expulsion of fallen Adam from the earthly paradise. Thus man fled from the presence of God, before God drove him from the peaceful abode in which he had placed him. But the authority of God must be maintained. It was not becoming that sin should remain unpunished.

Judgment must needs be put in exercise. The holiness of God abhors sin and repels it. The righteousness of God maintains His authority according to His holiness in executing a just judgment on him who does evil. Man was banished from paradise, and the world began. Sin against one's neighbor was consummated in the world, as in against God in paradise, and the death of the righteous one presented a striking image of that of the Lord Himself. Driven from the presence of God, man in despair sought to put in order and to embellish the world: this was all that remained to him; and civilization, the arts, and the delights of a life of luxury occupied and developed the intelligence of a being, who, having no longer any relation with holiness and the divine perfections, lost himself in that which was below him, while boasting himself of the fruits of his perverted intellect.

But, without the repression of the will of man by a superior power, civilization, although it may deceive for a moment the judgment of man, as to the state of his heart in occupying the mind, cannot arrest the vehemence of lusts, nor the violence of the will which seeks to satisfy them and to make a way for its passions through all obstacles. “The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence.”

But the grace of God did not leave itself without witness. The judgment of God on the serpent announced the seed of the woman. Abel, who “being dead yet speaketh,” testified of the power of evil and of Satan in the world; but he also testified of the acceptance on God's part of the righteous one who comes to God through a sacrifice which recognizes sin and atones for it, and lays the foundation of a hope outside the world in which the one who was accepted of God had been rejected and sacrificed to the hatred of the wicked. The departure of Enoch, who walked with God, confirmed this hope, and tended to assure faith, (which believes that God is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him,) that there is a happiness for the righteous in the presence of Him whom He loves—a happiness which the world does not give, neither does it take

away. This, although obscure, nourished and sustained the faith of those who sought to walk with God, whilst evil went on always increasing.

When the evil was approaching its height, another testimony was raised up in the person of him who was to pass through the judgment which put an end to the frightful development of evil that prevailed in spite of the testimony already given.

This was a testimony, not for the affections of the saints, fitted to carry them outside the world, but a testimony of the judgment of the world itself—a judgment necessary according to the principles of divine government, but through which a small, righteous remnant should be preserved in an ark of safety which God revealed to them.

Such was the condition of man, such his history, when, in consequence of the violation of a law, he had been driven from the earthly paradise in which God had placed him, and left, without law, to his own will, though not without a testimony. It needed that the deluge should put an end to a state of things in which corruption and violence had covered the face of the earth and left only eight persons disposed to listen to the testimony that God granted to them of the judgment which awaited them.

During the period which transpired between the expulsion of Adam from the terrestrial paradise and the deluge, man was one family, one race. There was no idolatry. Man was left to his own ways, (not without witness, but without restraint from without,) and the evil became insupportable: the deluge put an end to it. After this event—this judgment of God, a new world began, and the principle of government was introduced. He who should kill a man should himself be put to death; a curb was put upon violence, a bridle on outward sin: the corruption of the heart in a world at a distance from God remained just as it was. But, although there were as yet no nations, the destiny of various races, such as it has been to the present day, began to dawn at least prophetically. Noah failed in the position in which he had been placed after the deluge, as Adam had failed in Paradise, as man has always done; as every creature has done which has not been directly sustained of God.

The reader may, in passing, remark Adam as an image of Him who was to come, of the last Adam; and Noah as also a figure of Christ, inasmuch as the government of the world and the repression of evil were now entrusted to man.

Two great principles, which subsist to the present day, characterize the world which is developed after Noah: they are connected with the tower of Babel. Up to this time, whether before or after the deluge, there had been only the human race, one family only. Now, in consequence of the judgment of man, who seeks to exalt himself on the earth and to make himself a name, or center, which may give him strength, God scatters those who were building the tower, and there are nations, languages and peoples. The actual form of the world was established, in reference to its division into different tribes and different nations. Moreover, individual energy forms an empire which has Babel for its center and point of departure.

Now that the world is constituted, we arrive at the testimony and ways of God. In the midst of this system of nations, there were languages, peoples, and nations. The judgment of God had thus ordered the world, but an immense fact appears in the history of the world. The sin of man is no longer only sin against God, manifested in corruption and in the activity of an independent will.

Demons take the place of God Himself in the eyes and for the imagination of men. Idolatry reigns among the nations, and even in the race brought the nearest to God, the race of Shem. Although, at bottom, this idolatry was everywhere the same, each nation had its gods. The system established by God Himself, at the time of the judgment of the race at the tower of Babel, acknowledged demons as its gods. This gives occasion to the call of Abraham. The God of glory appears to him and calls him to leave his country, his kindred, and his father's house. He must break completely with the system established by God, and that in its most intimate relationships. He must be for God, and for God alone. He is chosen by sovereign grace; being called, he walks by faith, and the promises are made to him. But this call introduces another principle of great importance. There had already been many faithful ones who had walked with God—Abele, Enoch's, Noah's; but none was like Adam, who was head of evil, the stock of a race. Now Abraham, being called, became the stock of a race which was to inherit the promises outside the world. Of course, this may be developed in a spiritual manner in Christians, or in a carnal manner in the people of Israel; but the heir of the promise, (and this applies to Christ Himself,) enjoys it as the seed of Abraham. If the nations, the peoples, the families, and the languages took demons for their gods, God took a man by His grace to be the head of a family, the stock of a people, who may belong to Him for His own. The fatness of God's olive-tree is found in those who grow on the root of Abraham, whether it be in a people, the seed according to the flesh, or in a seed which shares in the promised blessings, inasmuch as belonging to Christ, the true seed of the promise. This call and this vocation, whatever the phases may be which the objects to which they apply pass through, always remain firm. Christ Himself came to accomplish the promises made to the fathers, as a witness of the unchangeable truth of God.

The state of the first heirs, however, changes; and in a little while we find a people who care little for the promises, but who, far removed from the faith of Abraham, groan under the yoke of a merciless tyranny.

This state of the people of God brings in an event in which a principle of immense importance is brought into view, namely, that of redemption, or of the deliverance of the people of God from the consequences of sin and from the slavery in which they were held. We shall see also, in the fruits of redemption, facts of the highest interest for us. The cry of the people went up to the ears of Jehovah of hosts, and He comes down to deliver them. But the Savior is the just Judge, and it is needful that He should reconcile these two characters. In order to be able to deliver, His own righteousness must be satisfied. A God who is not righteous cannot, morally speaking, be a Savior. It is in this character that God definitely appears, when He intends to deliver the people. He had manifested His power in calling on Pharaoh to let the people go, in declaring the rights He had over Israel; but the deliverance must needs be accomplished without the goodwill of man and by the judgment of God, by the full manifestation of what He is with regard to evil, and in love also, so that He may be known. Now the people themselves were, in certain respects, more guilty than the Egyptians; and God comes in as a judge. But the blood of the paschal lamb is put upon the door. and Israel escapes the judgment that was due to them, according to the value which that blood had in the eyes of God. God judges, and, by reason of the blood recognized by faith, passes over His guilty people. But Israel was still in Egypt; their deliverance was not yet effected, although the price of redemption was paid in figure. Israel sets forth, On arriving at the Red Sea, the question of their deliverance or their ruin must be decided. Pharaoh had pursued them, sure of his victory. The

wilderness in which Israel was, in appearance, lost, offered them no outlet; and the Red Sea (figure of death and judgment) was straight before them. On the morrow, Israel only saw the corpses of their enemies, who had perished in the sea—the road of salvation for the people of God. The death and judgment of Christ make us pass on dry land, far away from the place where we were captives.

Redemption is more than the fact of our being secured from the judgment of God. It is a deliverance wrought by God. He Himself acts for us, and places us in an altogether new position, by the exercise of the power of God Himself.

We have, in this important history, the figures of the great facts on which our eternal blessing is founded. It prefigures propitiation, redemption, and justification under a double aspect; on the one hand, propitiation by the blood which sets us free from all imputation of sin in presence of the righteousness of God; and on the other, our introduction, in virtue of the value of that blood, into an altogether new position by the resurrection. Christ was delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification.

Some very important principles come before our eyes, consequent upon deliverance by redemption. God dwell, with the redeemed—if you will, in their midst.

He did not dwell with innocent Adam, nor with Abraham called by His grace and heir of the promises. But as soon as Israel is redeemed and delivered by redemption, God dwells in the midst of the people. Compare Ex. 15:2, and 24:45, 46.

The holiness of God and of the relations of His people with Him then appear for the first time.

Never in Genesis was the holiness of anything, whatever set before us, (except in the alone case of the sanctification of the Sabbath in Paradise,) nor the holiness of God's character. But Ex. 15; 19; Lev. 19:26, and other passages show us that, once redemption is accomplished, God takes this character and establishes it as necessary for everything that is in relation with Himself. Compare Ex. 6:5.

In immediate connection with this truth, another is found, which, moreover, flows necessarily from redemption, namely, that the ransomed ones no longer belong to themselves, they are taken for God, consecrated to God, set apart for Him. Afterward they are brought to God Himself. (Ex. 19:4.)

Israel enter into the wilderness, the character of this world for the people of God who have the consciousness of their redemption, and the faithfulness of God takes care of His people there. Next, they enter into Canaan, where it is a question of the victories which we must win in order to enjoy in this world the heavenly privileges which belong to us. As to the title, we enjoy these privileges before gaining a single victory; but in order to realize these privileges, we must conquer, The wilderness and Canaan prefigure the two parts of Christian life: patience in the world under the hand of God who is leading us; and victory in our combats with Satan, in order to enjoy and to cause others to enjoy spiritual privileges.

But another very important privilege comes to light during the sojourn of Israel in the wilderness. If the reader examines Ex. 15 to 18., he will find that all is grace. But in chapter 19 the people put themselves under the law, and accept the enjoyment of the promises under the condition of their own obedience to all that the Lord would say. Obedience was a duty, but to place themselves

under this condition, was to forget their own weakness and to insure their being lost, a consequence which did not fail. Before Moses came down from the mountain, Israel had made the calf of gold. The patience of God continued His relations with the people by the means of the intercession of Moses, until, as Jeremiah says, there was no longer any remedy. But our aim now is to point out the ways of God, and not to enter into details.

The promises of God had been made to Abraham without condition, and in consequence the question of righteousness had not been raised. Now, this question was raised, and first, as was reasonable, righteousness in man demanded on God's part. It was the duty of the creature. The question must needs have been raised, but the result was—and with sinners it could be no other—that man, having violated the law, aggravated his sin, instead of attaining to righteousness. With a rule, which would have made his happiness if be had kept it, he is only a transgressor and by so much the more guilty before God. Moreover, it was in order to convince him of his state of sin that the law, which brought in positive transgressions, was given to him. God never had the thought of saving by a law; and man needs to be saved. The law of God must propose a rule which expresses the perfection of a man, nay, of every intelligent creature. But that could do nothing else than make sin evident, when man was already a sinner. This last truth is forgotten, when people speak of the law. However, the law of God must be the perfect expression of what man ought to be, that is to say, must condemn man, a sinner. An exact measure does not add anything to a too short piece of cloth which has been sold to me, but it manifests the fraud. “By the law is the knowledge of sin.” The question of human righteousness has been resolved by the law. Ordained with promise of life for obedience, it has been, in fact, a ministry of death and condemnation for those who have borne its yoke.

This is an immense fact and principle. Human righteousness does not exist. The guilt of man is made manifest.

We have seen that God manifested all patience with regard to man under the law, the while preparing him for a better hope. He sent His prophets to warn, to seek for fruits in His vineyard. All were rejected. At last He sent His Son. All was useless. He was cast out of the vineyard and put to death. But this exposes to view another character of sin: men rejected the mercy of God, as they failed to meet the just requirements of the law. “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.” But man had no desire for this reconciliation, and did not wish for God at any price. For His love, Christ found hatred. When He appeared, they saw no beauty in Him that they should desire Him.

Thus the sin of man was completely demonstrated. Innocent, he abandoned God; but afterward left to himself, except as to the testimony of God, he made of the world a scene of corruption and of violence, such that God must needs bring in the flood. Placed under the law, he violated it, and sought other gods of dung which he had invented. God Himself arrives in mercy in this world of sin, with the manifestation of the most perfect love and of a power capable of re-establishing man in blessing on the earth but the carnal mind is enmity against God, and man manifested this enmity in rejecting Jesus and putting Him to death. The cross of Jesus served as a proof that man hated God and expressed this hatred in the rejection of the Savior. Morally speaking, it is the end of the history of man. Completely put to the proof, he is corrupt and violent, a transgressor, guilty; but, more than that, he hates the God of goodness.

What we have gone through is the history of man put to the proof. There remains the history of the grace of God toward man, and the government of the world on the part of God.

(To be continued)

Chapter 229

# The Testimony of God: Or, the Trial of Man, the Grace and the Government of God. 2

There can exist no more serious question for the soul than this: where shall I find righteousness before God? We have said that the law raised this question. It is of importance to see the position it takes when the law is given.

From the first existence of man on the earth, the question between responsibility and grace was placed at issue. In the earthly Paradise, there was the tree of life which only communicated life, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, to which the responsibility of man was attached. As to the tree of life, man did not eat of it; and once become a sinner, the mercy of God, as well as His righteousness and the moral order of His government, closed against him the way of this tree. An immortal sinner on the earth would have been an insupportable anomaly in the government of God. Besides, man had deserved to be shut out of the garden. On the other hand, man failed in his responsibility. Before his fall, he did not know sin, but he was in the relation of a creature towards God. There was no sin in eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, except inasmuch as this had been forbidden.

When man fell, the seed of the woman, the last Adam, was immediately announced: the hopes of the human race are thenceforth placed upon a new ground. The deliverance presented does not consist in something which would have been but a means of raising up again founded on the moral activity of man already in a fallen condition, but another person is announced, who, while of the human race, should be a source of life independent of Adam, and who should destroy the power of the enemy; a person who should not represent Adam, but replace him before God, should be the seed of the woman, which Adam was not, and should at the same time be an object of faith for Adam and for his children, an object which, being received into the heart, should be the life and salvation of whoever should receive it. The first Adam was made a living soul; he was lost: the last Adam, the second man, is a quickening spirit. Until the coming of Christ, the promise only was the source of hope; it alone, through grace, begat and sustained faith. We believe in its accomplishment. When God called Abraham, He gave him (Gen. 12) the promise that in him all the nations of the earth should be blessed. Afterward (chap. xxii.) this promise was confirmed to his seed. The one who was to be the seed of the woman was also to be the seed of Abraham. Thus the ways of God towards man were established on an indefectible promise. It was without condition, a simple promise, and consequently it did not raise the question of righteousness nor of the responsibility of man.

Four hundred and thirty years afterward the law comes, and, as we have said, raises the question of righteousness, and that, on the footing of the responsibility of man, by giving him a perfect rule of what man, the child of Adam, ought to be. Now, observe it well, he was a sinner. This law had a twofold aspect, a kernel of absolute truth, which the Lord Jesus was able to draw from its obscurity—supreme love to God and love to one's neighbor. It is the perfect rule of the blessedness of the creature as a creature. The angels realize it in heaven. Man is as far as

possible from having accomplished this law on earth. But this rule is developed in the details of relative duties, which flow from the relation in which man finds himself, as a fact, before God, and from the relation in which he finds himself placed as towards others in this lower world. Now, in the circumstances in which man found himself, these details necessarily had reference to the moral state in which he was, supposed sin and lusts, and forbad them. As the law of God applying itself to the actual state of man, it necessarily condemns sin on the one hand, and necessarily proves it on the other. What can a law do in such a case, but condemn; be, as the apostle says, (2 Cor. 3) a ministry of death and of condemnation? It demanded righteousness according to a rule which the conscience of man could not but approve, and which at the same time proved his guiltiness. It is in that, in fact, that the usefulness of the law consists: it gives the knowledge of sin. God never gave it to produce righteousness. In order to this, an inward moral power is absolutely necessary. But the law on the tables of stone is not this power. The law requires righteousness of man, and pronounces the just judgment of God, makes sin exceeding sinful, and brings the just anger of God. No law produces a nature. Now, the nature of man was sinful. The commandment demonstrates that he will seek to satisfy that nature, in spite of God's forbidding it. The law is thus, and because it is just and good, the strength of sin. It entered that the offense might abound. Those who are of the works of the law (these are not bad works: the apostle speaks of all who walk on this principle,) are under the curse it has pronounced on such as disobey it. The flesh is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. The promise of God remains sure. Man is put to the proof, so that it may be made manifest whether he can produce a human righteousness.

The law was presented to man under a twofold aspect—the law pure and simple, and the law mingled with grace, that is to say, given to man after the intervention of grace, but leaving man to his own responsibility after a forgiveness accorded by grace. The history of the law in the first point of view is very short. Before Moses came down from Mount Sinai, Israel had made the golden calf. The tables of the law never entered the camp. They never were able to form the basis of the relations of man with God. How reconcile the commandments with the worship of the calf of gold? Subsequent to this sin, Moses intercedes for the people, and they receive the law anew, God acting in mercy according to His sovereignty and proclaiming Himself merciful and gracious. The relationship of the people with God is founded on the pardon which God grants, and established no longer as an immediate relationship with God, but on the ground of Moses' mediation. The people, however, are put under the law, and everyone is to be blotted out of God's book through his own sin, if be render himself guilty. At the same time the law is hidden under an ark, and God Himself is hidden behind a veil, within which the sprinkling of blood was to be made on the mercy-seat which formed, together with the cherubim, the throne of God.

But this mixture of grace and law could not, any more than the unmingled law, serve to establish between God and man relations capable of being maintained. It could serve to demonstrate that, whatever might be the patience of God, man, responsible for his conduct, could not obtain life by a righteousness which he himself should accomplish. Also, the impossibility in which man finds himself of subsisting in presence of the exigencies of the glory of God, however feebly it may be revealed, is presented to us in a remarkable figure, which the apostle makes use of in 2 Corinthians. The people prayed Moses to cover his face, which still shone with the reflection of the glory of Jehovah, with whom be had been in communication on the top of Mount Sinai. Man cannot endure the revelation of God when God demands of man that he should be what he ought

to be before Him. The veil disclosed, at bottom, the same truth. God must hide Himself. The way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest. A law was given on God's part to direct man's life, a priesthood established to maintain the relations of the people with God, notwithstanding the faults of which they became guilty; but man could not come nigh to God. Sad state, in which the revelation of the presence of God, the only thing which can really give blessing, necessarily repelled the one who needed the blessing! We shall see that, in Christianity, exactly the contrary takes place. The veil is rent.

But let us pursue the ways of God with man under the law.

We have already seen that, in the system we are considering, life was proposed to man as the result of his faithfulness. Whatever may be the patience and grace of God, all depends on this faithfulness; and not only is the responsibility of man completely at stake, but all depends on the way in which he meets this responsibility. God, no doubt, had patience, and manifested His grace. He bore with Israel in the desert, and introduced them into the land of Canaan, in spite of all sorts of unfaithfulness on the part of the people. He put the people in possession of the country, giving them victories over their enemies. He raised up judges to deliver them when their unfaithfulness had subjected them to their powerful neighbors. He sent them prophets to recall them to the observance of the law. At length, with a goodness which would not judge them without using every means to gain their hearts, He sent His Son to receive the fruit of His vine, on which He had expended all His care, and on which He had lavished so many proofs of love. But His vine yielded only wild grapes, and those who cultivated it, those to whom He had entrusted it, rejected His servants the prophets, and cast His Son out of the vineyard and killed Him. Such was the end of the proof to which man was put under the law—all the grace and all the patience of God having been employed to induce them to obey and maintain them in obedience: all was useless.

There is the history of man under the law. If we examine the bearing of the law on the conscience, we shall find that it brings condemnation and death as soon as it is spiritually understood; but the aim of this article is to consider the ways of God. Nevertheless, I cannot leave this subject without entreating my reader to weigh well what is the bearing of the law, if it be applied to his conscience and his life before God, if he be responsible—and he surely is—if all he can do is to recognize the justice and excellence of that which the law demands. If he sees that he ought to avoid that which the law condemns, and that the two commandments which form the positive part of the law, are the two pillars of the blessedness of the creature; if he finds that he has constantly done and loved that which the law and his own conscience condemn, and that he has entirely failed in that which his conscience must acknowledge as being the perfection of the creature: if all that be true, where is the life which is promised to obedience? How escape the condemnation pronounced on the violation of the law, if he places himself on the ground of his own responsibility, and has to be judged according to a rule which he himself acknowledges as perfect? Another law could not be found. If he is without law, good and evil are indifferent, that is as much as to say that man is more than wicked, even natural conscience is ruined, good does not exist, and man is unbridled in evil, save by the violence of his neighbor or the just judgment of God displayed in an event like the deluge. No; the law is just and good, and man knows it, his conscience tells him so. But, if the law is good and just, man, on the ground of his own responsibility, is lost. The life which it promises to obedience, man has not obtained; the judgment which will make good the authority and justice of the law awaits the one who has disobeyed it, and will at the same time be pronounced against all

the shamelessness of an unbridled will. All the guilty will be reached. As to the law, as the apostle expresses it—happily for the awakened conscience—that which was ordained to life, man finds it to be unto death.

The presence, however, of the Son of God in this world had not alone for its object the seeking, on the part of Jehovah, fruit from His vine. This task was even the smallest part of the object of His coming, necessary, no doubt, in order to make evident the state in which man was, as a child of Adam, responsible before God, but not at all the object of God's counsels in His coming, nor even the principal thing which was revealed by His manifestation in flesh. Moreover, neither did the fact that man did not render the fruit which God had the right to expect, bring to its full height the sin of man. God has been manifested in the flesh; He has appeared, He is love, love then has been manifested. He has been manifested in relation with the wants, the weakness, the misery, the sins of man. He was divine in His perfection, but He showed this perfection while adapting Himself perfectly to the state in which man was found. It was a love which was above all our miseries, but which adapted itself to all our miseries and did not weary itself of any of them. The Lord Jesus has manifested in His life here below a power which destroyed entirely the power of Satan over men. He healed all the sick, cast out devils, raised the dead, gave to eat to those who were hungry. He had, as man, bound the strong man and spoiled his goods. And not only that, but what was still more important, the human being who was the most abandoned to sin found in Him a way by which he could return to God. God Himself was come to seek him, God, who was showing that no sin was too great for His love, no defilement too repulsive for His heart. Satan had ruined man by destroying his confidence in God; God neglected nothing to re-establish it, but with a perfect condescension; perfect, because His love could not do otherwise; perfect, because it was the true expression of His heart, which found in the miseries, the faults, the weakness of man, the occasion of assuring them that there was a love on which they could always count.

We see, in effect, in the case of the woman of bad life and in the one whom the Lord met at Jacob's well, how the Savior's love attracted the heart, when once the awakening of the conscience had created in the heart the want of His goodness. There was then produced a confidence which revived the heart, turned it aside from evil, a confidence which no human being knows how to inspire and which delivers the soul from the evil influence which surrounds and possesses it, as well as from the fear of man, to turn it towards God with a sincerity which demonstrates that it is in the light with God, but which demonstrates also that the goodness of God has found its way to the heart, in such sort that it has no desire to get out of a position in which all the evil that is found there is manifested, but manifested where all is love, and where one can rest because all is known. It is a love which inspires confidence, because, when all is known, God remains always love. Here is the divine character of Christ, to be the light which makes all manifest, the love which loves when all is made manifest, which knows all beforehand, which produces perfect uprightness in the heart, because it is a comfort that such a heart should know all.

Such was Christ on earth. One was with God. The sinner who would have been ashamed to show himself to man could hide his face in the bosom of Jesus, sure of not finding a reproach there. Not a sin allowed, (if there had been, confidence would not have been established, because He would not have revealed the holy God,) but a heart which, through the midst of the sin, received the sinner in His arms; and it was the heart of God. Christ was all that in this world, and He was much

more than my poor pen could tell: and man rejected Him. He was all that, through opposition, hatred, outrages, and death; but all was in vain as regards man. It is this which has definitively demonstrated the state of man. It is not only that he is a sinner, that he has violated the law and refused to hear the appeals of the prophets; but when God Himself appeared as goodness, man would not have Him; his heart was entirely hostile to God fully manifested, not in His glory which will crush all that shall rise against Him, but with the attraction of a perfect goodness.

All the gravity of man's condition consists not in that God has driven man out of Paradise, but rather in that man, so far as it depended on him, has driven from the earth God come in grace into a world such as the sin of man had made it. “Wherefore, when I came, was there no man? when I called, was there none to answer?” “The carnal mind is enmity against God.” At the commencement of His ministry, we remarked, Christ had bound the strong man, and had spoiled his goods. But the result of the exercise of this ministry was that man did not want even a deliverer-God, did not want God at any price. Man, the child of Adam, was entirely condemned in the death of Jesus. There no longer remained anything; there no longer remained any resource to God Himself, any means to employ in the hope of awakening the desire for good in the heart of man. Not only was be a sinner, but nothing could bring him back to God. Everything had been tried, save the exceptional mode founded on the intercession of Jesus on the cross (intercession which the Holy Spirit answers by the mouth of Peter in saying that, if even now Israel repented, Jesus would return). But Israel refused this appeal also. God exhausted all the resources of sovereign grace; He exhausted them, and the heart of man repelled them all.

A new nature was needed, and redemption; a justification available for a sinner before the throne of a righteous God; and a righteousness which should render man acceptable, without there remaining on some other side any sin which God must occupy Himself with in judgment, and which should do more still—which should make man perfectly acceptable in the eyes of God, fit for the glory which God had prepared for him. There needed an altogether new state, which should leave to man before God no trace of his previous state of sin. There needed a state which should satisfy the glory of God, and render man perfectly capable of enjoying it.

According to the doctrine of Christianity, the question of man's responsibility is entirely disposed of. This doctrine fully recognizes this responsibility, but declares that man is lost. It is a message of pure love, but of a love which finds the basis of its exercise in the fact that man has been already put to the proof and that he is lost. Christianity announces that “The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

The day of judgment, which will execute the just judgment of God, has been anticipated, for faith, by the clear and distinct declaration of the gospel. “The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;” but “the righteousness of God is also revealed on the principle of faith for faith.”

It is the death and resurrection of Jesus which reveal to us these things. His death terminates the history of responsible man; His resurrection begins anew the history of man according to God. His death is the point at which evil and good meet in their full strength for the triumph of the latter. His resurrection is the exercise and the manifestation of the power which places man in the person of Christ who has triumphed, and, by virtue of that triumph, in a new position, worthy of the work by which Christ has gained the victory, worthy of the presence of God. In this new state, man is clear

of sin, and outside its empire and the reach of Satan:

In the position in which the resurrection of Christ has placed us, we see man living in the life of God, where redemption, purification, and justification have placed him, and fit for the state in which the counsels of God intend to place him, that is, for the glory which is attached to this resurrection. Man is also pleasing to God as the new creation of His hands, the fruit of the work in which God has perfectly glorified Himself. Let us examine this a little more closely.

I have said that good and evil met in all their force in the cross. It is well to seize this fact in order to understand the moral importance of the cross in the eternal ways of God. The cross is the expression of the hatred, without cause, of man against God manifested in goodness. Christ, the perfect expression of the love of God in the midst of the wretchedness that sin had brought into the world, had brought in the remedy for this wretchedness wherever He met it. In Him, this love was in constant exercise, notwithstanding the evil; He was never wearied, never thrown back by the excess of evil, or by the ingratitude of those who had profited by His goodness. Sin, disgusting as it was, never arrested the course of Christ's love: it was but the occasion of the exercise of this divine love. God was manifested in flesh, attracting the confidence of man by seeking him, sinner as he was; by showing that there was something superior to evil, to misery and defilement. This was God Himself. Christ, perfectly holy, of a holiness that remained always unfailingly intact, could carry His love into the midst of evil, so as to inspire the wretched with confidence. If a man touched a leper, he was himself defiled; Christ stretches forth His hand and touches him, saying, “I will, be thou clean.”

Man, who might fear to approach God, on account of his own sin, found in grace, which was seeking the sinner in perfect goodness, which made of sin an occasion for the testimony of God's love towards man, that which was fitted to inspire confidence in his heart. It could relieve itself by unburdening the load of a guilty conscience into the heart of God, who knew all. All was of no avail. The cross was the recompense of this love. Man would have none of God.

But there are other sides of this power of evil, which are shown in the cross. The effect of evil—death—reigns in it. I say “reigns in it.” It is true that this is shown more in Gethsemane than in the cross, but it is only another part of the same solemn scene, and the anticipation of the cross itself in the soul of Jesus. “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.” Death, as the power of evil, was pressing with all its force on the entire being of Jesus. Death is the present judgment of man in the flesh, wielded by the power of Him who thus has the power of it; but it implies the sin of man, and the wrath of God against sin. This is what Jesus met. It is true that, in yielding himself entirely to the will of His Father, He accepted the cup at His hand in a perfect obedience, which left Satan no place. But that was His perfection. He was fully put to the proof. Death was the power of Satan over man on account of sin, but at the same time it was the judgment of God. It was also the weakness of man even to naught as regards his existence in this world. If we enter into details, we find evil develop itself under the power of Satan in this hour of his power. If a man is a judge, he condemns the innocent, washing his hands as to it. If he is a priest, whose duty is to plead for those who are out of the way, he pleads against the innocent and just person. If it be a question of friends, one betrays, another denies, the rest forsake, Him who had shown unceasingly the abundance of His affection. In men, no fear of God, no compassion for man. The Savior went low enough for a wretched thief, suffering the punishment of his crimes, to insult Him in death.

In a word, good had been fully manifested in Jesus, and evil attained its moral highest pitch in the rejection of the Savior. Jesus dies, but He is dead to sin. He never admitted it into His nature, but now He has left the life in which He has sustained the combat. He leaves all relation with the order of things in which sin is found, breaking it by death which destroys this relation. There is no longer for Christ any link with man in flesh. That is what Paul means, (2 Cor. 5,) not even an outward link, or the likeness of sinful flesh. Man has severed every link between himself and God; and Christ has done with those relations in which He never suffered sin to enter His holy nature, but in which He had to do with sin and man. There was an end of man and sin. Man is left in sin so far as in flesh; and there is a risen man, a man completely outside the condition of the children of Adam, dead, not existing in relation with the state in which man was found, but to live to God outside sin.

Immense truth! Christ, (who had a perfect life, who was life, and who, tempted in all things, like unto us, passed through this present life in obedience and faithfulness, who manifested naught but the power of the Holy Ghost in His walk, and looking only to God, and who passed through all the power that the enemy had over man in soul and body by death,) has closed the history of man in ceasing to exist in relation with him, man led by Satan, having consummated his wickedness by putting Him to death. Nevertheless, it was Christ who offered Himself. Moreover, for Him it is the path of life, and He rises beyond the scene of the power of Satan, whether as tempter, or as having the power of death.

Let us now see good manifesting itself in all its perfection, and as superior to evil. First, the life of Jesus has shown the obedience of man by the Spirit through a world of sin, and in spite of all the temptation by which the enemy can try a soul. His life was according to the Spirit of holiness—His death perfect obedience. All we have spoken of, as the power of evil, only heightened the character and value of the obedience. But there is more than this. Man is now, by death, absolutely set free from evil. He dies to sin. Death breaks his relation with evil, because the nature, which can be in relation with evil, no longer exists, at least if there is life. We have seen that Christ, although in the likeness of sinful flesh, never for a moment admitted sin into His being; but death ended, and ended for us, all relation with the scene where sin exists, with all this sphere of existence, and ends it in Christ in a life which is holy. Christ dies, and we die in Him by the power of a life which is divine.

Besides this, perfect love has been manifested, and when man rejected it, it did not weaken, but it accomplished, the work necessary for the reconciliation of those who were enemies. Good, love, God showed Himself superior to evil, in such sort that, in the act in which the hatred of man against God was fully manifested, in which the iniquity of man's heart came to its height, the love of God in Christ triumphs in the act which sin, come to its height, accomplishes. It is the death of Christ. The greatest sin of the world is, (on the part of God and of Christ who offers Himself as a sacrifice for sin,) the propitiation made for sin.

Thus, for the one who is in Christ, for the believer, the sin of the old nature is entirely blotted out, and he lives as raised in Jesus—in a new life in relationship with God. What wisdom of God! We are dead to sin by the act which manifested this sin in the highest degree; and the love of God is declared in that which is the expression of man's hatred. And observe, is it in permitting evil? No; the just judgment of God is also manifested. If His Son takes sin upon Himself, if He is made sin for us, He must suffer. The justice of God is executed against sin in His person, and grace reigns

through righteousness magnified in Christ. If evil has ripened and borne all its fruits, good has triumphed with a divine perfection. All blessing and all glory are but the effect of this work, the moral center of all the relations of God with man in judgment and in grace.

It remains for us to trace its fruit in the ways of God.

The death of Christ had fully glorified God and shown His love. It had glorified Him in the obedience of man, had glorified Him in respect of His righteousness, and, in the judgment pronounced against sin, in respect of His holy wrath against sin. And at the same time the perfect love of God had been shown in it by the gift of His Son, His only begotten, for poor sinners, given to bear the sins of all those who shall believe on Him to the end.

What are then the effects of this work and of this love, free now to exercise itself, because what glorified love exalts righteousness?

In the first place, Christ raised by the glory of the Father, all that is in the glory of the Father, (that is, the revelation of His nature, love, righteousness, the relationship of the Father with Christ as Son, His good pleasure in the life of the Savior down here, His satisfaction in that He had glorified Him, and rendered the accomplishment of His counsels morally possible, and in particular the glory of His own among the children of men) all that was in the heart of the Father answered to the excellence of the One who lay in the tomb, was engaged in the resurrection of the Son of man. The first-fruits of the power of God, in answer to this work in which good triumphed at the expense of Christ, is the resurrection of Christ. Here, as we have already seen, an entirely new position is taken by man. Yes, entirely new. Death is left behind. Sin, so far as separating us from God, exists no longer. The divine life is the life of man. Righteousness is manifested in the acceptance of man, not in his condemnation. And man subsists not in the weakness of his own responsibility, and mortal, but as the fruit of the power of God who has been already glorified in respect of His righteousness.

We are speaking in an abstract manner of the position. In applying some of these expressions to Christ, it would naturally be necessary to modify them. Christ has acquired this position for us, we enjoy it as a new position. He is in it Himself, the divine life was always in Him. When in responsibility He was not weak. He was, even in the flesh, born of God. At the same time, His own position was very different from what it now is. He was, before His death, in the likeness of sinful flesh; He was not in it after His resurrection. He lived in flesh and blood before His death, He did not live in them after His resurrection. He has been really dead, although it was impossible that death should hold Him; now He dieth no more. He is the first who entered into the position He has gained for His own. Now that the Holy Spirit has been given to us, this position and even the glory, are already the portion of those who believe in Him, by faith and by the possession of divine life and of the Spirit. As to the actual fact, we are still in our mortal bodies.

But although the resurrection placed the Savior, and us in Him, in a position which is the fruit of the power of God, not of the responsibility of man, and which at the same time, by virtue of the work of Christ, is the result of the exercise of the righteousness of God; and although Christ was thus declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, this did not constitute the whole result, even as to His person. He must needs be glorified to immediate nearness to God, and glorified with the glory of God. Wonderful fact! transcendent divine righteousness! a main is in

the glory of God—is seated at the right hand of God on His throne.

In placing Himself there, Christ takes personally the place which was due to Him according to the value of His work on earth. “Now is the Son of man glorified,” (morally, in accomplishing the work on the cross,) “and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify Him in Himself, and shall straightway glorify him.” “I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.” That which Christ demanded, He received. The words “Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool,” place the Lord at the right hand of God to execute the judgment that will put an end to evil. Looked at as entered into the glory of the Father, Christ makes sure to those who know Him there, all the fullness of blessing which is connected with it.

But here we have an immense fact: a man, the Son of man, is seated at the right hand of God in the divine glory.

We may, before pursuing the consideration of the consequences, verify the bearing of this fact. On the one hand, we see the first Adam, responsible, fallen, and in sin; afterward the law and judgment. On the other, we see the Son of God, the supreme God, come down from heaven and become man in grace, and, after having manifested the perfect grace of God toward man, (grace much more abounding where sin abounded,) and, after having accomplished the work of propitiation for sin, and glorified God with regard to the position in which man was found, ascend, according to the righteousness of God by virtue of this accomplished work, to the right hand of God; so that man is placed in the glory of God. On the one hand, the responsibility of man and judgment; on the other, the grace of God, the work of God, salvation and glory, the righteousness of God for us as well as His love, and this righteousness of God ours also, by virtue of the work of Christ.

Hereupon the door is opened to every sinner, and God, by virtue of the blood of Christ, which has glorified His love, His righteousness, His truth, His majesty, all that He is, can receive him to Himself.

Man has entered into His place in glory according to the counsels of God, to be the head of everything that exists. (Psa. 8:3-7 Cor. 15:25-27; Eph. 1:20-23; Heb. 2:5-9.) Compare Col. 1:15, &c. There is the truth in its full largeness. Christ, as man, is established head of all things in heaven and earth. In this respect the first Adam was only a figure of the last. At the same time, as for the first Adam there was an help who was like himself; it is the same with Christ. Eve did not form part of the inferior creation of which Adam was lord. Neither was she lord; she was the spouse and companion of Adam, in the same nature and the same glory. It will be thus with the Church when Christ shall take the dominion over all things into His hands. Compare Eph. 5:25-27, and the passages already cited. But, at the present time, He is seated at the right hand of God, and His enemies are not yet subjected to Him. But it remains to point out the various parts of the dominion He will exercise. The angels (1 Peter 3:22) are made subject to Him. (Compare Eph. 1:10.) But His dominion must also be extended over the earth. Now this dominion over the earth is subdivided with respect to the human race. The Jews are to be subjected to Him, and the Gentiles also. King of the Jews is His indefectible title; He must also reign over the nations, and in Him shall the Gentiles trust. Every creature is also subjected to Him; (see the passages referred to;) they

sigh after His reign. (Rom. 8:21.) At the same time, all judgment is committed to the Son, because He is the Son of man. (John 5:27.) He has power over all flesh, (John 17:2,) and judgment is committed to Him, that all men may honor the Son even as they honor the Father. In this judgment there is the judgment of the living and the judgment of the dead. The first connects itself with the government of God on the earth, while at the same time it is final as far as individuals are concerned. The other is the boundary of all the revealed ways of God, when the secrets of heart of all the wicked, and their hidden motives, shall be brought into light.

Then the man Christ, when He shall have subjected all things and set all in order, will yield up (1 Cor. 15) the kingdom to the Father, and God shall be all in all. The yielding up the kingdom makes no change in His divinity, be it carefully observed. Man up to that time had possessed the kingdom according to the counsels of God. This mediatorial kingdom comes to an end. Christ is neither more, nor less, God. He was God on the earth and in His humiliation; He will be so in the glory of the kingdom which He will hold as man. He will be so when, as man, He shall be subject unto God, the firstborn eternally among many brethren, in the joy of the family of men eternally blest before God.

Some remarks remain to be made concerning the ways of God which are destined to bring in this blessed result, and to establish the mediatorial glory of the Christ.

During the time that the Savior is seated at the right hand of God, God gathers the Church by the action of the Holy Ghost on earth. The glad tidings of grace are announced in the world in order to convince the world of sin, and in particular of sin in that it has rejected the Son of God. (John 16:7-9.) It is not the tidings that sin is forgiven, and that this has to be believed; but that the world lies in wickedness, the grand proof of which is, that it has rejected the Son of God, and at the same time that the blood is on the mercy-seat, and that all men are invited to come to God who will receive them according to the value that blood has in His eyes.. (1 Peter 1:12; 2 Cor. 5:20; Col. 1:23; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47; 1 Cor. 15:3; and a host of passages.) But other precious truths proceed from this descent of the Holy Ghost from heaven. Observe that He comes in virtue of the fact that Christ has gone up to heaven. (John 16:7.) Divine righteousness is exercised and manifested in that man (Christ) is at the right hand of God, because of His having glorified God, and of a perfect propitiation having been made for sin. (John 13:31, 32; 17:4, 6; Phil. 2:8. 9.)

Now, He glorified God by His work accomplished for those who believe in Him. The Holy Ghost, then, descends on those who already believed in Him. (John 7:39; Luke 24:49; Acts 1; 2,) and announces through their means this glorious salvation; announces to all men, that the blood is on the mercy-seat, and invites them to draw near. But, besides that, He gives, as dwelling in the believer, the assurance that all his sins have been borne by Christ; (1 Peter 2:24;) and are blotted out forever (Rev. 1:5; Heb. 1:3; and other passages;) that he, the believer, is made the righteousness of God in Christ. (2 Cor. 5:21.) For the righteousness of God must accept and glorify the believer, otherwise the work of Christ has been done in vain, and God's righteousness is not put in exercise with respect to it; God does not recognize the value of this work, does not render to Christ that which He in every way deserved: which is absolutely impossible. Next, the Holy Ghost is in the believer, the seal for the day of redemption, (Eph. 4:30,) that is to say, for his entering actually into the glory of Christ; then, He gives to the one in whom He dwells the consciousness that he is with Christ, in Christ, and Christ in him; (John 14:16-20;) that he is the

child of God, and His heir, joint-heir with Christ; (Rom. 8:16, 17; Gal. 4:5-9;) finally, He takes of the things of Christ and shows them to him, while leading him through the wilderness by the path that leads to the glory. (Rom. 8:14.)

All that is for the individual. But there is only one Spirit in all believers, and He unites them all to Christ, and consequently all together as one body, (Rom. 12:4, 5; 1 Cor. 12 &c.,) the body of Christ, head, as we have seen, over all things. It is the Church united to Christ, His body, and Christians members of Christ and one of another, the Bride of the Lamb. (Eph. 5:25, &c.) The Holy Spirit thus causes her to wait for her Bridegroom, for the marriage of the Lamb. (Rev. 22:17; 19) But this Can only be in heaven. Believers, by the Spirit, are there already (Eph. 2:6; Phil. 3:21,) united by Him to the One who is there, having a heavenly calling, and detached from the world in order to look on high. Thus, they go up to meet Christ in the air, (1 Thess. 4:15-17,) Christ who has come to take them according to His promise, changing or raising them, and in order to have them with Him in His Father's house, where He Himself is. (John 14:2.) Thus they are forever with the Lord. (1 Thess. 4:17.) Believers, who have suffered, are children of the Father in the glory, and together form the Bride and body of Christ.

This does not establish the kingdom, but gathers the co-heirs who are to reign with Christ, and gives their place to them with Him, infinitely above all reign, whatever it be, over the earth; although the latter be the necessary, blessed, and glorious consequence of it. Satan is cast out of heaven, where he will never again enter. (Rev. 12:12; 16:13, 14; 17:13, 14; 19:18, &c.) Afterward the saints return with Christ (Rev. 19; Col. 3:4; Jude 14; Zech. 14:5,) and the power of the enemy is destroyed on the earth set free from evil. Satan, cast into the bottomless pit, (Rev. 20:1-3,)—not yet into the lake of fire—is no longer the prince of this world. Even the angels no longer govern it as administrators on God's behalf. Christ and those who are His own—man is established according to the counsels of God, (Psa. 8 referred to 1 Cor. 15; Eph. 1; Heb. 2; over all things, over all the works of God's hands. (Comp. Col. 1:16-20.) Christ appears in glory, the saints also appear with Him. (Comp. John 17:22, 23.) It is the kingdom of God established in power. (Comp. Matt. 16:28, and xvii.; Mark 9; Luke 9) Righteousness reigns, and men, the world, are in peace. (Eph. 1:10.) There is, in this state of things, fruit of the reign of Christ, the realization of all that the prophets have spoken of peace and blessing on the earth. Blessed time, in which war and oppression shall entirely cease, and in which all shall enjoy the fruits of God's goodness, without passions inflamed by the enemy impelling men to snatch from each other the objects of their lusts. Christ will maintain the blessing of all: if evil appear, it will be at once judged and banished from the earth.

Some accessory facts have to find their place here. The kingdom of the Son of David is to be established. All the promises of God with regard to Israel shall be accomplished in favor of that people; the law being written on their hearts, the grace and power of God shall accomplish the blessing of the people, blessing which they could not obtain when it depended on their faithfulness, and when they were placed on the principle of their own responsibility. At the same time, the dominion over the Gentiles will be in the hands of the Lord, while they will be subordinate to Israel, the supreme people on the earth. Thus, all things will be gathered together under a single head—Christ; angels, principalities, the Church in heaven, Israel, the Gentiles; and Satan will be bound.

But before the introduction of this universal blessing, the wicked one will be in open and public rebellion against God. The Jews will be joined to him, at least the great majority of the people, and the Gentiles will gather themselves together against God. This rebellion will bring in a time of extraordinary tribulation on the land of Judah, and in general there will be a temptation which shall put to the proof all the Gentiles. But the testimony of God will go throughout the world, and the judgment will come and will be executed upon the apostates from among Christians, upon the rebellious Jews, and upon all nations which shall have rejected God's testimony. This will be the judgment of the quick, the first resurrection having already taken place. The fullness of times begins at this period.

A few words will complete our sketch. Satan will be loosed from the abyss, after the inhabitants of the earth have long enjoyed the repose and blessing of the reign of Christ, and have seen His glory. When the temptation shall come, those who are not vitally united to Christ fall; and Satan leads the world against the seat of God's glory on the earth (Jerusalem,) and against all those who are faithful to the Lord. But those who follow him are destroyed.

Then comes the judgment of the dead and the eternal state.

There is a new heaven and a new earth, in which dwells righteousness. The kingdom having been delivered up to God the Father, Christ, who will have already subjected all things, is Himself subjected as man; a truth so precious for us, because He remains eternally the First-born among many brethren. Moreover, I do not think that the Church loses its place as the Bride of Christ and the habitation of God. (See Eph. 3 and Rev. 21) The kingdom only, the existence of which supposed evil to be subjugated, will have an end.

All things will be made new, and God will be all in all. We shall enjoy Him in perfect blessedness, and we shall know Him according to the perfection of His ways already developed in the history of humanity. His Son will be the eternal expression of His thoughts, and the First among those who are eternally blessed through His means—blessing founded on the value of His blood, which never loses its worth in the constantly fresh remembrance of the blessed.

(Concluded from page 176)

Chapter 230

# The Testimony of Paul

The testimony of Paul takes up man as wholly ruined in nature, and reveals a heavenly man and a new creation. It associates those called during the rejection of the true heavenly man with him in heaven; so that they are heavenly. He is the Lord from heaven. They, as new-created, have a part with him, and become His body and His bride, joint-heirs with Him, the firstborn among many brethren. But the current of promise runs on, too, in connection with the original promise to Abraham. The Jewish branches were broken off, and we grafted in. Thus, the chain of promise was unbroken, though there are blessings above promise in the mystery of union with Christ. The Church is associated with Him forever; and when the manifestation of blessing comes, she will joy and minister in it, as thus united to Him, and joint-heir with Him, and blessedly so, though her richest joy be Himself

Chapter 231

# The Value of Moral and Miraculous Evidences

EVIDENCES suppose either reluctance to receive or difficulties inherent in man as to the reception of truth. If man's mind met the truth as such at once, there would be no need of any evidences, no need of our new school investigating so much. But men do reason to prove the truth: that is, it is not intuitively known or necessarily received. The new school declares the human mind productive of truth, as being an intelligence which is the divine Word in finite action in man. Christianity declares the truth to be revealed in and by Christ and those sent by Him. And as to ordinary men, Christ has declared “because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not.” And, again, “He was in the world, and the world knew him not. He came to his own, and His own received him not.” “The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not.” That truth was found by man, is false; it was not: he arrived at “what is truth?” Christ came to bear witness to it. Now, assuming that there is such a thing as truth, (and there must be, or there is nothing; for if there is something, a true statement or knowledge of what it is, is the truth,) either man is omniscient, or be wants the truth to be made known to him. If he does, he needs evidences, unless he be so absolutely proper for its reception, that to state it is sufficient for its reception; that is, unless the truth be self-evident. If he be not so receptive of truth, and we are sure he is not, he needs evidences of it, because he has reluctance or difficulties.

But I go farther. Truth cannot really be self-evident to a creature, because let men be as proud as they will, in a creature the moral condition depends on the object he is occupied with. Is it gold, he is covetous; power, he is ambitious; and so on. Hence the moral condition is the fruit of the object. There may be lusts and tendencies dominant; but actual character is determined by an object. Now to know goodness as a creature without a revelation of it, I must be perfectly good. But I am not—far from it. When, therefore, it comes, it finds me not perfectly good. I do not know whether any one pretends to being perfect goodness; if not, he is something as a morally active being, he is selfish. A revelation of perfect goodness meets selfishness, which is incapable of receiving it. Besides, in fact, there is corruption, prejudice, superstition, into which selfishness has formed itself. And God, who is light as well as love, makes havoc with this. “No man, having drunk old wine, straightway desireth new, for he saith, The old is better.”

If your infidel says, man is innocent, and education has given him prejudices and connected his will with his lusts, so as to make passions; I say, be it so: I do not believe it; but be it so. But man is educated; he is a Jew, a Romanist, a Heathen, a Protestant. Pure truth comes; it meets his prejudices, and evidences are needed. If these are sent, it is the activity of grace. They are not simply to prove the truth, (to a mind which sees truth as truth, it needs no proof,) but to prove it to man, because man is prejudiced, and deeply prejudiced. But man has a conscience, and the truth does reach it, even when will is opposed; man has a heart, yea, selfishness, and is miserable; man can feel goodness, though opposed to the claim of God over his will as light. For if God reveals Himself, He must claim subjection, and, to bless, must make man give up his will, that own will, which is alienation from God and mixes in his lusts. Attraction is felt, the claim felt in conscience, the claim of goodness, the beauty of what is holy felt in conscience, what God is is

felt; but there are deep obscurities, through prejudice and lusts, and reluctance through feeling how much it will cost. Ignorance of what God ought to be, prejudice against what He is. “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?”

What is to be done? Man ought to receive grace and truth, light and love. Yet he would not want it revealed, if he were not morally in contradiction of will with it. God gives adequate evidences to overtop the prejudices, to force on the mind that what is presented to it must be the revelation of God. Men have inquired as to receiving truth because of miracles, or miracles because of truth. Both and neither. Men ought to receive truth because it is truth—abstractedly ought; for, unfallen, he would not need a revelation; fallen puts the case that be is indisposed; but, abstractedly, a nature suited to truth would receive the truth. “If I tell you the truth, why do ye not believe me?” But this is not so. Man does not like to come to the light because his deeds are evil. God therefore in grace gives evidences, miracles if you please, when the revelation of the truth is there. Not when it has been admitted as truth, to speak historically, But this is great grace. “Believe me,” says Christ, “that I am in my Father, and my Father in me, or else believe me for the very works' sake.” There is the place of truth and of miracles, “which at first began to be spoken of the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard it, God bearing witness by signs and miracles,” &c.; so “confirming the word by signs following.”

Where faith was founded only on miracles, the Lord did not own it; there was nothing moral in it. But He did give miracles to help men to believe the holy truth of love. But men say, all is to be reduced to general laws; and if anything cannot, it cannot be believed. God would not disturb general laws. The most general law is, that God is love; and miracles, used as I have said, show this more than a physical law. I affirm that, compared with miracles, general laws are nothing as a revelation of God. There are general laws, I admit. An increasing number of phenomena may be reduced to them, perhaps, had we all the secrets of nature—all of them. I will suppose that, however irregular phenomena may appear, all can be reduced to general laws. But I do not know hereby a personal God; I do not know Him morally. All goes on admirably. I am so constituted—for this is the real fact—that, seeing a creature, I suppose a Creator. As has been often said, a design proves to the human mind a designer; rather it is inherent in the idea, that is, in the constitution of man. When I say design, I think of a person, a cause for what exists. Constituted as I am, I cannot help doing so. Now this proves I cannot know God. For I cannot think of a thing's existing without a cause. But He exists without a cause, as we have said—this is His very nature as God. And what makes me know there is one, proves I cannot, in the nature of things, know Him. But that is not my object now. The knowledge that there is a God is no personal revelation of God—no revelation at all. I conclude there must be. I am right. I conclude to immense power, and pretty surely to His unity—the apostle says, His eternal power and Godhead—a solemn truth, from which many an inquiry may arise. Where is He? Who is He? Is He good? Does He think now at present of men? Does He govern all things? I have only a conclusion of my own mind that there must be a God of power who made the universe; not that there is—no conclusion gives this, because my conclusion is only the sequence of an idea. But am I in any relationship with Him?

Am I part of a system governed by general laws and no more?—for the absoluteness of these is insisted upon. If I am not a part of these general laws, what relationship have I with God?

My new schoolman tells me I have a conscience and reason, am free, and so forth: that is, I am not governed like a planet by general laws. Ah, ah! Then, in all that is really important, (that is, what is moral,) I am not a mere machine, under a general law. And you would persuade me God is and cannot help Himself, nor act freely in respect of my freedom! I am free, and He is not. Then, certainly, I am God, not He. Now, general laws give me no revelation of God personally; and when I enter into detail, I am lost even as to my conclusions. My conscience tells me He must be good. But I look around and see misery, evil; men worshipping Jupiter, Venus, Pluto; men in every degradation that human nature is capable of; babes in torture, grown men in sin, oppression, and a groaning creation. Is this a general law? Where is the goodness?

There is another world, you say. Perhaps I hope so. Will the oppressor, the seducer, the corrupter, the tyrant, be there? What proof have you? Your instinct tells you so. Is that all you have to comfort me? Has the instinct of men given them any clear idea of it? Had the heathen such? Are life and incorruptibility brought to light anywhere?

In theory a God of mere general laws is a dead God for me as to present moral relationship; and when I turn to facts, I see it is false, or evil must be a general law too. Now, where there is One who reveals the truth and works miracles, I am brought into relationship with a God who acts personally, so that I know Him. I see what He is, what He is about. He is righteous, He is love. He thought it worthwhile to come down into a world full of misery, which man's free will had brought in, to show Himself good in it, more mighty than the evil, to reveal Himself as the resource; to make Himself known, on the one hand, and to make the moral revelation of Himself in the truth valid in the hearts of men paramount to all prejudices, on the other. If it be love, it cannot be a general law. Not that love is not the general law of God's nature, as I said; but love in exercise must have its occasion—suited occasion—must be free, or it is not love. But if God acts in the world to make Himself known, He thereby works miracles; for God's acting thus is a miracle. He does not contradict, does not suspend the general law, as a law. Men die as they died before, nay, they died again if He raised them; but He acted by a power which was not subject to the general law, because He is God and takes an individual out of it by His own power, without touching the law. The queen does not abrogate a law when she pardons. That power is a part of a more general law. The most general law of all is that God is always God, and cannot act contrary to Himself; but can always act as God when He pleases.

Thus I know God—His own mind, disposition, interest in man, goodness, love. I know what sin is thereby; for it is departure of will from Him. But unless this new school deny all the truth of Christianity, their theory of general laws is wholly false. Is the resurrection by God's power or not? Does man rise of himself by some common law of his nature, or is the resurrection the fruit of the intervention of God in power? If so, the system of general laws adduced against miraculous Christians is all nonsense. God does interfere by power, freely to bring the great result of moral dealings to an issue.

Besides, the theory of judging by general laws is false in principle. It takes man's experience of the physical course of things (for that this world is an adequate witness of God's moral government, though there is one, is a horrible lie) as the sole and absolute measure of what God is and can do. What proof is there of this? I am told it is complete. It is not; morally, it is no such thing; and your experience of what God is in the laws of the universe is no adequate measure of what God is. But,

I repeat, miracles are a far more real revelation of God Himself than general laws—moral revelation. I am not personally in relationship with God by general laws; I am by free miracles, not done necessarily on me or for me, but in which God's free action shows what God personally is in His actings. I ask if Christ's miracles did not do this—did not show the intervention of God in goodness in a world of misery? There are instances of judgment when it was to deliver others, and that is part of the character of God; there are permitted displays of Satan's power that we might know it. Why are any of them inherently incredible? Who is the judge? Man's experience? Nonsense! He cannot have an experience of miracles. It is merely saying, there cannot be because there cannot be; because I do not think God ought to do them. You do not! What is incredible? Was God not powerful to do them? You cannot say so. Was He not good enough? Ah! that is perhaps what is incredible for you: I thank God, it is not for me. But if in a world of misery God was winning the confidence of men's hearts to His goodness, what more credible than miracles? i. e., extraordinary displays of power, sufficient to show God's intervention, so that men might know not only that evil was not of Him, but that. He had come to man's help as good. This may be incredible for the new school: they may study the movements, of Jupiter, and speculate on the fall of empires, as based on general laws; but a personal God of goodness they do not like to know. It has inherent incredibility, for them. But there is no personal relationship with God without it. I delight in the thought of seeing God manifested here below, spending Himself to win the confidence of men's hearts who, as offenders, were afraid, and using the very wretchedness they were in by sin to draw their hearts to Him out of it. True, it was inherently incredible to Pharisees and Sadducees then. He could not be of God; He did not keep the Sabbath. They were grieved that the apostles taught the resurrection. But Jesus cared for the poor of the flock, and, in spite of Pharisees, would win by speaking “as never man spake,” and by doing so that “it was never seen on that fashion.” If power acting in goodness to win the hearts of the poor to God is inherently incredible, I know where the heart is to whom it is so.

Such, then, is the place of miracles. The abiding thing is the truth of the being of that personal objective God who is revealed by these means. Miracles are a means of knowledge as evidence. The truth, and the Son—who is the truth, revealing the Father, revealing God—is that which is evidenced. When unbelief ceases, miracles are useless as evidence; but as being the fruit and exhibition, of the power and love of God, they remain always the object of increased delight; and in Christ's miracles it is impossible to separate His ways and feelings and thoughts from them, when we have any detail.

Miracles, then, have a double character. They are confirmatory signs graciously given, and especially Christian miracles, a present witness of the intervention of power in grace. Where Christianity is believed and professed, so far as they are proofs, they lose their importance—are out of place. So far as they have the second character, the record of them, which is here supposed to be received, is a witness to the heart that God is come in to help, and how He is come in. The Word alone reveals this directly as revelation. At any time faith founded on miracles was nothing worth, because miracles do not quicken. We are begotten by the Word of truth, and so children by faith. When believed only by reason of miracles, the Lord did not trust Himself to them; He knew what was in man. As removing opposing hindrances in the mind, and strengthening man against unbelief, they are precious to our compound nature. There is much that removes unbelief, acts on our old nature—even solid reasoning does—that does not give faith nor a new nature, but

removes the opposition of nature and silences it, and attracts the heart. This if alone is nothing. There must be something positively new which a man cannot give himself, and which no proof produces. A really new nature or life, which man receives, is a first principle, and one of the main vital questions of the day. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit: except we are so, we cannot enter the kingdom of God. Of His own will begat He us by the Word of truth, that we might be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures. Infidelity seeks to set up man as he is—will accept Christ if He serves for that. The doctrine of Scripture is that there is a second man, a last Adam; and as is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy, and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.

When we meet with infidelity now, it has the character of apostasy and antagonism. It may be open as in the last century, or covert as in this; but it has essentially this character. Early opposition was not apostasy; nor did it, indeed, deny the miracles: they were too recent. They ascribed them, as Celsus, to magic, or cited Apollonius Tyaneus as having wrought such too; or the Jews talked of magic learned in Egypt and the theft of the Shem-hammaphoresh out of the temple. Still that was antagonism, and had to be so treated. Now it is more. It is apostasy in principle, and has to be treated as such—covert, I admit, using Christ's name, but only so much the worse. Christianity has been publicly admitted as the religion of God, its record accepted as the record of God, miracles and all; and then men begin to cavil, and oppose, and undermine, not being honest enough to throw it off, or sometimes happily kept back by spiritual instinct; but as a system, it is apostasy in principle. Hence there is less hope, and the record has to be proved, objections answered, miracles to be proved, not a proof. In this case we must show their folly as reasoners, and trust to the Word, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth. For them I should look much more to the power of the Word in grace. If the record have power in them, they will see the miracles with ft, and the perfect beauty and suitableness of them in such a revelation of God. Proofs may show the absurdity of doubts, and so far are useful. They may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, but cannot give faith.

Chapter 232

# Three Ways of Looking at Christ

There are three ways of looking at Christ.

(1.) as dead and risen;

(2.) as ascended and seated on high;

(3.) As coming again.

Now, of these three grand branches of Christian truth—justification through the death and resurrection of Christ; the formation of the Church, in connection with Christ ascended and the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; and the second coming of Christ to receive the saints and judge the world, the Reformation did not go beyond the first, the preaching of justification by faith. The last two were not even touched, so to speak. Similarly, Christians in general do not see these truths at the present day. Neither the distinctive calling of the Church, nor the character of the Lord's coming again for us, is entered into beyond scraps and opinions. These are the great truths to present to their apprehension, rather than to begin with ways of meeting, &c.

J. N. D.

Chapter 233

# Titus 1:1-4

IT is at the beginning of this chapter that the Spirit of God marks with an especial character that on which I desire to speak—the eternal thought of God towards us which we find in verses 2, 3. Evil had come in, the Spirit takes notice of it, and the effect in a most remarkable way is to throw them back on the whole mind and thought of God from the beginning. As evil progresses and corruption comes in, the apostle turns back to the origin of all, and coming from the divine nature itself, (and all that could meet the evil, and convey us on, must come from that;) i.e., the eternal life which God who cannot lie promised before the foundation of the world; that which was in the mind of God as to the thing itself before the foundation of the world; that which God had in His mind, the counsel of God for us before the world itself was created. It just shows us what we are, and what man is, with and apart from that eternal life. In Ephesians we find it in connection with Christ. (Chap. 3:3-7.) A mystery hidden through all ages in God until Christ was raised up as Head of the body, the Bride. It is not on this I would dwell. I am not going to speak about the Church, but would turn back to what this life is and would dwell on this thought, and promise of life in the mind of God before the world ever existed. Before that, I say, this life existed in a Person, Christ, the One who was in the beginning with God and was God; that is the Christ with whom my life is hidden with the Father. Being in Himself life, He came into the world as the life and manifested the life. The thing was embodied in the Person of the Lord as man, and there it was, the life of man, not of angels: that which was specially God's divine thought towards man is shown out when Christ becomes man, and this life is communicated to us, the instrument used being the preached word of truth. This divine life had been manifested here in a man—the Lord Jesus. He having given it to us, it is now manifested in our bodies. It has the character of godliness in its manifestation. It tells you what you are. It is in a poor vessel and where there is a wretched will, but it tells you what you are and what the world is—throws out an additional light to show what man is, as a creature totally departed from God. Morally speaking, the world has grown up in departure from God; that is, this world we live in—all that we see around—has sprung up from the creature having got away from God, but the life we have existed before the creation of the world, and this portion of Scripture is very full of the simple, quiet blessedness of what that life is, practically manifested and given in Christ. A great deal of evil had come in. Satan was corrupting the truth by the wild reasoning of man's mind. The apostle specially warns Timothy and Titus, and throws them back, not on common Christian profession, but on the faith of God's elect, the acknowledging the truth which is after godliness. They were to be as those who knew what were the thoughts and mind of God and were cast on Him. If I have got divine teaching, I can say, I know the Shepherd's voice, and if it is not His, I shall know that too. The truth which is after godliness is not only acknowledged, but is marked and stamped as of God by a man living to and for God. Godliness is what a man would do if instigated by God, and what a man would not do if God were close by him, it is clear would certainly not be for God. A man daily taught by the knowledge of God how to be living for God would do everything to manifest the ways of godliness, knowing those ways because of knowing God. I speak not of doing right instead of wrong or of conscientiousness. A believer clearly ought to be righteous with regard to others; but I speak of godliness. You never can be for God without knowing what God is.

I cannot walk worthy of God if I do not know Him. I cannot walk with God without that, though I may walk uprightly with man. Here it is walking worthy of God, the loins being girded (affections tucked up).

This applies to all revealed to us in Christ. A believer, as to his motives and life, has Christ's mind revealed to him, to show him how to guide himself through all circumstances. Christ was always Himself, never guided by circumstances. Sorrow could draw out his heart in divine love, but in motives and all circumstances He was always Himself (perfect of course). It is the mind of Christ that believers are to have.

What a wonderful place we have got. Only as we are taught of God can we get hold of this, i.e., the hope of eternal life promised by God before the world began, mark that; for as to the Adam life, it never could be that, but a divine life in those who are saved, a life for heaven; we have got it now, and we shall be there on account of it; there will be its full manifestation, everything there, every word, and all praise will be according to the presence of God; as participators of the divine nature we shall be in fullest blessedness, there where nothing inconsistent with the divine nature can exist, but everything will be in accordance with that life and ourselves as possessors of it in the highest and most blessed perfection. We belong to that place now, whilst our bodies are down here; the life we have got came down from thence, and has its only full sphere of blessing there.

The promise of God before the world began, this life was in the mind of God for us before ever the world existed. I do not speak now of predestination, but of the thing itself in the mind of God. before ever the world existed. If we turn to 1 John, we see how this life came down (1-3): “Our hands have handled, of the word of life.” A real man. The life which was with the Father, was manifested down here in the person of Christ. You will find in many great vagueness of thought in connection with this life. It is Christ Himself. “When He who is our life,” &c. Before He speaks of the communication of life, He speaks of its manifestation. John could see what it was down here, amongst friends and enemies; he says, “We have looked upon, and our hands,” &c. The life which was with the Father, is the life promised before the world began. I get what it is perfectly displayed. I see this life in One who, in due time, fully manifested it as man. The second Adam is the Man in whom its perfection is seen; a Man in this world, in all points tempted like us; a perfect Man, without sin, walking in the world in meekness and holiness, a pattern set before us to follow. 2 Tim. 1:9 shows the way it was given us in Christ. God connects the two things here: saved by Christ before the world began. In this life we see a thing that has its display in heaven. We have got it now, and in a place where it is hindered. It leads my thoughts and feelings to be ever in heaven, where it is as before the world began. Though displayed in all perfection down here by Him who has abolished death, and has brought life and immortality to light, the life was in heaven before it was manifested here. Wonderful truth! For the power of this life Christ has gone through death and abolished it. Death is an abolished thing for saints. It takes us out of all the misery of the first Adam. It was not so with saints in the Old Testament; they could not say, “Absent from the body, present with the Lord.” It was all death to them. Elijah was taken away for a testimony without passing through death, but Christ passed through it and abolished it, and is gone up to heaven, and life and immortality are thus brought to light. Turn to John 1:1, “In him was life.” You never could say that of a saint. God gave us to have that life in His Son; if in ourselves we might lose it, but if He is my life, I cannot. “He that hath the Son hath life.”

He is the life and light of men, not of angels. This is an unutterably humbling truth for us. If God was exercising life-giving power, it was to be manifested in a man, and therefore the Son of His love becomes man. God displayed it by the incarnation of the Word—the eternal Son. He was given in promise to us before the world existed; and He came into the world personally. The Word, made flesh, dwelt among men in all the circumstances in which we walk. He goes down into the death of the first Adam, and abolishes death, brings life and immortality to light, and goes up to the right hand of God, as the display of this life in a man up there. What a thought! That eternal life in this world—a man, a poor man, a carpenter, one who had not where to lay His head. The life, promised before the world began, now has been made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, and in due time manifested to those who believe through preaching. Christ Himself is the great firstfruits of the life that we, as saved ones, have in Him—He the firstfruits of the great harvest of God. I repeat, this life given in promise before the world was, was manifested by the Christ, who, in the power of it, passed through death; and in heaven it is now manifested in the risen man Christ Jesus, and down here it is manifested in those who believe through preaching.

That is how we get it. It is preached in the world now, and what does the world make of it? That is the solemn thing for your consciences. If we take the world, we get not the second Adam, but the first. Turn back to the garden of Eden, and you get the clue to the present state of the world and how it began. Man created in responsibility to keep his first estate, commanded not to eat the fruit of a certain tree, he eats it, doing his own will, and is cast out of Paradise; and the world begins where Paradise ends; and that is the world we live in, only it is a thousand times worse, because it has rejected Christ. Yes! the world around us sprang up when man was driven from Paradise; a man, in a state of responsibility, departed from God, made the world what it is; and what a world! Solemn as is the responsibility of man in it, for us who have life it is only by the by; true, we have to go through it, but it has nothing to do with the eternal life we have except as being the place where the eternal life has been manifested and brought to us. I would ask, What is man, departed from God, about? Making the world a scene of delights for himself by cultivating the arts and sciences. (You will find amongst the heathens the most beautiful exhibitions of the arts and sciences.) I repeat, man is making a scene for developing and displaying faculties that have nothing to do with God (the best as well as the worst have nothing to do with Him). Well, it is in this world that the eternal life has been and is manifested now. Is it by first mending and reforming man, by setting the world right, that God gives eternal life? Is life to be got by reforming the world, by modifying the evil of the ways and the tastes of man, away from God; by improving man first without God? What is man? A responsible being that has never been lost? A responsible being, I repeat, away from God, and in departure from God, he has built up for himself a world without God. Bring God into all the fine things that man is doing, and what would be the effect? Most of us know it as a matter of fact, that this world, with all its pleasures, and things delightful to the flesh, does not let God in, nor Christ, who is the eternal life; and I get it as a thing that comes in between. Eternal life has come down here, and I have it in a world that has all its life from the first man; in a world entirely departed and alienated from God; a world that had its origin in man having been turned out of Paradise; a world that when Christ, in divine beauty and grace, was in it, spat in His face and turned Him out. That is the world I am in now. But where does my heart go out of it to? To that blessed life I have in Christ. I may have got it but yesterday, but the thing I have received was up there for me before the foundation of the world. I have got Christ as my life— “the life I live is by faith of the Son of God;” and it was in God's mind to give me this life before the world was. “Whoso

hath the Son hath life." A life not of man at all, and having got it I am to show what is the effect of it, and from whence I got it. What is the life I got from the first Adam? All sin; if put under law, not subject to it; a life with lusts and a will of its own. I judge it altogether. When Christ was here, the tree, being bad, had judgment pronounced against it. The flesh is a judged thing: I find only sin and condemnation in connection with it, but I get God dealing with this sin in the flesh— "What the law could not do," &c. Mark, not sins, but sin, Oh! I say, sin is in the flesh, I have got it, and I hate it. It is lusting in me, making me dislike what Christ likes whilst my heart is set on Christ. But I find God has dealt in judgment with it, and put it away on the cross. He condemned it where it was put away, and that is where I find I am. I have sin, but I am not to be judged for it—Christ was made sin for me, &c. He, in grace, has taken it. My soul in the power of this truth gets perfect peace. I have no more conscience of sin: all has merged into the deliverance Christ has given. I have perfect liberty; sin has not dominion. I judge this flesh of mine and all its lusts, and will, entirely, because it is a judged thing—I am crucified with Christ. I stand in a new condition. I have eternal life in me, Christ is my life.

I have liberty and joy, by His going through death. I have died and am risen with Him. That is where I am brought. I have not only a life of him that departed from God, but the life of Him who came into the place where I was away from God, to bring me back to God. I belong to Him—I am risen with Him, where the eternal life is to be displayed. In spirit I am up there now, whilst in the body waiting for Him to come. I am in a world that is merely by the by to me, only a thing I have to pass through—not of it, even as Christ was not. He passed through it, and left us an example, that we should follow, walking in His footsteps. I am to reckon myself dead. "As we have borne the image of the earthly, even so," &c. A believer does not belong to the first Adam, but to the Second. The life of Christ is his and that is all he owns as his life—that life so blessed, so divine, that the world would not have it, and shrunk from it because it was so perfect, and God took it up and put it on His throne as the only place fitted for it. Christ down here displayed everything that characterizes this life. I should like to mark one or two traits of it: one is that quiet confidence with God that springs from, and is the fruit of, divine love, that which can trust God and is capable of enjoying blessed communion with God, enabling one through all things and circumstances here to walk on confiding in God. One could not have had that confidence if Christ had not died to put away sin and brought me into relationship with God. Having a purged conscience, I can delight in God, and as regards my walk through this world, Christ is my life, my all. I am consciously dependent on Him. As we pass on through the world we have to overcome. How? This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Life has this especial character. It avoids evil and walks in grace through the world. If I have the life of Christ, I am to walk down here as He walked, in practical life, "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord," &c., with the consciousness that it came from God, promised before the world was. We shall most surely find defectiveness in this from not having the spirit free. We have to watch that things of this world do not narrow up this thing that is to be made manifest. Do we not continually find that we get under the power of circumstances, by which the heart is often narrowed. How often we have to say, I did not think of that at the right moment; but if always bearing about the dying of the Lord, it would be always easy to manifest His life. If the heart is full of Christ, it will be always ready for Christ. The tendency of saints is to have the heart narrowed up—never ready for God and their neighbor. It would not be so if we could only get the heart exercised under a deep consciousness of what the life we have got is, and what the world is, what a poor little wretched thing it is. Having hearts

exercised to discern good and evil whilst down here, we should pass through this world as pilgrims and strangers, having cleansed consciences able to judge the flesh as being only the old thing. Life being given, the world (grown up from man rejecting God) is the place where this life is to be exercised, and we get various exercises. See what Paul passed through, “We who live always delivered unto death.” &c. He gloried in tribulation and in infirmities, if only the life might be manifested. I desire that your hearts should get hold of what this eternal life is, so to live in the power of it, that you should see how it came into the world, revealed in Christ.

Seeing all its blessedness and beauty in Christ, the heart clings round it. In Him was the light and life of men. What a thing—in the place where Satan rules to have God's own life given to us in His Son, and that we live in Christ only, but ever remember that this life has no affinity with the world. We have to manifest the light of life in the midst of the world that will not have Christ; and, alas! how constantly everything tends to make us live by sight instead of by faith, but whatever we fail in we shall certainly find that God has given us everything in Christ.

Oh, may He give us to know more and more what that eternal life is which was promised in Him before the foundation of the world.

Chapter 234

# Scripture Query and Answer: Rapture Before the Tribulation

Q. Is there anything in such Scriptures as Rev. 7:9; 11:15-18 and 20:4, which justify the inference that the Church will not be caught up before the tribulation of the last days? What appears to be the strong, plain, and sure conclusion forced on us by a due consideration of the full corps of the royal and priestly elders seen in heaven from chapter iv. and thenceforward? Are not these twenty-four elders the complete symbol of the heads of the heavenly priesthood glorified above before the tribulation begins? How could this he applied before the rapture, which accordingly is nowhere hinted at afterward? The rapture must have taken place before Rev. 4, for the result of it is then beheld in the full company of the enthroned elders, who represent the saints transfigured and translated to the heavens. Matt. 3:12; John 17:20, 21; and 1 Thess. 1:6, 7, have been similarly pressed: What think you? ==========

A. Undoubtedly, in my judgment these scriptures harmonize with, if they do not even suppose and confirm, the previous removal of the saints to meet the Lord in the air. For 1. Rev. 7:9 distinguishes in the sharpest way between the innumerable crowd of Gentiles and the elders, and restricts these blessed Gentiles to the epoch of the great tribulation. Nor is it by any means certain, to say the least, that they compose a heavenly company; indeed to me the evidence seems to point rather to earthly blessedness in the day of glory. What might be cited to show that they are heavenly is that they are seen in heaven in the prophet's vision. But this of itself no more proves that in the accomplishment of the vision the Gentile multitude are to be glorified in heaven, than the presentation of the woman in the beginning of Rev. 12 proves that her actual place will be there when this prophecy is fulfilled.

As little does the seventh trumpet in Rev. 11 decide the question of rapture before or after the tribulation. In fact, there is not the slightest allusion to that act of grace in the passage, and therefore no warrant for confounding “the last trump” in 1 Cor. 15 with it. The trumpets in Revelation are a symbolic series peculiar to the book, consisting of judgments and the last three of “woes” even, the last of all bringing in the closing scene of divine judgment, and of course, therefore, the reward of the righteous. In 1 Cor. 15, on the other hand, the reference is solely to the saints risen or changed, and the origin is a military allusion drawn from the final signal when the legion sets out on its march from its old encampment. It would be a mistake to confound with either of these the blowing of the great trumpet (Isa. 27) which gathers in the elect of Israel to the land of their inheritance. Each must be interpreted by its own context.

Rev. 20:4 is, to me, strikingly in favor of the view that the rapture of the saints symbolized by the elders is before the tribulation. For we have, first, thrones filled with saints to whom judgment is given; and these are no other than the elders, or those already glorified. Then are seen two distinct classes in the disembodied state, “the souls of those beheaded,” &c., who are then, and not before, caused to live in time for the first resurrection and the reign with Christ. “The first resurrection” is a phrase in no way importing that all who share it are raised at the same moment; but that all who do so are raised a thousand years and more before the rest of the dead, so as to

enjoy the millennial reign along with their Savior. These disembodied ones who had suffered unto death under the Beast, are not raised evidently till the Beast and Satan are disposed of; bat who believes that the Church and the Old Testament saints are not changed and caught up before? Rev. 17:14; 19:14, are too plain.

4. As to Matt. 3 it does not refer to the question of the time of the rapture to heaven, any more than John 17 “The floor” seems clearly to denote a Jewish scene; and the sifting of corn is quite as certainly said of Israel as of the heavenly saints. But apart from this, there is nothing here for deciding the question of sphere, time, or way. Again, the view of John 17:20, 21, which supposes, not that it was accomplished at Pentecost or just after, but that it awaits the persecutions of the last Antichrist to drive the frightened sheep all together, and that this is evidence that the Church cannot be translated before those days of trial, appears to me to demand no comment; 2 Thess. 1:6. 7, is a fair question, and so is the answer. For the point revealed is the manner in which the Lord will deal in public retribution. Now, there will be nothing of the sort till the Lord appears in judgment. The previous rapture of the heavenly saints (even if we suppose it now to be ever so sure) is not of any such nature, but a pure and crowning net of grace, altogether outside the world. But “the day of the Lord,” in which, on one side, the changed saints come and appear with Himself in glory, and, on the other side, their persecutors are smitten with His vengeance; “that day,” and none before, is stamped with the character of solemn, righteous award to the glorified saints and to their enemies. Then only will the Lord recompense tribulation to the troubling world, and rest to the troubled Church. The question of the rapture is quite apart from the point discussed in these verses.

Chapter 235

# The True Servant

It is a consoling thought, not only that God has served us in the beginning of our history as self-ruined sinners, but that He will serve us at the end of our history as glorified saints. He serves us, as one has said, in our ruins and in our glories. As in the day of Gen. 3 we find Him with His own hands making coats of skins to cover our nakedness, when He had to drive us from His presence in righteousness; so in the day of Rev. 15 we find Him filling the hands of His saints with harps to tune to His praise, in the day of their glories, and these harps are termed “harps of God.” “God is love;” and love delights to serve the objects it has formed, and that are in a position to need that service.

There is something inexpressibly precious in the servant character which the Lord Jesus has assumed towards, and for His people; a character not only serving their need, but the Father's glory, as none but He could serve. We are admitted into that solemn scene of' the eternal Son presenting Himself to assume the position of the True Servant in Psa. 40 to accomplish the counsels of God: a scene enacted before He manifested the Father's name in this world in His human body. “Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou digged: (thou hast digged ears for me) burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, come in the volume of the book it is written of me. I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.” (Psa. 40:6-8.) What perfect devotion to the glory of God, and ability to accomplish all His will, we read in these words! The majesty and glory of God required it: they had been outraged by His creatures. Man had, under the instigation of a powerful enemy, aspired to be a god. The scene in this world of God's creation-glories was defiled and filled with sin. God had no desire for the sacrifices and offerings of the law, which only called to mind that sit, was there. One was needed to accomplish His will whose ability was unquestioned. And the eternal Son presents Lo, I come.” But it was needed too that God should be glorified in the scene in which He had been dishonored—in the world; and so the Son takes the place of a servant and becomes a man. He has a body prepared, and His ears opened to hearken, as a servant, to the will He came to perform. To Him it was a delight to perform it. “I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation.”

Christ having thus put Himself in the place of obedience, and with Him it was perfect, He accepts no intervention short of God's. It was thus He found the strong man in the place of his strength. Having a perfect will of His own, He exercises it not. “Not my will, but thine, be done.” He would shelter Himself in nothing, and from nothing, while He “waited patiently for the Lord.” Patience had her perfect work in Him. There is something so unspeakably gracious in affording thus a perfect example to His people. Assuming a position in grace, in which He would know to the full the trials of His people, and thus be able to sympathize with and succor them, in their pathway through the world, and that they might be able to lean upon Him as One who had passed through all, and knew the pathway Himself, and who had emptied Himself of everything, and humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, rather than fail in one tittle in His perfect

surrender of Himself to do the will of God. So, when He had thus waited patiently upon the Lord, He inclined unto Him and heard His cry, and declared Him to be His Son with power, by resurrection of the dead. (Rom. 1:4.) “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name that is above every name.” “Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself; and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” It is not the value of the cross we have here, but the self-emptied, self-humbled obedience of Jesus, that which, of priceless value in itself, affords so precious an example for His people in their pathway. It was in His pathway of suffering in the world He learned obedience. It was a new thing for the Eternal Son to be in the place of a Servant, and it was by the things which He suffered He learned obedience: and thus was made perfect as our High Priest, and Captain of our salvation. This is not so with us; we learn obedience in detail, by the subjection of wicked hearts and wiles, and the bringing of every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. He acquired the ability to enter into their trials, and to comfort, and sustain His people thus, by sorrow, and in grace, having been subjected to it: “a man of sorrow.” “The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary; he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned.” (Isa. 1) The outflow of the Son's perfect love of His heart was restrained by the chilling circumstances through which He passed: till at last, forsaken of those who had loved Him, but did not understand Him then, and forsaken of Gel, He closes that pathway of obedience fulfilling the perfect will of God! There is something so truly precious in those submissive words of this perfect Servant in Matt. 11:26: “Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight” —words at the close of a scripture that speaks of His forerunner having doubted Him. His people had not danced to His piping strains of grace. And the cities, where His mightiest works had been performed, had not repented in dust and ashes, at the sight of them. It calls to mind those words of the Spirit of Christ in the Prophet (Isa. 49) after the Lord's unparalleled course as a servant in the world: “I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for naught and in vain;” but He adds “surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God.” He commits it to God, and receives the glorious reply from Him to whom the savor of His work had ascended: “And now, saith the Lord that formed me from the womb to be His servant It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel, I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.”

Thus the Hebrew servant in Ex. 21, when his period of service was over and might go out free, declares that be loves his master, and his wife, and his children, and that he would not go; so his master brings him to the judges, and to the door-post, and pierces his ear through with an awl, and the servant becomes his servant forever. Like this Hebrew servant, Christ declares that He loves His Father; He loves his wife—His Church; He loves His children, whom God had given Him, and He would not go out free; and thus He becomes their servant forever. We see this in John 13 Rejected by His earthly people, and the world, when supper was going on, He rises from amongst His disciples, and girds Himself to be their servant in that unsullied presence of light into which He was about to enter—the presence of God. He girds Himself to serve His people, as they pass through a defiled and sin-stricken world, and to cleanse their feet from the stains and soils they would contract as they passed through it, and which would hinder their perception of His love, and their hearts' communion with the Father and the Son.

And in Luke 12 we find Him anticipating the day of His people's glories, when they would no more need the cleansing and wiping of their feet of John 13 “Verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.” Surely we may say, He has served us in our ruin, as self-ruined sinners; and He does serve us in our pathway as children of grace; and He will serve us in our glories as glorified saints.

Chapter 236

# Fragment: The Unity of Christ's Body

The unity of Christ's body being the ground assumed, all Christians have, in principle, a title to be there, the Lord's name being maintained as to doctrine and discipline. If you insist on a certain standard of intelligence beyond Christ, before receiving them, you prove that you are not intelligent, and you abandon your own (i.e. God's) principle. At the same time, it is all well that young converts should wait; it would do them no harm. The great requisite for receiving, is satisfaction as to membership of the body of Christ...the principle is “one body and one Spirit;” the resource, now that all is confusion and inconsistency, is Matt. 18:20. J. N. D

Chapter 237

# The Rending of the Veil

UNDER the Jewish system God had conferred benefits, given laws, sanctioned them by judgments; but man had been kept at a distance: God had never revealed Himself. He dwelt “in the thick darkness;” and if He condescended to dwell amongst men, He was within the veil, where none could approach—in a word, unseen. He governed from His throne; but direct approach was forbidden. The thick darkness and the barrier of Sinai, or the veil of an unlighted holy of holies, secluded Him from man. Had He shown Himself in light to a sinful world, it must have been utter condemnation. The darkness had no communion with the light. Unseen, He might, in patient grace, bear much which man's ignorance committed, and govern in mercy. But in due time, when man had been fully proved in all possible ways—without law, under law, under promise, prophecy, government, and even grace in the mission of God's own Son—and proved utterly bad, the time was come for God to show Himself in grace, such as He really was. Had He done so before, man could not have been properly put to the test. This he has been; and now in infinite grace, when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ dies for the ungodly. Now if God came forth merely as light or holiness when man was wholly wicked, his will antagonistic, as the skeptic admits, He must, in the nature of things, have driven man out of His presence, unless holiness means allowing sin, whereas it means not allowing it, Yet God must be holy; that is, He cannot allow sin. when He deals with it, or he would be morally like it, which would be a blasphemous denial of Him. How, then, does He act? In the death of Christ He manifests His holiness in the perfect taking away of sin, that His perfect love may flow out, never so shown to men as in this act. Now God can fully reveal Himself without a veil. His holiness is perfect blessing, because shining out in absolute love, sin being put away. As a sign of this wonderful all-changing change, the veil which before hid Him is rent in twain from the top to the bottom, signifying Christ's death, according to the whole figurative arrangement employed to typify these things. And so the New Testament uses this event: “Having therefore.... boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath opened to us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;. . . let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith,” &c. Again, “Into the second [that within the veil] went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood. . . the Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing, which was a figure,” &c.

Now here we have the veil and its accompaniments declared to have precisely this force in the mind of the Holy Ghost. According to the whole system of Scripture, and that in its deepest moral elements, whether of man's relationship with God, or in reference to the peculiar position of Israel, which we know historically was then closing in, the rending of the veil had the most clear and weighty significancy. Nothing could have had so much. It was the central expression of the whole change of the divine way of dealing with man, and of man's relationship with God by the cross. And here I would remark, that I must, to ascertain the importance and “genius” of a fact, take such a system within itself. It is another question, whether the whole system be right or wrong? But within itself—and the veil was a part, and a central part, of the system—nothing could have such a

distinct signification as its rending. It signified, as I have said, the change of the whole relationship of God and man. I must, if I refer to a veil and its rending, consider the meaning of its being there, to know the importance of its being rent. God's being concealed or revealed, is not an unimportant idea; and the rending, at Christ's death, of the veil which concealed His throne and glory, not difficult to understand. It is a figure of course, as all these parts of the tabernacle or temple were; but a figure of the most intelligible simplicity, and pregnant with meaning.

Chapter 238

# The Washing of Water

(John 13)

The display of the grace in Christ did not hinder the wickedness in Judas, and the display of Judas' wickedness did not hinder the Lord's grace.

The Lord was about to leave His disciples, but He was going to be their servant, and to make them clean. Though He was going to be so near to God, He must go on serving them—not in being with them down here at the board, but in the Father's house. He would give them a place with Him, and He must do that which was needful to enable them to have communion and comfort. Thus, though He was going away, they would have still greater blessing. He not only would bear with our manners down here, but make us fit to be with Him where He is. This washing is for communion, not justification. For justifying the blood was needed; water here. The body is washed with water, (Heb. 10,) referring to regeneration. But this is not that washing, it is only the feet. He is not our servant any more to shed blood; which is done once for all; but feet-washing is for communion. The laver before the tabernacle aims symbolical of the same thing.

For communion there must not be a spot upon you, and therefore the continual need of feet-washing as we pass through this world. (ver. 7.) They did not understand it then, but they did when the Holy Ghost is given; and we do understand it now.

None can wash another for God. It must be Christ Himself. You must have the word of Christ by the power of the Holy Ghost, to help another in this matter. Man's word is not enough. Man's word is no better than man's word. God's word is God's word.

He that has been bathed as a priest needs not to be washed again altogether; but his feet touch the world and he becomes defiled. Christ, as a priest, washes them. We, too, have priestly duties.

The sin of Judas was so black because it was in the presence of grace. There was a constant incessant hardening in the presence of Jesus. He took the money that grace gave the Lord, to live upon, and he went on and on till he came to the point where grace was most fully manifested. Then his wickedness comes to the highest point. Satan enters into him; he goes and kisses Him when he had betrayed Him; he uses the familiarity grace had given him with Christ to betray Him. See him in the garden of Gethsemane. It is not like Peter who was rash, and drew his sword—but in Judas it was a constant, steady process of hardening. The Lord gives the sop out of His own dish—a proof of friendship, and to whom?

When the wickedness of Judas is fully out, then the glory of Christ is without veil. There was time when obedience was so shown, and when love was so shown, as when He gave Himself up (ver. 81.): not only the fact, but the depth of the work of grace. Because He bore our sins, He is the Son of man at the right hand of God.

“God shall straightway glorify Him.” He must go directly, but He will come again, to display His glory in the world. We anticipate the glory in which we shall be manifested; and He must take away

from us all that is inconsistent with that glory into which He has entered, and for which we wait. This is signified by the washing the disciples' feet; and it is because we “are clean” that we need it. We never get particular cleansing until we are clean every whit. Now He is girded as our servant, to maintain our communion. We are looked upon as in heaven because seated in Christ who is there—one with Him there; but our members are down here on the earth, and it is these which need to be mortified.

Chapter 239

# The Water of Purification

Num. 19

How rare it is to find the child of God walking in the consciousness of his true position before Him! Numbers there are (and we bless God for the numbers) whose souls have felt the sting of sin, and who are trusting in Jesus, but who have not yet realized the full results of the work of Christ for their souls; and thereby fail to walk in the consciousness of sonship before the Father—fail to walk so as to please God, through the world; as those who have been separated and redeemed for a higher and a better scene. Such souls have doubtless felt more or less deeply the fact of indwelling sin. Like the Jew of old, who when he committed a sin, brought a sacrifice—again and again a sin and a sacrifice—they have daily recourse to the blood of Jesus for cleansing from the workings of sin in their members. They do not see that sin has been once and forever, effectually and completely, put away from before God. Such is not the Christian state. It lowers the whole tone of practical Christianity, reduces the apprehension of the value of the blood of Jesus almost to the level of the oft-repeated sacrifices of the Levitical ceremonial, and weakens the apprehension of the character of purity and holiness of the place into which the believer has been brought, the unsullied presence of God, there to walk before Him. Jesus “died the just for the unjust to bring us to God.” The believer has been called into fellowship with His Son Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. 1:8.) “Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.” (1 John 3.) God has “called us from darkness into His marvelous light.” He has “made us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.” And He has set us to “walk in the light as He is in the light.” He has done all this in such a way that He can have us there without lowering the unsullied holiness of His presence in light.

When the believer has realized, even in some measure, that God has thus brought him to Himself, and accepted him in the Beloved, and has apprehended somewhat of the holiness of walk conformable to the place, it is then that he can estimate the provision that God has made in the work of Jesus, as typified in Num. 19, that the believer may thus enjoy unclouded fellowship with the Father and the Son. He can see in it the great fact that it is God's thought that the worshipper once purged should save no more conscience of sin; and yet, such being the case, that when he is conscious of the workings of indwelling sin in his members, he has no need to go back to be re-washed in the blood; and, more than all, he learns in the precious type before us the jealous holiness of God, who will not go on with even a thought of sin in His child; and that in this type the provision He has made for all these exigencies stands in marked and precious precision before the renewed mind.

Let us now look at its varied and beauteous features. We read, “This is the ordinance of the law which the Lord hath commanded, saying, speak to the children of Israel, that they bring thee a red heifer without spot, wherein is no blemish, and upon which never came yoke.” In this the person of our Lord Jesus Christ is brought before us. One wherein is no blemish and upon whom never came yoke of sin. In His own person, free from every stain or taint of sin, take Him when you will,

and where you will, and as you will, from the womb of the virgin to the cross, and you will find One who, while surrounded by evil on every side, in the midst of evil, and in contact with it, notwithstanding never was defiled, beauteous in the perfection of personal purity as man in the midst of a defiled world; One who, ever above the evil, adapted His heart to the need around; never in fellowship with evil, but morally above it; perfect in the holy calmness and evenness of divine goodness and love, in His perfect pathway through the world. Paul, while such a wondrous instrument in the bands of God, had to say, “I wilt not, brethren, that he was the high priest.” And again, he “had no rest in his spirit, because he found not Titus.” Moses too “spake unadvisedly with his lips.” As one has beautifully said in words that I deeply enjoy, vessels “such as Paul are chords on which God strikes, and on which He produces a wondrous music; but Christ is the music itself.” Compare them both in Matt. 16. Christ could be on the mount in glory with Moses and Elias, and be owned as Son by the Father Himself; and He can be on the plain in the presence of the multitude and Satan; but although the scenes are different, He is alike perfect in each. In 2 Cor. 13 Paul could glory as a man in Christ, one who had been in the third heavens; but when he comes down into ordinary life, be must have a thorn in the flesh to keep him humble, lest he should be exalted above measure.

Thus was Jesus, and thus He walked—never equaled. The Lamb for God's altar must be without spot and blemish, and such was He!

But when we turn to look at His cross, we find something else; perfect in His person, as perfect in the act He came to accomplish, we find Him then. We read, “And Eleazar the priest shall take of her blood with his finger and sprinkle of her blood directly before the tabernacle of the congregation seven times.” Would that the trembling one, whose heart has not yet found peace, or the anxious one whose conscience is still unpurged, the weak one who desires to realize all the blessings of acceptance and forgiveness—would that such would read aright the soul-emancipating truth conveyed in the verse before us! We read of a sevenfold sprinkling at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. This suggests to us two thoughts. First, the place where the sprinkling was accomplished; and secondly, the value of the act that was done there. In Ex. 29:42, 43, we read about the place; and it was the place of fellowship or communion between God and Israel. “There will I meet with the children of Israel.” There was the blood of the unblemished heifer sprinkled seven times before God, at the place where He met His people.

Seven is the well-known number which conveys to us the thought of perfection in spiritual things. Every claim that a God of righteousness and truth and justice and holiness could righteously demand was answered there according to the divine standard of these things, in the sevenfold sprinkled blood. His holy eye saw before Him that which responded to every claim as to sin and uncleanness, and proved Him a “just God” and yet “a Savior” — “Just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.” Sevenfold was the sprinkling of the blood of the unblemished heifer; and in its sevenfold perfection was the blood of Christ, once offered to answer every claim of God and need of the sinner. He “made peace by the blood of His cross.”

But in verse 5 we learn something more; we read, “And one shall burn the heifer in his sight, her skin, her flesh, and her blood with her dung, shall he burn.” Here we get another view of the cross of Jesus, that meeting place between God and the sinner. We learn here that Christ was entirely consumed by the fire of the judgment of God on account of sin. The accents of His soul at that

moment were, “I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels.” Entirely was He consumed by the fire of judgment on account of sin; the very levity of thought and sins we think so lightly of, wretched creatures that we are—for these was He consumed to ashes, in exhausting the cup of wrath for His people!

Again, in verse 6, another phase of the cross unfolds before us. We read, “And the priest shall take cedar wood, and hyssop, and scarlet, and cast it into the midst of the burning of the heifer.” Another wondrous truth is here, one we may deeply ponder with subdued hearts before God. How many are the schemes around us to improve man, as he is, and to adorn the world which has departed from God. Here we find them all judged and set in their true light. Nature from its highest to its lowest is typified here; “From the cedar that is in Lebanon to the hyssop that springeth out of the wall.” This takes in the full range of the natural man. Let it be the moralist or the philosopher, the teetotaler or the drunkard, the amiable or the churl, all are included here. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh,” and never can be anything else. No doubt many of the schemes of morality, and self-improvement, and reform, have done much for men; but this, while good in its place, never alters the great fact that “the carnal mind is enmity against God.” The cross has revealed this, has written death upon all its varied plans, for improvement and amelioration; and the word of God comes alike to it all, “it must be born again!” This is its sentence after 4,000 years of probation and trial; it had been “weighed in the balances and found wanting.” And again, every human glory of the world, and its attractions found its true measure in the cross. The “scarlet” was cast into the burning of the heifer. “Now is the judgment of this world.” “The world hath not known thee.” “All that is of the world.... is not of the Father.” “The world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.” Thus we have seen in these verses, brought before us, the person of the Christ of God; the value of His cross before Him; and somewhat of the deep meaning of that cross, and how it puts everything in its right place—the flesh, the natural man, and the world.

Now to apply this to the conscience of the believer who has been called to walk in fellowship with Jesus. Such an one has doubtless rested for acceptance more or less in the cross and bloodshedding of Jesus. He has been washed in the precious blood, it has been sprinkled on his conscience by faith, once and forever in its divine efficacy and sufficiency. Then has come his walk before God, in the light of His presence, within the vail. Being there makes him feel the consciousness of indwelling sin, of sin in his members. Perhaps in an unguarded moment the evil fruit has come forth in the form of sins, which has clouded his perception of his place, and his communion with the Father and Son has been interrupted. How then is he to be restored? How has God provided in His jealous holiness against the least thought of sin in the practical walk of His people? The sevenfold sprinkled blood precludes the thought of the sin ever coming into His presence. He sees before Him that which has answered every claim according to the divine holiness of that presence. Nevertheless it has clouded the soul of His child, and He will not permit him to enjoy his place and fellowship with Him while the cloud remains.

We read then in verses 11, &c., “He that toucheth the dead body of a man shall be unclean seven days, he shall purify himself with it on the third day; and on the seventh day he shall be clean. But if he purify not himself the third day, then on the seventh day he shall not be clean... And for an unclean person they shall take of the ashes of the burnt heifer of purification for sin, and running water shall be put there in a vessel, and a clean person shall take hyssop, and dip it in the water, and sprinkle it upon.... him that touched a bone, or one slain, or one dead, or a grave. And the

clean person shall sprinkle upon the unclean on the third day, and on the seventh day he shall purify himself and wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water and shall be clean at even. But the man that shall be unclean and shall not purify himself, that soul shall be cut off from among the congregation, because he hath defiled the sanctuary of the Lord; the water of separation hath not been sprinkled upon him: he is unclean." Here we learn first of all, that even contact with evil, or its smallest workings, defiles. Completely and perfectly has the soul lost the enjoyment of its communion with God: seven days was the Israelite unclean. As perfectly as had the sevenfold sprinkling answered the claims of God at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, as well as the need of the convicted conscience which approached there; so as perfectly had the soul lost its fellowship with God. And God would have one feel the loss, and feel it deeply too. The unclean person lay two days under his defilement; be must feel the privation of communion with God. There was no haste in bringing the water of purification till be had this adequate twofold testimony (as required under the law) that he had lost his communion, and that he was in the truth as to his state. Then, having lain two days under his uncleanness, the clean person was to take the ashes of the burnt heifer and running water, and with hyssop sprinkle it upon the unclean person the third day.

When we have fully felt the want of communion, through having lost it, then we find these two things—the ashes and the water. To the Israelite, it was for purifying the flesh from ceremonial defilement; with us, it is spiritual purification. The ashes proved to the Israelite that the sacrifice was entirely consumed: it was the memorial of the perfect offering which had been consumed outside the camp, some of the blood of which had been sprinkled before God. To us, it is the remembrance of the sacrifice of Christ, once offered in its perfection, brought to our minds by the Holy Ghost, (typified in the running water; see Eph. 5:26,) proving to us that He was entirely consumed on account of sin, by the searching fire of judgment. The ashes testified that the sin was gone forever. When the soul has felt that it has lost communion with God through carelessness or sin, the sacrifice of Christ, in all its perfection, is applied to the conscience by the Holy Ghost. The first application on the third day did not restore the Israelite. Nor does the first apprehension of the sacrifice of Christ, as applied by the Holy Ghost to the conscience of the believer, restore the soul to communion. It is the sense of the sin having been put away by the sacrifice of Christ; and then the second application, is the full restoration of the soul to God, with the sense of His grace triumphing over the sin. The unclean Israelite purified himself the third day, but the result of the second sprinkling on the seventh day, was that "he shall be clean" —perfectly restored.

How perfect in all its divine precision is the figure before us! It shows the jealousy of God about the holiness of His house, and the care He has shown that there should be practical holiness in His people and truth in the inward parts; the type divinely provides for both. And then we find, verse 19, that after his full restoration to communion, he had one thing more to do—he had to wash his clothes and bathe himself in water. He was to cleanse himself; by the washing of water by the word, from every defiling circumstance which surrounded him; and to cleanse himself, as having been in those circumstances and having thus become defiled by them; to lay the edge of the word to them, so that they might not affect him again in his walk, and that be himself might not be found in them so as to become defiled.

Such are some of the wondrous beauties of the type of the red heifer. We find that not only as sinners has the grace of our Savior God given us a place before Him, the work of Christ having fitted us to be there, and the Holy Ghost having brought us into the understanding and enjoyment of our place; but that as believers, God (the Father, Son and Holy Ghost) is engaged in keeping us in the place, in practical holiness, and fitness to walk in fellowship in the power of the Holy Ghost with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

F. G. P.

Chapter 240

# The Ways of God: 1. Government, Grace, and Glory

AT a time like the present, so full of events crowding themselves together in the history of this present age—an age which ends with consequences so deep and solemn to the world, and so full of blessing to the Christian, and to the Church of God—it is a blessing from the Lord to have our minds directed towards the prophetic word, and to the ways of God. It is said of the prophetic word, that unto it “ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts.” It is desired as briefly as is consistent with the end in view, and as the Lord may graciously afford guidance and blessing to our need; to bring before the mind of the people of God the general scope of the great dispensational dealings of God, which it has pleased Him, in His infinite grace, to make known to us in His word, so as to display those dealings in government, grace, and glory. In this way some may be enabled to follow those dealings in their consecutive order, as nearly as such may be followed, so as to grasp the purposes of God thus revealed.

Truly we may say, we only “know in part;” but the Lord is very gracious, and waits on our slowness to learn.

It is not pretended to give a complete view of the details of these things, but such as may lead the mind to a closer searching after the more minute details, details in the word of God, and a more perfect apprehension of His purposes and ways.

In carrying out such a desire, many truths, well known of late amongst the Lord's people, will be before us—needfully so—that the more important parts may not be forgotten or omitted, in the consecutive order of God's ways. And should it be found that it is necessary to depart from this order, it will be but to link together more fully and clearly the events, that the mind may be enabled to pass along the chain without leaving a link behind.

The purpose of these papers is to put the truth plainly and simply before the mind from Scripture, for “godly edifying which is in faith;” not to combat with error, however useful and necessary such may by in its season. For it is strongly felt that, when the truth with its clear and perfect light shines into the soul, it dispels the darkness around, and finds a resting place in the heart that desires to be subject to the word of God. May the consideration of these truths prove a blessing from Him, who alone can bless; and may He enable us to live in the power of the things which are unseen and eternal, and abundantly bless His own word!

In searching into these subjects, a very large scope of Scripture will be before us, besides the prophetic scriptures, which embrace five great distinct subjects, viz.—first, the corruption or ruin of Israel; secondly, judgment following the ruin; thirdly, the times of the Gentiles; fourthly, the crisis of the world's history; fifthly, the glory or kingdom. I would premise one remark upon 2 Peter 1:20: “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation.” There have been certain partial fulfillments of prophecy in times past, which, no doubt, bore largely upon them the features of the occurrences to which, when fulfilled, in a primary application, they referred; but

if we were to say that their scope ended there, we should miss the mind of the Spirit in the subject of the scripture, and make it of private interpretation. Prophecy begins in the mind and counsels of God, and only ends in His own glory to be revealed and perfected and displayed in His Son; it links together two things, the counsels of God and their accomplishment in Christ. We cannot, therefore, begin at a subsequent point, or stop at any one prior to the end, without losing its great aim. No matter how exact may have been the apparent fulfillment of certain prophecies, when we come to examine the details, we are sure to find features which clearly show that, when God was pleased to use the circumstances that were coming, or that were then before Him, He has always shown that He had other thoughts in view reaching on to the accomplishment of His full purposes and glory, of which the matter before Him served as a type. Prophecy, too, is occupied about earthly events, not about heavenly. “There is one glory of the celestial and another glory of the terrestrial” truly; but prophecy is silent as to “the mystery which, from the beginning of the world, had been hid in God.” “The mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest.” “This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the Church.”

I.—The General Scope of the Dealings of God.

With reference to this subject, we will refer to three scriptures as follow: “But when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law.” (Gal. 4:4.) “In the dispensation of the fullness of times, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him; in whom we also have obtained an inheritance.” (Eph. 1:10, 11.) “And the angel sware by him that liveth forever and ever that there should be time (delay) no longer: but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished.” (Rev. 10:6, &c.) These three portions of Scripture mark out three great leading events or epochs of God's dealings towards the world: the first of them is past, and the two others manifestly future; the difference in the two last lying in this, that the one ends when the other begins. We shall now endeavor to ascertain from Scripture, to what past dealings and ways of God the expression in Galatians refers, “When the fullness of time was come.” We must, consequently, take a general glance at the past history of the world as revealed to us.

We turn to Gen. 1; 2, and there we find that God, having created the man and woman, bestows upon them the “dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.” A universal dominion bestowed upon them over all created things. We pass on to Gen. 3, and there we find that Satan had come in and succeeded in obtaining this headship through man who had fallen, and through his lusts, when estranged from God. To Adam alive and innocent had been given a law upon the observing of which the retention of the blessings and dominion depended, and which would, as a creature, have kept him in his proper place of subjection to God. Adam thus fallen hears a promise, that the woman's seed (which he was not) should, in due time, bruise the head of Satan, who had thus obtained the headship by his deceit; and thus he passes out from the presence of God. “So he drove out the man.” Then begins the probation of man in this condition, which lasted about four thousand years, till “the fullness of the time was come.”

For about sixteen or seventeen hundred years of this time of trial men are left to themselves (God never leaving Himself without a witness) till the flood, when the earth was “corrupt before God, and

was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and behold it was corrupt: for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth." "The invisible things of him from the creation of the world" having been" clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead," leaving them "without excuse." And so God said, "The end of all flesh is come before me, for the earth is filled with violence through them: and behold I will destroy them with the earth." "And so he brought in the flood upon the world of the ungodly... and the world that then was being overflowed with water perished," and thus ended the trial of man left to himself.

Noah and his family are saved through this judgment, and we find him on the earth thus cleansed. Into his hand is given the "sword;" government is entrusted to him— "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed, for in the image of God made he man." Noah thus entrusted, began to be a husbandman, and he planted a vineyard, and he drank of wine, and was drunken; thus losing, morally, the position in which he had been placed by God.

The worship of devils began. Men, when they knew God, "glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imagination, and their foolish heart was darkened: professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things." "The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils and not to God."

Self-will thus fills the heart of men—self-will that would prove a center in itself, having lost the link which linked it to God, the only center of good: men unite to make a center of unity apart from God. "Let us build a city and a tower, whose top may reach to heaven; and let us make a name, lest we be scattered about upon the face of the whole earth." Man would call this unity, God calls it confusion, (Babel,) and He goes down and scatters men abroad, giving them the restraint of tongues, "an iron band round men."

When the world had thus gone into idolatry, "and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever;" God separated to Himself one man, Abraham, and in him a family, a nation, that He might (amongst other counsels) place man under another test, on new ground. In course of time He separates this nation of Israel from the world (Egypt) to Himself, giving them thus separated, Himself dwelling amongst them, His law. This law represented to man the rule of his responsibility as a sinner, and also represented the authority of God. Ignorant of themselves, they accept it as the condition of their relationship with God; the law-giver goes to receive it, and before the conditions are named, those who accept the conditions, set up a golden calf and worship it as their God, and fail! God then puts the law into the hands of a mediator and adds the conditions of longsuffering and mercy to its claims. The history of the nation of Israel, thus set on new ground, gives us the result of this fresh trial of man. It lasted till the captivity in Babylon. During that time of trial we listen to the pleading voice of the prophets and messengers of God, striving to win back the rebellious people to the observation of the conditions of their relationship with Him, and to keep the law that defined them. "But they," says the prophet, "like Adam, have transgressed the covenant; they have dealt treacherously against me." (Hos. 5:7.) They broke the covenant upon which the blessings depended, as Adam had done.

Man now gets another trial. Supreme power is put into his hand. Universal dominion is given into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon: "Thou, O king, art a king of kings; for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory; and wheresoever the children

of men dwell, the beasts of the field, and the fowls of heaven, hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all." (Dan. 2:37, 38.) How then will he use it? Will it be to the glory and honor of Him from whom he had received it? The result is known. Lifted up in pride of heart, he makes of himself a center, and for a religious and idolatrous unity apart from God persecutes His people. Lifted up in pride he says, "Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty." (Dan. 4:30.) He loses his moral reason and becomes a beast!

And now into this wilderness of the world, into the spot where God had put His vineyard and planted His vine, that it might bring forth fruit for Him—the vineyard that He had fenced and gathered out the stones, and planted with His choicest vine, and of which He could say, "What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it?" and when He looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes, with all His care and culture, "the degenerate plant of a strange vine:" —into the moral wilderness of this world, and into that little spot on which He had bestowed such care, came His last trial of man!

"I have one Son, it may be they will reverence him when they see him." The tale is soon told: they gave Him a cross when He came to seek His crown! They gave Him spitting when He came to seek for fruit! And thus ended the probation of four thousand years under every form of trial; the fullness of time was come! Man cannot now say that one single way was left untried of God; he is left without excuse. The fullness of time was come, and God sent forth His son. The Son came to seek and to save that which was lost! He took the twofold position: "made of a woman," through whom sin had entered; "made under the law," through which men were under condemnation, "to redeem them that were under the law," that we might receive the adoption of sons; that God might display the exceeding riches of His grace to those who were poor and miserable through sin. The result to those that believe is, "We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."

To such His purpose is revealed: "That in the dispensation of the fullness of times, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in him; in whom also we have obtained an inheritance." And when these fullness of times shall have run their course, the strong angel shall sware by Him that liveth forever and ever, that there shall be no longer delay, and that when the seventh angel should sound, the "mystery of God" should be finished. (Rev. 10) "And the seventh angel sounded, and there were great voices in heaven saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever." (Rev. 11:15.)

Let us now look at these "times" that are running on to their "fullness." "The fullness of time" is evidently past; the "dispensation of the fullness of times" plainly future.

1. It is now the time of the testimony of the cross and resurrection of Jesus, and the gathering together of the joint-heirs for Him, in whom we have obtained an inheritance; the time when God's secret work is progressing, fitting the spiritual stones to His spiritual house.

2. The time of the Church suffering in brokenness and weakness here below, in the kingdom and patience of Jesus.

3. The time of confusion and misrule, when judgment is so far separated from righteousness, that when the only righteous One stood before the judgment-seat, owning that the power which was there was given of God: “Thou couldst have no power at all, unless it were given thee from above” —it condemned the Guiltless!

4. The time of the blindness of the beloved people, the vail being over their face, the fullness of the Gentiles being gathered in.

5. The time of the Gentile domination, when the great image of Daniel has not yet received the blow upon his feet from the stone cut out without hands.

6. The time when the whole creation groans and travails in pain, waiting for the manifestation of the sons and heirs of God.

7. The time when Satan goes about, a roaring lion unbound, seeking whom he may devour; whose voice we hear in the evil spirits, “torment us not before the time.”

8. The time of the “mystery of God,” when He bears with much longsuffering the evil, without judging it; when wickedness is in high places, and goodness trampled under foot; when falsehood triumphs, and truth is fallen in the streets.

9. And the time when Jesus, rejected by the world, sits at God's right hand, waiting until His enemies are made His footstool.

But we must now retrace our steps. We saw that man had lost the headship and dominion given to him in Gen. 1; 2 We turn to Psa. 8 and find that there is a “Son of man” on whom this dominion is bestowed. “Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands, thou hast put all things under his feet; all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field, the fowls of the air and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea.” Who is this “Son of man?” and when is this dominion to be exercised and enjoyed? Heb. 2 answers us: “Unto angels hath he not put in subjection the habitable earth to come, (οικουμενη,) whereof we speak; but one in a certain place testified saying, What is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels, thou crownedst him with glory and honor, thou didst set him over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet.... We see not yet all things put under him, but we see Jesus. crowned with glory and honor.” it is in the age to come this dominion is to be exercised and enjoyed by Him who is also the “Son of man,” now “crowned with glory and honor.”

We turn to Eph. 1:19-23, and find the apostle again quoting the same Psalm. He speaks of the exceeding greatness of the power which was wrought in Christ “when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenlies, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in that which is to come. And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.” We learn from this and other portions of chapters 1 - 4, that, while He is exalted thus, a body is being formed for Him from Jew and Gentile; and that the same power that was put forth to raise Christ and exalt Him as man to God's right hand (He was always the eternal Son, the Word that was with God) is put forth to quicken, raise up, and unite to Him the joint heirs, which form His body the Church.

Again, in 1 Cor. 15:27, the apostle quotes this psalm. Thence we learn that this dominion is accomplished in resurrection, the resurrection of the saints from among the dead, of which the chapter treats; that when that day comes, some shall not have been laid asleep by Jesus, but all (living and dead) shall be changed. It is at that period that the dispensation of the fullness of times shall have course, and God shall have gathered together all things in heaven and earth in Christ: and when the saying shall be brought to pass, “death is swallowed up in victory.” (1 Corinthians ay. 54; Isa. 25:8.) Then He shall proceed, as we find by the kindred passages of Isaiah, to bring in the blessing of the earthlies; and then the kingdom of this world shall become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, “when the Lord of hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously.”

We find this in Isa. 24-26 The world and its systems brought under judgment, when it will reel to and fro like a drunkard under the judgment of God. When He will punish the host of the high ones that are on high Satan and his hosts shall then be cast out of the heavenlies (Rev. 12), after having so long obscured and hindered the blessing from God. The kings of the earth shall be punished on the earth, when they are gathered together against the King of kings and Lord of lords. (Rev. 19) This universal judgment makes way for the establishment of His throne in Zion. “in that mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all nations a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. He will remove the vail that is spread ever all nations. He will take away the rebuke of His people Israel, the remnant of the nation that have waited for Him, who was “the strength to the poor, and the strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, and a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall.” He will bring the branch of the terrible ones low, and cause “the feet of the poor, and the steps of the needy” remnant of His people to “tread it down,” and teach them in that day of their deliverance and restoration to sing this song in the land of Judah, “We have a strong city, salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks.” The whole three chapters are of exceeding beauty, showing what the Lord will do at the day when the saying is brought to pass, “Death is swallowed up in victory,” when all that has been marred and destroyed in the hands of the first Adam, shall be made good in the last Adam,” and when He shall exercise the headship of Psa. 8 taken as Redeemer-Heir—the joint-heirs united to Him, when the name of the Lord shall be excellent in all the earth; and His glory, not only as King in Zion, but that which He has set above the heavens shall be displayed in the heavens and the earth, at “the times of the restitution of all things.”

In fine we see that man has destroyed himself; every fresh trial only proving how complete has been his ruin and failure. He has sinned away his blessings as soon as he has received them. We see that God will make good in a far higher sense, and to His own glory, everything that man has ruined, and under which he has failed, in the Son of man—the second Adam—in Christ! What we have considered embraces only the period of probation up to the cross and rejection of God Himself in the person of Christ. We shall see, in considering over other subjects, this humiliating, yet necessary, discovery, more clearly brought out. True it is that man—the first Adam—was as really lost and ruined at the day of Gen. 3 as in his rejection of Christ; but it was this which brought out definitely the enmity of his heart to God and good. Before the cross there was no distinct proof of this. He had failed in many a patient trial from God; but his ruin was fully proved, when God, gentle, humane, loving, full of grace and truth, came into his midst and was rejected in the person

of Jesus Christ!

Chapter 241

# The Ways of God: 2. The Past History of the People of Israel

II-The Past History of the People of Israel

After our short survey of the general dealings of God, we now come to consider His ways, as exhibited more in detail; and in doing so we turn to that people, or nation, which was peculiarly the platform for their display, in government, longsuffering, and mercy—the people of Israel.

We have seen the state of the world and failure of man in the days before the flood: and afterward Noah set up on the renewed earth, the world going into idolatry, and, amongst the jarring elements of human wills, man striving to make a center and a name apart from God, and the judgment of God thereon—the divisions of the world into nations in the family of Noah. There was a purpose with God at that time, in His mind and counsels, which we find in Deut. 32:8. “When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people, according to the number of the children of Israel. For the Lord's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.” Here we find that centuries before they existed as a nation, the counsels of God were occupied about them. His dealings with the nations of the world were arranged with reference to the seed of Jacob.

The world had lost the knowledge of the one true God and had gone after idols, even the family of him of whom it was said, “Blessed be the Lord God of Shem.” Satan had succeeded in gaining the position God should have had in the minds and hearts of man. “Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods.” (Josh. 24:2.) We learn from 1 Cor. 10:20, in which the apostle quotes Deut. 32, that these gods were devils. This being the case, God chose one man, whom He called to separate himself from his country, associations, and his family to be a witness in the world and against the world for Him. To this man, Abraham, God gave certain promises, both of a temporal and of a spiritual nature. The question before us being the past history of the nation of Israel, we pursue only the temporal promises. When Abraham came into the land of Canaan, God said, “Unto thy seed will I give this land.” (Gen. 10:11.) When Lot had separated from him, these promises are renewed. “Lift up now thine eyes and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward; for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it and to thy seed forever,” &c. (Gen. 13:14, &c.) Again in chapter 15 we find the promise renewed and the bounds of the land named. “And he said unto him, I am the God that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it.” And again, “Unto thy seed have I given this land from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates.” In a vision in the same chapter God reveals to Abraham that his seed would be a stranger in a land that was not theirs and that they should serve them. “And they shall afflict them four hundred years. . . And afterward they shall come out with great substance.”

Now these promises were entirely unconditional: they were given by God and received by Abraham without any condition whatsoever. We find them, still without condition, repeated to Isaac in Gen. 26, and to Jacob in Gen. 28. We turn to Ex. 2, when the four hundred years were expired,

and we find these promises to the fathers alluded to; “And God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob; and God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them.” The people are now redeemed, and taken out of Egypt, the covenant name of Jehovah revealed to them. Afterward they are told God's purpose in thus taking them out. “Unto thee it was showed that thou mightest know that the Lord (Jehovah) he is God, there is none else beside him.” (Deut. iv. 35.) Or, as He says in Isa. 43:12, “Ye are my witnesses that I am God.” On the redemption of the people God takes up His dwelling amongst them in the cloud and the glory.

The question of righteousness had not, however, yet been raised. The people journey from the Red Sea to Mount Sinai, the objects of perfect grace. Here God proposes certain terms of relationship with them; “Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine.” &c. (Ex. 19) “And all the people answered together and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do.” See also chapter 24:3, 7, where the covenant is ratified by blood. Thus they enter upon a covenant of obedience as the terms of relationship with God. Instead of saying, “No, we cannot trust ourselves in the least; if we accept conditions as these, we shall surely fail: we shall not be able to keep our blessings for one hour.” Instead of this, they were full of confidence and ignorant of themselves. The result is plain and solemn. The lawgiver goes up to the mount that burned, to receive the terms of the covenant; and, ere he returns, the people make a calf and worship it, as the god that brought them up out of Egypt: they say, “Up, make us gods which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.” (Ex. 32:1.) Moses returns with the tables of the law in his hand; he sees the music and the dancing when he came nigh unto the camp: he saw that on the side of the people the terms of the relationship were broken; and his anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hand, and broke them beneath the mount. Pure and unmixed law never, therefore, came amongst the people. The lawgiver returns to the mount; he goes up again, “peradventure he might make an atonement for their sin;” and in answer to the prayer of Moses, the people is spared, and a covenant of longsuffering, patience, and mercy added to that of the law; and it is established in the hands of the mediator and the people. (Ex. 34:27.)

The Book of Leviticus, with other matters, settles the approach to God, who dwelt amongst them, and the priesthood.

The Book of Numbers gives the journey through the wilderness.

When about to enter the land, the covenant is renewed, establishing the terms of their possession of the land on condition of their observing them, in the plainest way in the Book of Deuteronomy. Chapter 27 states the principle of legal righteousness, and chapter as other parts of the book, the conditions of their inheritance and blessing in the land. “And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth, and all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God. Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field: blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the

increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep: blessed shall be thy basket and thy store: blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out." (Deut. 28:1-6) And the alternative, "But it shall come to pass, that if thou wilt not hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day, that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee. Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field; cursed Blain be thy basket and thy store; cursed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy land; the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep: cursed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and cursed shalt thou be when thou goest out." (Deut. 28:15-19.) The whole chapter states in the most solemn manner the conditions of their possession and retention of their blessings in the land. And we read in chapter 29:1, "These are the words of the covenant which the Lord commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab (in the borders of Israel), beside the covenant which he made with them in Horeb."

Accordingly we find them entering the land under the leadership of Joshua, the waters of Jordan separating themselves, and the "Lord of all the earth" passing into the land before His people, to possess the land in them. This was an important title which the Lord thus assumes, to which we shall have occasion to refer again.

The Book of Joshua gives the history of their conquest and establishment in the land. In the last chapter we find Joshua establishing a covenant with the people, in which they bind themselves to serve the "Lord their God," and to obey His voice, and under these conditions to retain the blessing.

We now see one point established clearly, of the utmost importance, which is, that the people never yet possessed the land, or the blessings promised to the fathers, under the unconditional terms promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. These promises are yet to be fulfilled and accomplished in grace.

The results of their inheritance of the land, and the blessings conditionally, we find in the Book of Judges, as in other scriptures. "And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord and served Baalim: and they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods; of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the Lord to anger. And they forsook the Lord and served Baal and Ashtaroth And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel; and he said, Because that this people hath transgressed my covenant which I commanded their fathers, and have not hearkened unto my voice: I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he died; that through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the Lord, to walk therein, as their fathers did keep it or not," &c. (Judg. 2:11-13, 20-23.) This book shows their failure, and the faithfulness and longsuffering of God, who raised up judges and deliverers from time to time, to bring temporary relief to them out of the bands of their enemies.

In 1 Samuel we find the failure of the priesthood in the family of Eli. We read, "Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial, they knew not the Lord." (1 Sam. 2:12.) The entire chapter treats of this failure, and the cognizance the Lord takes of it. In chapter 3 the Lord establishes the regular line of prophets in Samuel," ere the lamp of God went out in the house of the Lord," to form the link between Himself and the consciences of the people. In chapter 4 the ark of God, on which He

manifested His presence, is taken. Eli dies, and the wife of Phinehas, dying on giving birth to her child, names him “Ichabod, saying, The glory is departed from Israel.” The prophet Samuel is now the link between God and the people. “He judged Israel all the days of his life.” When he became old, he set his sons to be judges over Israel, but they “walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment.”

The people now desire a king and “the thing displeased Samuel when they said, Give us a king to judge us; and Samuel prayed unto the Lord. And the Lord said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.” The Lord now gives them a king, a man of their own choice, Saul the son of Kish. Chapters 9 - 15 give us the history of his appointment and failure. He fails in what he had been raised up to do. “And Samuel said unto him, The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbor of thine, that is better than thou.” (Chap. 15:28) God now gives them a king, a man of His own choice, “David the son of Jesse,” who at last is settled in the kingdom. After him, his son Solomon is established on the throne of the kingdom, in the full tide of prosperity and blessing,” neither adversary nor evil occurrent.” (See 1 Sam. 16-1 Kings 10) But “Solomon had horses brought out of Egypt,” and he multiplied wives unto himself. Both of these things were expressly forbidden in Deut. 17 “And the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned away from the Lord God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice; and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which the Lord commanded.” (1 Kings 11:9, 10.)

They had now failed under prophets, priests, and kings. Solomon had for a little moment united all these in his own person, serving as a type of Him in whom all shall be established. We read in 2 Chron. 9:3, 4, when the Queen of Sheba came up, she heard the wisdom of the prophet, and saw the magnificence of the king, and the ascent of the royal priest to the house of the Lord—a faint shadow of the coming day of the glory of the kingdom.

God now stirs up the adversaries of the kingdom against Solomon, declaring by His prophet that He would take the kingdom from him; yet He would still preserve one tribe to David's house, that he might always have a light before Him. Accordingly, when Rehoboam came to the throne the mass of the nation revolted under Jeroboam, who established a separate kingdom, and an idolatrous center of unity. The tribe of Judah only was preserved to the house of David.

From this time we pursue the histories of these two divisions of the nation, under the kings of Israel and the kings of Judah. That of the former is a tale of evil without any redeeming point, till we come to 2 Kings 17, when, under their last king, Hoshea, Shalmaneser, the king of Assyria came up and led away the nation of Israel captive. “In the ninth year of the reign of Hoshea, the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Haber by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.” (2 Kings 17:6.) Read the entire chapter, which gives the account of this. These tribes have never been restored.

We follow the history of the kingdom of the house of Judah from Rehoboam's day, which is such another tale of wretchedness, and failure, and departure from God, occasionally relieved by the reign of some faithful king, such as Josiah and Hezekiah, till the house of David consummated its guilt in Ahaz. This king had set up the altar of a strange god in the house of the Lord, and made

molten images for Baalim, and followed the abominations of the heathen. He was scarcely exceeded in iniquity by Manasseh after the reign of Hezekiah. In the reign of Zedekiah the time had come when those touching and solemn words were pronounced: “The Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes and sending, because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place; but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy.” (2 Chron. 36:15, 16.) Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came against the city of Jerusalem, and besieged it and took it, and brought the nation captive into the land of Babylon, and put out the eyes of the king and slew his sons, rifled the house of the Lord, and burnt it and the king's house, leaving a few of the poor of the people to be vine-dressers and husband men in the land. They had failed under prophets, priests, and kings, and God pronounced these words by the prophet concerning their last king: “And thou, profane wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end, thus saith the Lord God, Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn it: and it shall be no more, until be come whose right it is; and I will give it him.” (Ezek. 21:25-27.)

The glory, or presence of Jehovah, that had dwelt amongst them since they had been redeemed from Egypt, departs from its house. Turn to chapters 9 to 11 of the prophet Ezekiel. In chapter 9 the prophet sees the glory of the God of Israel gone up from the cherub, and standing upon the threshold of the house: the Lord marks His own, who were faithful, then executes judgment. In chapter 10, the glory departs from off the threshold, and stood over the cherubim that were to bear it away. And in chapter 11, the glory goes up from the midst of the city, and stood upon the mount of Olivet, that is upon the east side of the city.

As soon as the people had gone into captivity, the “sword” of government is handed over to the Gentile king, and the “times of the Gentiles” begin. “Thou, O king, art a king of kings, for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field, and the fowls of heaven, hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all.” (Dan. 2:37, 38.) Israel had been God's servant up to this (in this position, however faithless). See Isa. 43:10 - “Ye are my servant whom I have chosen.” (See also Isa. 41:8; 42:19; 44:21) The Gentile king now takes the place of the Lord's servant, though in another sense. (See Ezek. 29:18, 20; Jer. 25:9, &c.) During the times of the Gentiles, God assumes the title of the “God of heaven,” as we see all through the Book of Daniel, which treats of these times. He had gone over Jordan into the land of Israel, as we saw, under the title of the “Lord of all the earth,” and had exercised His government from the center of Israel. The people having proved themselves worse than the heathen around, utterly untrue witnesses to the “Lord of all the earth,” God removes His presence from amongst them, and bestows the government of the world into the hands of the Gentile king.

Thus ends, properly speaking, the past history of the nation of Israel. In the language of Hosea, “The children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without a teraphin.” And again, “Call his name, Lo-ammi: for ye are not my people, and I will not be your God.”

We must not, however, close our brief view of their past history, without looking shortly at the return of the remnant, of part of Judah and Benjamin at the close of the Babylonish captivity. We turn to Jer. 25 and we find that when they were about to be sent into captivity into Babylon they are told by the prophet, “Behold I will send.... Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof and this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.” We find in the Book of Esther how God secretly watched over His people without publicly owning them or manifesting Himself to them, in the land of their captivity. We read in Dan. 9 that as soon as the seventy years of the kingdom of Babylon were run, and Darius the Mede had taken the kingdom, “I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolation of Jerusalem.” When the seventy years were over, a remnant of Judah and Benjamin came back, and settled in the land (Ezra 1, &c.); they rebuilt the temple, and reared up and repaired the city. (Nehemiah.) The history of this remnant is touching and impressive. It was, however, an empty temple; they had neither the Shekinah (or the glory of the presence of Jehovah), nor the ark, nor the Urim and Thummim. They did not pretend to more than they had, but did what they could in the ruins of everything around. This was not the national restoration as was promised by the prophets; nor was it the inheritance of the land according to the promises to the fathers; only a remnant of Judah and Benjamin returned under the permissive patronage of their rulers, to whom they were still subject. “Behold we are servants this day; and for the land that thou gavest to our fathers to eat the fruit thereof, and the good thereof, behold, we are servants in it; and it yieldeth much increase to the kings whom thou hast set over us because of our sins: also they have dominion over our bodies, and our own cattle, at their pleasure, and we are in great distress.” (Neh. 9:36, 37.) When the national restoration takes place God declares, “will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all; and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all.” (Ezek. 37:22.) And again, “They shall take them captives, whose captives they were; and they shall rule over their oppressors.” (Isa. 14:2.)

This remnant of the nation remained in the land under their oppressors until the coming of their Messiah, and His presentation to them; only a little band of disciples attached themselves to Him, and received Him as the Christ: the mass of the people refused Him and chose a murderer in His stead. They were warned by Him that He had come in His Father's name and yet would reject Him: and that if another would come in his own name, him they would receive. (John 5) With His own blessed, unwearying love He pleaded with, and yearned over, and wept for the people—still beloved for their fathers' sakes, till compelled to say, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate, for I say unto you, ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.” (Matt. 23:37-39.) The sentence of judicial blindness and hardness of heart, pronounced by the prophet seven hundred years before, but in longsuffering withheld, (Isa. 6:9, 10,) came to pass. (Matt. 13; John 12) The householder had sent his Son to receive the fruits of His vineyard, and the husbandmen said,” This is the heir, come let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours; and they caught him and east him out of the vineyard, and slew him.” His love was not turned aside even by this; the Holy Ghost takes up the

voice of Jesus on the cross, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do,” by the mouth of Peter in Acts 3, who says, “And now brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also our rulers.” Repent and be converted and even now He will return. But they gnashed their teeth upon His witness Stephen, and stoned him, and sent a message by him after Jesus “We will not have this man to reign over us.” Still in longsuffering He lingers till the days of Acts 28, when the final carrying out of the sentence was pronounced by Paul, “Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, saying, Go unto this people and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive, for the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed: lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.” (Acts 28:25-27.) It only remained to complete the sentence by the armies of Titus—till “the cities be wasted without inhabitants and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate and the Lord removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land.” (Isa. 6:11, 12.)

The great Prophet had come into the midst of His people: to Him they would not hearken. Rejected, He had gone to heaven to be a priest for those who believe; and when He comes again as King, He will unite all these glories in His own person, and His kingdom shall have no end!

Chapter 242

# The Ways of God: 3. The Times of the Gentiles and Her Judgment

III. - The Times of the Gentiles, and Their Judgment.

We have shortly traced the past history of the people of Israel to the Babylonish captivity, when the sentence “Lo Ammi” (not my people) was passed upon them, the presence of Jehovah, or the glory, departed from their midst, and the government of the world was transferred to the Gentiles. That is, the “times of the Gentiles” began. We have also followed the history of the remnant of Judah and Benjamin, which returned to the land to have their Messiah presented to them, the sentence “Lo Ammi” not having been nor to be removed till after their complete dispersion and the destruction of the cities of the land. (Isa. 6:10.)

Just before the time when Judah was finally carried into captivity, we find God sending His prophet to Zedekiah, who was plotting with the nations around to throw off the yoke of the king of Babylon, requiring that he and they should bring their necks under his yoke. He says, “I have made the earth, the man, and the beast that are upon the ground, by my great power, and by my outstretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me. And now have I given all these lands into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant; and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him. . . Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him and his people, and live.” (Jer. 27:5-12.) It is with this Gentile power, and those which succeed him, until the end of their “times,” we have now to do.

We turn to the Book of Daniel and read of one of the Hebrew captives enabled of God to recall and interpret his dream to the Gentile king, who had forgotten it. (Dan. 2:31-45.) The dream was of a great image, whose head was of gold; the breast and arms of silver; his belly and thighs of brass; his legs of iron, and his feet part of iron and part of clay. The interpretation shows that this image typified the Gentile power from the days of the first king, Nebuchadnezzar, till its close. When in its last state, a stone “cut out without hands,” a kingdom set up by the God of heaven, smites the image on its feet, i.e., at the close of its existence. Accordingly the compound parts of the image then fully formed are broken to pieces and consumed by a crushing act of judgment, inflicted by the stone. They become like chaff in the Bummer threshing-floors, and the wind carries them away, so that no place is found for them. Thus it is that the stone, which executed this act of judgment, becomes a great mountain, and fills the whole earth. The vision is plain, and needs but few words. The Gentile power exists in different stages, each inferior to the other, the farther it removes from the source of its first power, until an act of judgment most complete and destructive on its last state is executed by a power not entrusted to the hands of men, so that every vestige of the image disappears from the scene; and the power that strikes the blow becomes expanded and exalted, and stands forever.

Babylon was the head of gold; its source was the gift of God, as we have seen; its power absolute and unquestioned. “For the majesty that God gave him, all people, nations, and languages, trembled and feared before him: whom he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up, and whom he would he put down.” (Dan. 5:19.)

After it came the Medo-Persian, the breast and arms of silver, a united power (two arms), inferior to the first in its absolute power, inasmuch as if he who wielded the power made a law he was himself subject to that law as another; for “the law of the Medes and Persians altereth not.”

The third kingdom, of brass, the Grecian, was still inferior; as the fourth, that of the iron, and the iron mixed with the miry clay, degenerates yet more.

The great point for us to understand is, that the great power given to the Gentile king, to which succeeded the other powers, as typified in the great image (which, as its existence is prolonged, deteriorates), runs on till one great, crushing, complete act of judgment, yet to be executed, carries the whole and every vestige of it away, replaces it, and then fills the whole earth. I say “yet to be executed,” because it is a common thought to misapply this kingdom, which destroys the others and then fills the earth, to the gospel. Grace, or the gospel, is never represented in Scripture as doing this. In the first place, the image did not exist in the state typified by the feet in the beginning of the Gospel-day. In the next, it is on them the blow is struck, which is a crushing act of judgment, not grace. And next, it is the first act of the stone, an act of judgment, before it begins to grow and to fill the earth. This is noticed only in passing, as the object of these papers is rather to establish the truth in tracing these Gentile powers to their end, than to combat with error.

We now turn to Dan. 7, where these four great powers are expressed under the form of four ravening beasts. From the vast sea of human passions and wiles, which floated unorganized in the world, striven upon by the four winds of heaven, came up four wild beasts or kingdoms. The first like a lion, king among the beasts of the earth, with eagle's wings, the chief of birds: a power rapid in its flight, and soaring above the other powers of the world. This we know was the first of the four great monarchies—Babylon. (Dan. 1:1; 2:37, 38.)

Another wild beast follows—the Medo-Persian, which succeeded that of Babylon. (See chap. 5: 28, 30, 31.)

Then a third—the Grecian empire, formed by Alexander the Great, which followed the Medo-Persian (see chap. 8:21, 22), afterward divided into four heads.

The fourth, diverse from all the other beasts and yet partaking of the qualities or materials of all (see Rev. 13:2), strong exceedingly, devouring and breaking to pieces and destroying the rest, which also had ten horns. It is with this fourth empire we have more particularly to do: the chapter we are looking at is principally occupied with him. The fourth great power was Rome, which replaced the Grecian empire after it was broken into four heads. (Chap. 7:6: 8:21, 22,) This imperial power is introduced by the ancient name of that which surrounded it, its center, Rome, in chapter 11, where we read, “the ships from Kittim shall come,” &c. This is merely referred to, to show that we have all four powers defined from Scripture, either by name or circumstances adjacent. This power existed in its vast unbroken state in the days of Christ, as we read in Luke 2:1, “And there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed.” And it is with this power we, as Christians, called out from the Gentiles, have most to do.

In the second vision of chapter 7, we find that the fourth beast had ten horns, and that amongst the horns came up another horn, before whom three fell; and this horn had eyes, expressive of active intelligence and design; and a mouth speaking great things. He speaks great words against the Most High, wears out the saints of the Most High, prevailing against them; thinks to change times

(Jewish festivals), and laws (ceremonies), which are given into his hand for a time, times, and the dividing of a time (three years and a half). Thrones are set, and the Ancient of days sits, the dominion of the little horn is taken away (he personifies the beast in the end, taking the lead amongst the other horns, and so becomes the expression of the whole), his body destroyed and given to the burning flame. Judgment is given to the saints of the Most High (the heavenlies.

“Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world,” (1 Cor. 6.), and the saints possess the kingdom (the earthly, “Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” Matt. 25) Afterward we find, in another vision, the kingdom of the Son of man substituted for that of the fourth beast (the Ancient of days is the Son of man Himself, see verse 22), which is personified in the little horn that came up last amongst the other horns.

The questions now arise, 1st. Has not the fourth kingdom long ceased to exist in its vast iron power? 2ndly. Has it ever assumed the features conveyed by the ten horns? 3rdly. Has it ever done what is attributed to it in verse 25?

Now these questions will be satisfactorily answered by other Scriptures. We turn to Rev. 13 and read of a wild beast which the prophet sees arising from the sea. It partook of the characteristics of the three foregoing beasts of Dan. 7, but it has another added, which was, that the dragon gave him his power, and seat, and great authority; this it had not before. It had seven heads and ten horns—seven forms of government, and ten divisions in its administrative power. John saw one of its heads wounded, as it seemed, unto death, and the deadly wound was healed. There is no doubt but that this head was its imperial form, which has long ceased to exist: some think forever—that the wound was unto death. But the apparently deadly wound was healed, and all the world wonders; and they worship him, and, through him, Satan, who had given him his power, and seat, and great authority; and they say, “Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?” This is clearly the little horn of Dan. 7, for the same doings are attributed to him. But we have in Revelation this added—that he was the full expression and instrument of Satan when revived; for (as in Dan. 7:25) we read that there was given him a mouth speaking great things, and blasphemies; and power was given to him to make war forty and two months (three and a half years). He blasphemes God and His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven, “the saints of the heavenlies;” and makes war with the saints on earth, and overcomes them—we know from Dan. 7 until what time.

Turning to Rev. 17, in the explanation of the vision, to the prophet we find the same beast, which “was, and is not.” It had existed in its one vast empire, the fourth kingdom of Dan. 7; it had ceased to exist, and “shall ascend out of the bottomless pit;” it would again appear, but when it did, it would be the full expression of Satan— “The dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.” (Chap. 13:2)

But we must proceed with his description under his last form. “There are seven kings,” seven forms of government of the Latin empire. “Five are fallen,” five had disappeared when the prophet wrote. “One is,” it existed then. Another form, not vet come, was to arise, and continue for a brief space. Then the beast that was, and had ceased to exist—he would be an eighth form, yet of the seven. There would now be a feature explained as to the ten horns, not belonging to his former state of existence. The ten horns are ten kings, they had received no kingdom then, they did not belong to his antecedents of one vast empire, but they would appear, and receive power at the

same time as he when he would re-exist in his final form. They would have one mind, and they give their power and strength to the beast; they would have each his separate existence, and yet would own the beast as their chief—the expression of the entire. These make war with the Lamb, and He overcomes them. Their end we find in chapter xix. The rider upon the white horse, with the armies of heaven, comes forth at the last daring and blasphemous defiance of his authority; and the beast and these kings are gathered to make war against Him that sat upon the horse and His armies; and the beast was taken and was “cast alive into a lake burning with fire and brimstone.” His armies, too, are judicially slain.

We have one point to remark, to account for the presence of Satan on the earth at this closing scene, when he gives his power to the last form of the Latin empire three years and a half before the execution of judgment, which introduces the kingdom of the Son of man. We turn for this to Rev. 12. There we find the man-child (Christ and the Church, His body) caught up to God and to His throne, which is immediately followed by war in heaven. Satan is cast out to the earth; rejoicing in heaven follows; woe is pronounced upon the inhabitants of the earth, “for the devil is come down unto you, in great wrath, having but a short time.” He then turns his malice against the Jewish saints below, who are then the objects of the attention of God. He gives his power and authority to the beast for the 1260 days, or forty-two months, or “time, times, and the dividing of a time,” before the end of the beast's existence.

Let us now sum up shortly what we have gathered from Scripture, i. e., the history of the Gentile powers from its beginning to its close.

We have seen that four great kingdoms arose, commencing with Babylon, which had its power directly from God, followed by the Medo-Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman; this last was in existence when John wrote, and for some hundreds of years in more or less of its iron away. It was then broken up into different kingdoms, and continued thus for a long time. Three and a half years before the end of the Gentile power, Satan is cast out of heaven. Next, the Latin empire, so long apparently destroyed and forgotten, is restored, but in a new form; not one vast iron power, but its divided kingdoms uniting to own one man amongst them as their chief, and giving to him their power and force. Satan makes him his ready tool, and the world wonders and worships. This chief blasphemes God, and as Satan cannot now accuse the saints in the heavenlies, be makes his instruments blaspheme them. He turns his rage through this chief against the Jewish people then gathered into their country. And, finally, he leads him to turn his heart in open rebellion against Christ, who comes to take possession of His world-kingdom, and put an end to the Gentile power. This chief and his allies gather together against the King of kings and His heavenly saints, and the end of the Beast is the lake of fire and brimstone.

We have now followed, without much diversion from our subject, the history of the Gentile empires to their conclusion, looking especially upon the features the fourth empire will assume, when revived as an imperial power, three and a half years before the close of its existence; when, in the person of its leader, it will be the plain and complete expression of diabolical power. Possessed by Satan, it will be instigated in rebellion against God and Christ, and so be destroyed.

But, dear friends, we may remember when considering the past history of Israel, we saw that when Christ was presented to the Jews at Jerusalem, He was rejected, and received only by a little band of disciples, and that He told them that He had come in His Father's name and Him they would not

receive; and that if another would come in his own name, him they would receive. Now during the time of the crisis of the world's history, synchronical with the three and a half years of the full-formed evil of the beast, which we have seen, the Jews will again have been gathered into their land in a state of apostacy. Scripture largely shows that a false Messiah will present himself to them at that time, who will be received by the mass of the people, and rejected by a remnant of faithful ones—just the reverse of what occurred in the day when our Lord Himself was there. This personage is the connecting link between the Gentile power in a state of apostasy and revolt and the Jews in a similar state. Christ was presented to Pilate as the representative of the fourth monarchy, and to Caiaphas who represented the Jewish nation in that day: both united in crucifying Him. At the same time He was rejected by the mass of the Jews and received by a little band of disciples. At the close of the existence of the fourth monarchy in its revived state, this false Messiah will appear, the mass of the returned Jews will receive him, and he will be recognized by the imperial head of the restored Latin empire, into whose hands he will play his game; but he will be refused by a little remnant, whose hearts God is training, through unexampled tribulation, for the kingdom about to be substituted for that of the Beast, when judgment is executed.

After thus shortly introducing this false Messiah, we will follow in order the scriptures that speak of him. He is introduced in Dan. 11:36-39; and we may remark that the prophet is told in chapter 10:14 that the angel was come to make him understand what would befall the Jews in the latter days. Chapters 10 - 12 are all one vision and are occupied with this subject, and the Lord Himself in His directions to the Jewish remnant in Matt. 24 alludes to this prophecy (Dan. 12) as still future, and that when the circumstance of the abomination of desolation, &c., come to pass, it would be the sign for the remnant to flee, adding that, “Immediately after those days shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven coming with power and great glory.” We can apply it, therefore, to no other time than to the hour of the great tribulation, or the closing 1260 days, before the appearing of Christ and the judgment executed by Him and the kingdom set up (see also Dan. 12:11, where 30 days are added) and substituted for that of the beast.

The king is at once introduced in chapter 11:36-39 as one who has that title in the eyes of the Jews. He does according to his own will, exalts himself and magnifies himself above every god, speaks marvelously against the God of gods, and prospers till the indignation is accomplished. He regards not the God of the Jews, nor the Messiah, nor any god, magnifying himself above them all. The “indignation” is spoken of in Isa. 10:5. 24, 25, where we find that there is an appointed time for its duration.

We turn to Rev. 13:11, where we find this personage brought before us again, as the second beast, which comes up out of the earth, having two horns like a lamb—some imitation of Christ, but his voice like a dragon. He cannot set aside the power of the Gentile king, the Beast—that is reserved for Christ; but he ministers to him and “exercises the power of the first beast before him” —the power of Satan, but subordinate to that of the Beast. “And he doeth great wonders, so that he causes fire to come down from heaven, on the earth, in the sight of men,” &c. He thus imitates the great power of God (of course it is not so, but only in the sight or apprehension of men).

Read now Rev. 16:13, 14, where we find the three great allies in wickedness, the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet, unclean spirits proceeding from each to gather together the kings of the whole habitable earth to the battle of the great day of God Almighty.

In Rev. 19:20, we find Satan's two great instruments—the Beast and the false prophet. The Beast, with his vassal kings, as we have seen before, gathered together to make war with the Lamb, the Lord of lords, and King of kings. The Beast and the false prophet here meet their doom. Allies in wickedness and blasphemy, they are allied in judgment. “These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.”

There is a link now wanting, beloved friends, in this sad and sorrowful history. Sad and sorrowful it is, because in the judgment of these two men we see the end, first, of one who personifies, in the close of the times of Gentile domination, the abuse of the power that had been delivered into the hands of man by God: filled with moral madness and impotent pride, he becomes the ready instrument of Satan, in the last and closing acts of his stupendous wickedness, till he is bound by Him whose heel he bruised when here, and who then exhibits in this world, so long the playground of Satan's deeds, the blessings He had “reveled to procure for man when He went down under the dark domain of him who had the power of death. Sad and sorrowful, too, as to the second, that the minds of men, ever ready to receive the veriest lie of Satan, and ever ready to doubt the love of God, at last become so besotted in wickedness and moral blindness, as to receive such an one as he for their Christ. But there is, as we were remarking, one link yet wanting, and that is, how this consummation of spiritual wickedness, this false Messiah, becomes the link, as we may say, between the history of professing Christendom and the Jews, in the close and the crisis of the history of this age, before the introduction of an age of blessedness and peace. This will be brought before our minds again; but before this we must consider another subject which comes in during the great Gentile parenthesis, which fills up the space between that time when Israel was the earthly people of God, owned and acknowledged, and that when they shall be so again. That subject is the “calling of the Church.” In it is involved the second coming of Christ for His saints, before His manifestation with them to the world, in the judgment which we have been partially considering; also the first resurrection, the resurrection from among the dead (of which Christ was the firstfruits) of the saints, the “children of the resurrection.” This subject, dear friends, is a blessed one, near to the heart of Christ—the secret that was hid in God; the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Chapter 243

# The Ways of God: 4. the Calling of the Church and Her Glory

We turn to Psa. 2 and we read, “Why do the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and his anointed (or, Christ), saying, Let us break their bands asunder and cast away their cords from us.” Here we find a confederacy between Gentiles and people of Israel, the kings and rulers, to reject the authority of the Lord and His Christ. We now turn to Acts 4:24-26, where we find this psalm quoted by the Holy Ghost as far as we have read, and the comment then added, “for of a truth, against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.” He was presented to Jew and Gentile, rulers and kings and people, as King in Zion, and rejected. The Lord is represented in this psalm as laughing at their impotent rage. “He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh, the Lord shall have them in derision.” But with all their rage and rejection of Christ, God says, “Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.” They could not turn His purpose aside. Now while we are assured that the full rejection of Christ, as their Messiah by the people of Israel, was at the cross, when they said, “We will have no king but Caesar,” still when we examine the gospel narratives we find that the spirit which showed itself in full hostility at the cross had been exhibited in various ways, especially amongst the rulers and chief ones of the nation, during the Lord's ministry amongst them. This caused Him, after declaring the new era that His rejection would introduce, to desire His disciples to say no more that He was “the Christ;” (there was no further good to be got by this testimony to the people, that is, to His rights as the Messiah). He adds immediately, “The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day.” This latter clause He always adds to the declaration of His rejection and sufferings. Consult Matt. 16:20, 21; Luke 9:20-22, which convey, I doubt not, the truth we are about to see.

In considering Psa. 8 in connection with other subjects, we saw that there was a “Son of man” to whom dominion was bestowed in all the earth, which Adam had sinned away and lost. He, we saw, was the Lord Jesus Himself, as Heb. 2 informs us, even as His inheritance will be enjoyed in an age to come. This title the Lord takes to Himself according to that psalm, after His rejection as King in Zion according to Psa. 2, taking it in resurrection. He takes the headship and inheritance, with its load of sin and guilt upon it; and inherits it not only as His by right, but by redemption also. He takes it as the Redeemer-Heir. “We see not yet,” says Heb. 2, “all things put under him; but we see Jesus.... crowned with glory and honor.” Men said, “We will not have this man to reign over us;” God said, “Sit thou on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool.”

We turn to Eph. 1, and there we find that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ (looked upon here as the exalted and glorified Man), had raised Christ from among the dead, and “set him at his own right hand in the heavenlies, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things in subjection under his feet, and given him to be head over all things to the church which is

his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all." Here we find Him raised and seated in the heavenlies, as the glorified Man, all things not yet visibly put under Him, but his title declared; and while as the expectant Heir, He is seated there, we learn that a work is going on of quickening, raising up, and seating together in Him, the second Adam, in the heavenly places, the joint-heirs of all His glory. It is a work, that, the more we search into and meditate upon its depth and magnificence, humbles us to the dust at the "exceeding riches of God's grace." Human words can but feebly convey to us just thoughts of a work which takes up the Magdalenes, and outcasts, and vile ones, lost and defiled through sin, and sets them in the same glory as the Son of God! Not only blessing them through Him and His blessed work on the cross, but with Him! conferring upon them every dignity, every glory, and every honor, conferred upon Christ Himself as the risen, and exalted, and glorified Son of man! and yet a work in which God is glorified, and in which He is even now exhibiting to the heavenly hosts the fruits of His own precious grace!

This serves truly to level every pretension of man, to think on these things. We look at ourselves, and we are inclined to ask the question, "How can these things be?" But we look at God and His purpose, for the glory of His Son; and thus we serve now to manifest to the principalities and powers in the heavenlies, and to teach them the meaning of "Grace!" May we learn to be silent, and to submit ourselves to Him, who does all things well!

The Epistle to the Ephesians is that Scripture which so fully brings out these things. We find there the purpose of God and the execution of that purpose: His own counsels and the good pleasure of His will revealed; Himself the source of the blessings; His Son Jesus Christ the measure of them, ourselves, by nature dead in trespasses and sins, the objects of them!

But to return. We have seen for a moment the work that is going on while the Head is seated in heaven—raising up and uniting to Him the joint heirs. This is the work of the Holy Spirit since His descent at Pentecost. Now it is most freely admitted that regeneration has been the same in all ages and dispensations. Sinners have been, since the fall of man, quickened by the Holy Ghost and led to trust in the promises of God for salvation by a coming Redeemer, faintly seen in types and shadows of old. Still the saints were quickened; they trusted, and died in faith, and were saved. But individual salvation is not the Church of God. Every individual of that Church, no doubt, is a saved one; still, collectively, they occupy a place, as we shall see, beyond all that went before, and peculiar to the dispensation in which we live. It was reserved for the day when the Lord Jesus, rejected, crucified, dead, buried, risen, ascended, and seated at God's right hand; not only as God's eternal Son, but as a glorified Man, who had fully accomplished redemption in His own person, had put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, glorified God to the utmost as to sin, substituted Himself for His people on the cross, and had been thus seated far above all heavens—it was reserved for such a time to bring out this mystery, which, from the beginning of the ages, had been hid in God—the mystery of "Christ and the Church."

The first notice of this work we find in Matt. 16, where the Lord declares the foundation in Himself, as Son of the living God. He speaks of the Church as that which was to come. He says, when Peter confessed Him to be "the Christ, the Son of the living God," "Upon this rock I will build my church." The apostle afterward learned the true meaning of the foundation here declared, when he says by the Spirit, "To whom coming as unto a living stone.... Ye also, as living stones are built up a spiritual house," &c. This, however, is by the way, as to Paul's ministry, and to it alone, is

entrusted the revelation of the mystery of Christ and His body.

The Lord Himself does not reveal it. He had disciples during His ministry here, but not disciples gathered into one body and united by the Holy Ghost to a glorified Man in heaven.

In the days of Judaism, it was an unlawful thing for a man that was a Jew to have any dealings with those of any other nation. He was separated from amongst the other nations of the earth to God. “You only have I known of all the families of the earth,” says God, by His prophet, to that people.

When we come to look upon the Lord's life and ministry here, we find that He was constantly going beyond the middle wall of partition which surrounded the Jewish enclosure, in the outflow of His own blessed grace to those who had no relationship with God even in an outward way. Witness the woman of Canaan in Matt. 15, and the woman of Samaria in John 4 “He was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers, and that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy.” (Rom. 15:8, 9) Still, the middle wall of partition was not really destroyed till the cross, however our Lord's actions may have shown what was coming. We find the position of Jew and Gentile forcibly contrasted in the following scriptures: “Who are Israelites, to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.” (Rom. 9:4, 5.) And again. “Wherefore remember, that ye being in times past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called the circumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.” (Eph. 2:11, 12.)

We find in this epistle, that the apostle speaks in the first chapter of the purpose and counsels of God, and the redemption of His people, the latter being an accomplished thing; adding His further purpose to be executed in the dispensation of the fullness of times, when all things shall have been gathered together, in heaven and earth, under His headship; and when those who believe have obtained an inheritance with Him and in Him in these things. He goes on to show that the Head, who had been in death (he sees Him only thus) was alive again, raised up and glorified, Head of all principality, &c., set then as Head over all things to the Church, which is His body. In the second chapter he sees both Jew and Gentile dead in trespasses and sins, as children of the first Adam. In verses 1 and 2, he states what the Gentiles were, and then turns round upon the favored Jew and writes, “Among whom we also and... were children of wrath even as others.” This was the position of both Jew and Gentile by nature. We go on and find that Christ “hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition, having abolished in his flesh the law of commandments contained in ordinances for to make in himself of twain, one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both to God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity by it.”

There could be, and there was, salvation for individuals, as we have seen, before the cross, and by virtue of what Christ would accomplish there but the cross itself is the foundation of this unity of Jew and Gentile in one body. “He came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him (Christ) we both (Jew and Gentile), have access by one Spirit unto the Father.” (Eph. 2:17, 18.) Here we learn the power of this unity, of which the cross

was the basis. The Holy Ghost, then, is the power by which this unity is formed.

Now it is freely admitted that everything good, and of God, that ever has been done in this world, was by the Holy Ghost. But, dear friends, it was reserved for that day when God's people, by virtue of an accomplished redemption, had their consciences so perfectly purged, that God could come and inhabit by the Holy Ghost, the believer's body; and that the Holy Ghost could be given in such a sort, as in this dispensation, since the day of Pentecost.

We do not find in the experience even of a David, the possession of a purged conscience. There was the most blessed and perfect trust and confidence in God displayed and enjoyed, but a purged conscience never. That was reserved till the cross had made it possible to be enjoyed.

We read in John 14 of the Lord, before He departed, promising His disciples the Holy Ghost, as the Comforter. He says, “I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter (He had been that when with them), that he may abide with you forever he shall be in you.” “In that day (when He was come), ye shall know that I am in the Father, and ye in me, and I in you.” This was the knowledge and experience the personal presence of the Holy Ghost would communicate. In John 7:36-38 we learn that His presence thus was a new thing, and that although there were believers before His descent, still it was on believers, as such, who had been constituted such by His quickening power, that the Holy Ghost was to be bestowed. “In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet; because Jesus was not yet glorified.” We find an example of this in Acts 19 Long after the Pentecostal gift of the Holy Ghost, we find Paul finding certain disciples at Ephesus. He asks the question, “Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?” They reply, “We have not so much as heard whether the Holy Ghost is yet.” (Compare John 7:38, where the word “given” has no business.) He asks again, “Unto what then were ye baptized?” They reply, “Unto John's baptism.” “Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.” He found here a company of disciples, believers as far as they had heard, but who had not yet received the Holy Ghost. Far from the center of the Pentecostal gift of the Spirit, they had not yet heard if He had come, not “whether there be any Holy Ghost.” Our English Bible is faulty here and might lead to wrong conclusions. As soon as “they heard, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus; and when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them.”

It is sought to show that the great distinguishing feature between the state of the individual believer, under the dispensation of the Holy Ghost's presence, and the saint in that which is past, is, that he now receives the Holy Ghost to dwell in him; that “in the Spirit” is the proper state of his existence as a Christian, and the link which unites him with Christ risen. The corporate blessings we will see again.

In the instance quoted there was the laying on of the apostle's hands; but, doubtless, God was showing to us that there is a twofold thing—the quickening and the indwelling of the Spirit, the latter belonging specially to the present time.

Not seeing this is much of the reason for the low state of numbers of God's children. They think that Christianity is a sort of spiritualized Judaism, and that saints are the same now as before the descent of the Holy Ghost, as to their state. Consequently you have in the lips of many a one of them the prayer of David— “Take not thy Holy Spirit from me;” while others are ever praying for the Holy Spirit to be poured out upon them. Now the least intelligent saint who has been instructed in Christianity, as such, could not use such prayers. He knows that he receives the Spirit now, as he does eternal life, by faith, and consequent on redemption. As the apostle asks the Galatians, who were getting under law, “Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?” And again, “That we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” A Christian may, doubtless, sad to say, by his unfaithfulness, grieve the Holy Spirit much indeed, so much so, as almost to think he had never had the Spirit at all; but he could not with the least intelligence in Christianity say, “Take not thy Holy Spirit from me.” In Rom. 8 the Spirit is the principle of our relationship with God; He constitutes the link between the believer and Christ; and this only is Christian life (life in the Spirit), which depends on redemption being accomplished.

This is a fact assumed to be the case in all the apostolic teaching to the Church. In Eph. 1:11 He is given as the seal of redemption and an earnest of the inheritance yet to be enjoyed, till its redemption out of the enemy's hand, the price for its purchase having been paid. In no epistle are the official glories of the Holy Ghost brought before us more fully than this, which reveals the heavenly calling of the Church of God. In chapter 1:14, He is the seal of redemption. Chapter 2:18, He is the medium of access by Jew and Gentile, constituted one body, through Jesus Christ unto the Father. Verse 22, God inhabits the assembly on earth by His Spirit. In chapter 3:16, He strengthens the saints in the inner man, enabling them to lay hold of and enjoy their position and standing. In chapter 4, precepts are founded upon doctrines; the saint is told not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God, whereby he has been sealed till the day of redemption. In chapter 5 he is told to be filled with the Spirit. In chapter 6 is the power of the warfare in the heavenly places, and his prayer is to be “in the Spirit.” To multiply examples were needless.

This being established, we will now look into those scriptures which speak of the body and the unity of the Spirit. We saw that the Lord speaks of the Church as a future thing during His own ministry here. He had disciples, but not disciples gathered into one body, constituting the “fullness” of a glorified Mau in heaven, by the power of the Spirit, uniting them in one. Such, and such only, is the Church of God. It was reserved for the ministry of the Apostle Paul to bring out this grand central truth of the Church. He tells us that he had it “by revelation,” and not therefore from others.

After the rejection of the Lord and the descent of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, we find the Church gathered in Jerusalem, and principally composed of Jews, affording a wondrous spectacle to the world around, united in one heart and soul, a dwelling-place of God by the Holy Ghost. The Lord lingered, in His longsuffering love, over His beloved though now castoff people, to see if even the testimony of the Holy Ghost to a risen and glorified Christ would touch their hearts. The enmity of the Jews and the religious leaders of the nation increased every hour, till it arrived at its full height, when the Sanhedrim (the great council of the nation) gnashed upon the witness of the Holy Ghost to a risen and exalted Christ, in the person of Stephen, who, filled with the Holy Ghost, sees heaven opened, and, stoned by his murderers, is received by the “Son of man standing at the right hand of God.” The Church at Jerusalem is broken up as to its outward manifestation, and dispersed. Saul of Tarsus, the young man at whose feet the murderers laid their clothes, on his

journey from Jerusalem to Damascus with the high priest's commission in his robe, and the purpose in his heart of wiping out, so to speak, if it were possible, the very name of Jesus from the earth, is struck down at midday with the vision of the glorified and exalted Jesus. He hears the wondrous truth, for the first time now proclaimed, that the poor persecuted Christians on earth were members of the body of Christ. “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me. . . I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.” He arises and straightway preaches Jesus that “he is the Son of God.”

The short period of its earthly manifestation at Jerusalem having passed, the Church henceforth fully assumes its heavenly position in the mind of the Spirit. While on earth, wherever locally represented by saints gathered to the name of Jesus, by the power of the Holy Ghost, it is the tabernacle of God through the Spirit.

To the Apostle Paul is committed the testimony of the mystery, hidden in God in other ages, but now revealed. He tells us that he had it by revelation. (Eph. 3:3.) We will briefly notice some of the testimony by him as to this. The Epistle to the Romans being chiefly confined to the revelation of Christianity and the individual relationship of the saint with God, and His dispensational wisdom in His dealings with the Jew, the subject is but shortly referred to in chapter 12:4, 5. He writes, “For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office, so we being many are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.” In 1 Cor. 12:12-27, this subject is brought out more fully. The bare reading of the passage should be sufficient: “For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit,” &c. Nothing can be clearer to the mind subject to Scripture. The Holy Ghost is the center and living power of the unity of the body. Christians are “members of Christ” and “members one of another.” How this overturns the ideas of men, who speak of being members of such and such a church (so-called) or religious association! This is the only unity a Christian is bound to acknowledge and own, and to endeavor with all his heart to observe, and to witness for the unity which has been made by the Holy Ghost, constituting every Christian a member of one body, and gathering them together to be subject to Christ as Lord. The Holy Ghost is, we may so say, the life which animates the whole, dwelling not only in the individual believer, but in the body collectively. And when saints are thus gathered together, owning this unity, and this alone, they form the sphere for the manifestation of His presence, in the ministry of the word, “dividing to every man severally as he will;” taking up and using, according to His divine pleasure, those who have been gifted and set in the Church for the building up and edifying of the body, and for the perfecting of the saints. “God hath set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.” (1 Cor. 12:18.) So of Christ, “when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.... And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints,” &c.

The assembly thus is on earth the tabernacle of God by the Spirit. “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” (1 Cor. 3:16.) Again, Eph. 2:22: “In whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God by the Spirit.” We are now, of course, looking at those scriptures that view the assembly here; others, as we have seen, view it as the body of the risen Man in heaven. Both are true. Eph. 1 speaks of the latter, chapter 2 of the former.

Such being the calling of the saints, the apostle founds upon it his exhortations, in Eph. 4:1-6. He puts their privileges first before them and then looks upon their responsibility. “For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,... beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.... Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, one Spirit one Lord.” We have purposely passed over the entire of chapter 3 from verse 2 to the middle of verse 1, chapter 4; as the reader may remark in his English Bible that this entire passage is a parenthesis.

This then is the Church of God—this the unity we are exhorted to keep: not to make a unity for ourselves, or choose one out of the many existing factions around, that best suits one's education, thoughts, feelings, circumstances, &c., but to endeavor, with hearts subject to Jesus as Lord, to preserve a unity which has been formed by the Holy Ghost since the day of Pentecost—the body of Christ.

We have in the same chapter (Eph. 4) the care of Christ for His body. “When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive.” He went into the domain of Satan and bound the strong man; but before He exhibits the results of His victory amongst men, in the blessing of the millennial earth, He does so in His body, bestowing gifts on men for the setting free of those captive under Satan, and the building up of those who have been delivered, “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 fullness of the Christ.” When that fullness is attained, the complement of the body for its Head, it will be taken away to be united in actual fact to the Head in heaven. Then will come the resurrection of the sleeping saints, and their translation with the living saints, when all shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

The Scriptures teem with this blessed hope of the Church. In the earliest epistle (1 Thessalonians) we find that, however unintelligently it may have been understood, the saints had been converted to this blessed hope. “Ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven.” It was the hope set before the sorrowing disciples, as they gazed up into heaven after the vanishing form of the Lord, in Acts 1, that He “would so come in like manner.” The Corinthians came “behind in no gift, waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Cor. 1:7.) In Ephesians, the saints are looked upon as already seated in the heavenlies in Christ, there waiting for the gathering together of all things in the fullness of times. Their blessing is in the heavenlies, chapter 1:3; their position, chapter 2:6; their testimony, chapter 3:10; and their conflict, chapter 6:12. In Philippians, chapter 3:20, 21, the citizenship of the saints is in heaven, from whence they look for “the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body,” &e. In Colossians, chapter 3:4, the life of the saints is so bound up with Christ's, that, when He is manifested to the world, they are manifested with Him. In Thessalonians, the whole epistle is taken up with the hope. In chapter 1, it was connected with their conversion; in chapter with the labors of Christ's servant; in chapter 3, with practical righteousness and holiness: in chapter 4, the whole matter and the manner of its accomplishment is detailed. Chapter 5 shows the design of the apostle for their practical sanctification, and their being preserved blameless to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Thessalonians sets the hope aright in the minds of the saints, which had been disturbed by the receipt of a spurious epistle; and distinguishes the coming of Christ for His saints and their gathering together unto Him (their proper hope), from His manifestation in judgment to the world, in which we know, from other scriptures, He is accompanied by them.

I forbear to quote other scriptures on this subject. It is almost sad to be obliged to press so blessed a hope on the hearts of the Lord's people—a hope, of which the scriptures of the New Testament are so full. Sad to say, it has become necessary to do so: even God's people have imbibed so much of the evil and worldly-minded servant, who said in his heart, “My lord delayeth his coming,” and of the scoffers of the last days who say, “where is the promise of His coming?”

In considering our first subject— “The general purpose of God” —we referred to the places in the New Testament where Psa. 8 was quoted. The first was Heb. 2, when the “Son of man,” to whom all dominion was given, is seen in heaven, “crowned with glory and honor,” all things not yet put under Him—the headship to be enjoyed in the habitable earth to come. The second was Eph. 2, when the body was being prepared for the glorified head. The third remains now to be quoted again. “For he hath put all things under his feet.” (1 Cor. 15) This will come to pass, as the chapter shows, in the day when the scriptures of Isa. 24-26 are fulfilled, in the day of the first resurrection. “Behold I show you a mystery, we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.” (Isa. 25:8.) The whole chapter treats of this resurrection, of which Christ was the first fruits, it is a resurrection in power and glory. “It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power.” There is no thought in the chapter of the resurrection of the wicked. We have before considered shortly, that, at that time, the restoration of the nation of Israel will take place—the veil will be removed from all nations. And it will be a period of universal judgment of powers on earth, and in the heavenlies, introductive of the kingdom in Zion and the renewed earth, which the saints of the first resurrection will inherit and reign over in the heavenlies as joint-heirs with Christ. In short, it is the time of “the restitution of all things.” This period of universal judgment is identical, as we may see, with that spoken of in considering the “times of the Gentiles,” and their judgment.

Chapter 244

# The Ways of God: 5. The Corruption of Christendom

V - The Corruption of Christendom.

We have seen, in some measure, the nature and unity of the Church of God, and her heavenly calling—the Church to which Christ has imparted the glory given to Him, as man, by God the Father. The glory was His by right as the eternal Son, as well as by creation. But the only way in which we could partake of His glory, was, by His becoming a man, and taking this glory, and headship over all things, through death and resurrection—thus accomplishing the redemption of His people. How little do they enter upon and realize, and walk in the power of their heavenly calling! Rather may it be said of many, “They mind earthly things.” They are engrossed and absorbed in the pursuits and aims of this world— “this present evil age;” from which He died to deliver them. (Gal. 1:4.) They are conformed to its ways, its vanities, its projects, rather than following a rejected Christ, whom the world united under its prince, to cast out of the world; and declaring plainly in their walk and ways that theirs is strangership on earth, and citizenship in heaven, and that they are of those of whom Christ said, “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (John 17); and of whom the apostle, “As is the heavenly, even so are they also that are heavenly.” Would that there were more of that intense personal devotedness amongst those who are Christ's—amongst those to whom He has in His marvelous grace, taught the nature and meaning of this heavenly calling, and the truth of His Church, His Bride; who are in the place of the testimony of God just now, in His own sovereign goodness! Would that this testimony of God might press itself more deeply on our souls, and lead us to that intense separation from the world; and personal, individual devotedness, as witnesses, or servants, as it may please Him! Surely all may serve Him in the former capacity: all may be witnesses, if all are not laborers! And surely the corporate testimony without the personal devotedness—or the personal devotedness without the corporate testimony, is faulty: both must go together to be in accordance, in our little measure, with the mind and purposes of God.

For a little moment the desire of Christ, “That they all may be one.... that the world may believe” (John 17:21), came to pass at the first blush of the unselfish joy of the Church at Pentecost, when the world beheld with wonder the great multitude of one heart and soul, having all things in common. But we may remember in our former paper, when considering the testing of man from the garden of Eden to the cross, that we found that, tried in every way, he had failed; let us now see what man under grace will do—if such a position will succeed. It is just such another tale of sorrow, with this difference—that he has now failed in and corrupted, as to its testimony in the world, that which was best!

When the Church assumed fully her heavenly calling, after the persecution and dispersion which arose at the death of Stephen, we find Paul raised up of the Lord, that He might bring out by him the true heavenly calling and doctrine of the Church of God—the body of Christ. In the devoted labors of the apostle, and the scriptures given to us by his instrumentality, we find that it became necessary for the Holy Ghost to reveal the consequences which would result to the Church, from

its witness on earth being entrusted into the bands of man. Evil had crept in from the very beginning, but as long as the apostolic energy was there it was kept from gaining head, and was judged. Judaism, and false brethren, and ungodly men crept in unawares, amongst those who were true disciples; and even those who were truly disciples, became impregnated with the spirit of the world, and with the evil. Witness those solemn words of Paul to the elders of the assembly at Ephesus, the scene where all they of Asia had heard the word of the Lord: “I know this, that after my departure shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock: also of your own selves shall some arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.” And in view of such a state of things, he directs the heart of the faithful disciple to “God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.” God and the Scriptures of His truth were to be his sure and never failing resource in the time of ruin, which was fast closing in. In Corinth we find schools of doctrine and human wisdom, taking the place of revelation and divine wisdom amongst them. (1 Cor. 1; 2) In the epistle to the Galatians, the influence of law teachers and Judaisers compelled the apostle to stand in doubt of them for the moment as to whether they had abandoned the ground of Christianity altogether or not; still he had confidence in them through the Lord. In Philippians “all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.” (Chap. 12:21.) Again, “For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.” (Chap. 3:18, 19.) In Colossians, Satan had succeeded in introducing ordinances, and philosophy, and vain deceit after the tradition of men; meats and drinks, holy days, will-worship and neglecting of the body—between the Head and His members. 1 Timothy, law-teachers and Judaisers, “understanding neither what they say nor whereof they affirm;” and the warning of the apostasy of the latter times. 2 Timothy, the tide of evil came in with such a torrent, that the apostle sees the Church which he had labored for, and watched over, and builded, as a wise master-builder—that which the Spirit terms “the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15), the house inhabited by the Holy Ghost—fallen into dilapidation and ruins, and transformed into “a great house,” with “vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honor and some to dishonor.” In such a state of things, in the “perilous times” of the “last days,” the faithful disciple has but one pathway—not to be satisfied with such a state, nor to think of being able to mend the ruin, but—to purge himself from the vessels to dishonor, and to walk with the faithful, who “call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” (Chap. 2:20-22) And again does the apostle turn the heart of the faithful one to the Scriptures of God as profitable for all and every difficulty, that he might “be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.” So deeply solemn is the warning here in chapter iii. 1-5 that that which bears the name of Christianity, and which before men has the character of godliness, shelters all the worst features of the corrupt human heart, that the words are literally nearly the same, and morally the same, as those which the apostle uses in describing the corruption and moral degradation of the heathen world in the close of Rom. 1. There is also the active energy of evil in those who, “reprobate concerning the faith,” are deceiving and being deceived; from such the man of God was to turn away, leaving them to the judgment of God. In Titus we find the unruly talkers and deceivers spreading their baneful influence around. 2 Peter also testifies as to these evil influences at work amongst the saints. Jude traces the apostasy from the time when “certain ungodly men crept in unawares” until the Lord comes with His saints to execute judgment upon

such. In verse 11 we have a summary of the apostasy of the natural man: “the way of Cain;” teaching error for reward, and using truth for corrupt ends, “the error of Balaam;” and lastly, where the apostasy ends, “the gainsaying of Core.” This, it will be remembered, was the revolt of the Israelites, instigated by the Levite Korah, against the authority of Christ, in His royalty, represented by Moses, and His priesthood, represented by Aaron. The Levites sought the priesthood (“Seek ye the priesthood also?” Num. 16), and were the moving spring of the revolt of the simple Israelites. And thus it has been ever, the ecclesiastical evil urging the civil power on to rebellion. See the revolt of Absalom against David: the moving power was Absalom's counselor, Ahithophel, who was a priest. (See 2 Sam. 15:12.) And so it is in the end, a beast, and a false prophet who urges on the former, and “exercises all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them that dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. (Rev. 13) Such has been the corruption from the beginning of Christianity. Those who ought to have occupied the position of the Levite, that is, those who were sent into the Church to labor for the Lord, instead of retaining the Levite place, recognizing that all the people of the Lord are priests, and thus entitled to enter into the holiest (see 1 Peter 2:5, 9); the ecclesiastical, or priestly, position has been assumed as the medium between Christ and His people; and this is not confined to the grosser evil and corruptions of Rome, but it is the same in principle throughout Christendom, although not developed in the same measure. Both these epistles— 2 Peter and Jude—testify of the rejection of the Lordship of Christ. Rev. 2; 3, give us in successive stages the different phases in which the evil would be developed in the Church, looked at in her place of testimony here below, from her departure from her first love, till threatened with full rejection, as something loathsome to Him—a false witness in the world. “I will spue thee out of my mouth.” We have also the testimony in Matt. 13 from the Lord Himself in the parable of the tares, by which we see that the evil produced at the beginning by the introduction of the tares amongst the wheat, goes on till the harvest, when the righteous are gathered into the garner, and the tares bound in bundles and then cast into the fire and burned; thus cleansing the kingdom of the Son of man. Instead of a change, such as men think, coming over the world; and, by the gospel, the knowledge of the Lord covering the earth as the waters cover the sea, the evil increases till the harvest. How do the thoughts of men who look for a millennium brought in by the preaching of the gospel, fall in with this? Properly Matt. 13 including the parable of the tares and the wheat, is a similitude of the kingdom of heaven, in the phase it would assume when the King would be fully rejected, not the Church, which had no existence; in a subsequent chapter (16) the Lord speaks of it as a future thing. He came as their Messiah, to His people Israel—His vineyard—to seek for fruit, and He found none. He then sowed in the world (“the field is the world") that which was to produce fruit— “the word.”

I have purposely passed over 2 Thessalonians and the Epistles of John, for in them we find the personage named who shall consummate all this wickedness in himself— “the man of sin” — “the Antichrist.” In the former epistle, given to us on the occasion of a spurious epistle having been received by the Thessalonians as if from Paul (chap. 2:2), telling them that the “day” of Christ was there, the apostle (ver. 1) beseeches them by their proper hope, which he had taught them in the first epistle, that of the coming of Christ, and their being gathered together unto Him, that they would not be shaken with the thought conveyed by the false epistle, that the “day,” or manifestation, was then present (ενεστηκε). The apostle clearly distinguishes the “coming” from the “appearing,” or “day,” which is to bring rest to them from the trials and tribulations of the world, and judgments on their enemies; for, when the “day” of His manifestation would come, the saints

would be manifested with Him in glory. He goes on to show that before the “day” would come there would be, there is, “the mystery of lawlessness,” or iniquity, which already worked; secondly, the apostasy from Christianity (ver. 3); thirdly, the revelation of the man of sin. (Ver. 3, 4, 8.) The judgment executed by Christ Himself would be the “day” in which the false epistle told them they were. We have seen before that in this He will be accompanied by His saints, previously gathered to Him. We have seen some of the testimony of Scripture as to the mystery of lawlessness, and also of the apostasy from Christendom; but there was a good hindering power (ver. 7), which, when removed, then would the lawless one be revealed. The principles were all at work, but the Holy Ghost was in the Church, the power of God was here below, and the unbridled self-will of man, exalting himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped, was still restrained, till the fitting time was come; then the evil would assume its definite shape in “the man of sin.”

We will follow to its close the mystery of iniquity. We turn to Rev. 17 and find the fourth Beast, or Latin empire, in his revived state, ridden upon by a false woman, “Mystery, Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth.” Imperially and gloriously arrayed, and her cup full of idolatry and fornication, drunken with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus, and the blood of saints. The prophet wonders at the end of what was once so precious, so beautiful—the work of grace at Pentecost! She overrides the peoples, nations, and tongues, and their kings, who have been intoxicated with the wine of her fornication; until at last, tired with her oppression, the ten horns and the Beast, “these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.” She waits not for the appearing of Christ for judgment, but suffers it at the hands of those over whom she exercised her pernicious influence so long. Chapter 18 gives her judgment, and the lamentation of the kings of the earth, and those who had profited by her traffic and rewards, for her overthrow. Such is the end of corrupt Christianity in Rome, and wherever it is found; for she is the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth, In considering the history of the Gentile powers, from its beginning to its close in judgment, and that of the Beast, who represents it, urged on by Satan in the end, we also saw his connection with the false Messiah, whom the Jews would receive in the end of the age, and his judgment under the character of the false prophet with the first Beast: we desired to show how this personage forms the link between their history and that of false, professing Christendom in the end. We saw from 2 Thess. 2:3, 4, 8, that that wicked one would not be revealed till the good restraining power was removed: the mystery of iniquity worked, and the apostasy would come; this we traced to its end in the judgment of the corrupt woman of Rev. 17, but the day of Christ's manifestation in judgment would not come till the man of sin was revealed, the good restraining power having first been removed. Rev. 13 showed us also that it is during the revived form of the Latin empire, at the close of the existence of the fourth beast, that this man should be fully revealed. He who has title of king amongst the Jews, the second Beast ministers to the power of the first Beast (not being able to set aside the Gentile power) during the short period before the close, when Satan shall have given him his power, and seat, and great authority. We also saw that it was after the taking up of the saints, that Satan was cast out of the heavenlies (Rev. 12); so putting all these things together, we find that it is between the coming of Christ for His saints, and His appearance in judgment with them, that the man of sin, the lawless one, is revealed. As described in 2 Thess. 2, he does similar things to those attributed to him in Dan. 11:36-38: he “opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped: so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and

lying wonders:" even as Christ, as the Man of righteousness, was "approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs which God did by him." (Acts 2:22—see Greek.) The attainment of this position—i.e., of God—was the first suggestion of Satan to Adam. Here we find it is Adam fallen, fully developed and filed with the energy of Satan, in this man of sin, who opposes the Lord Jesus—Man in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. (Col. 2)

When examining Rev. 13 with regard to this personage, we saw that the miracles he performs have, in the apprehension of men, the appearance of divine energy, and they are mostly of a Jewish character. In 2 Thess. 2 they are more an imitation of Christ. With regard to those in Rev. 13, we may remember that when Elijah was raised up to witness for the name of Jehovah, before the apostate tribes of Israel (1 Kings 19), the question whether Jehovah or Baal was God, was decided by fire, which came down and consumed the sacrifice, and that the people then fell on their faces crying, "Jehovah, he is the God." In 2 Thess. 2, as we have seen in quoting Acts 2, it is more an imitation of Christ, though of Satanic origin.

In the First Epistle of John he is termed "The Antichrist," who denies the Father and the Son; or, the revelation of Christianity. Thus it is plain that in these days of strong delusion—when men, not having received the love of the truth that they might be saved, will be given up to believe a lie—he forms the connecting link between apostate Christianity, and apostate Judaism, and the apostasy of the fourth beast or Gentile power, and is in himself the expression of the apostasy of man, claiming to be God. Judaism, for he sits in the temple of God (I need hardly add, in Jerusalem)—Christianity, as we have seen. And we find him coming to his end, with his coadjutor in evil, in Rev. 19:20, under the title of the "false prophet," which is more his Jewish character; the false woman or ecclesiastical corruption having been destroyed, not by the Lord, but by those she had overridden.

We have now traced to their end the different agents in evil in the apostasy of the natural man entrusted with power, personified by the beast, the Antichrist to his end, and false Christianity to her end. Deeply solemn subjects, and yet needful (or God would not have warned us about these things), they affect not ourselves as to their judgment and their end, but we are in the midst of, and have to do with, the principles which are fast ripening up around us. Ours is a calling out of, and above, the world; and we shall be with the Lord, when the evils are fully manifested, and the world carried away in delusion by them. Our citizenship is in heaven, where these evils cannot come. Blessed be our God! Evil is fast ripening to its head and the minds of men more blinded, and there are many antichrists. May the consideration of these things lead us into a more growing separation in all our pursuits and ways from that which ends so sorrowfully. And may we with greater earnestness long for the coming of Him who will put an end to the evil, and fill the world with blessing under Himself.

Our considerations have led us thus far. We see that the three great systems (1 Cor. 10:32) set up in the world for the display of God's government and His grace (viz., the Jew, under law; the Gentile, without law, and entrusted with universal dominion; and the Church, as Christ's epistle in the world—His witness for grace and truth, and under grace) have all, as far as man's responsibility reaches, been a scene of ruin and failure and corruption—the ruin of that which was most excellent proving the worst of corruptions.

Chapter 245

# The Ways of God: 6. 1. The Judgment of Israel and the Nations Introductive of the Kingdom

VI-The Judgment of Israel and the Nations Introductive of the Kingdom

In the opening subject of our considerations of the ways of God, we mentioned that the prophetic scriptures are occupied with earthly events, and embrace five great leading and distinct subjects, some of which, if not all, are often found grouped together in the same prophesy. It is with the fourth of these subjects we shall now be specially occupied—the crisis, or short period of judgment, which cleanses the world of all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, preparatory to the setting up of the kingdom— “the hour of temptation which comes upon all the world to try them that dwell upon the earth” (Rev. 3:10); “the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it.” (Jer. 30:7.) The nation of Israel is most prominent during this period, and is the subject of judgment, in which the Gentiles are sharers. The testimonies of Scripture are very full on this subject; and to help to clear it in our minds, I have classified them into three points, as follows—

1. The promises made of restoration to Israel, after their failure, and in view of it, besides the unconditional promises made to the fathers, both of which will be fulfilled to a remnant of the nation, who will be established in the kingdom under Christ in the land.

The testimonies of Scripture that Israel would be set aside for a long timeless period, known only to God, and again taken up to be restored.

That when this timeless period shall have run out, the nation will be restored by judgment, which not only falls on the apostates amongst them, delivering a remnant, but is a universal judgment on the nations of the world as well, and is introductive of God's kingdom in Zion, and the millennial period, when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

As to the first point, we will turn to Lev. 26, where we find the result put before Israel consequent on their observing the conditions they had accepted as the terms of their relationship with God, and retention of their blessings in the land, and the alternative in ease of the non-fulfillment of these terms— “If ye will walk in my statutes.... then I will give you rain,” &c. (ver. 3-13); “But and if ye will not hearken.... I also will do this unto you.” &c. (Ver. 14-39) It goes on assuming that the latter would be the case, till the cities are wasted, and the land and her sanctuaries brought to desolation, and the nation dispersed amongst the heathen, in their enemies' land; and then, even when in the enemies' land, God says, “I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them, for I am the Lord their God. But I will for their sakes remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the heathen, that I might be their God.” The Lord then turns back to His own unconditional promises to their forefathers, alter they have destroyed themselves: and when in their enemies' land, He forgets them not, nor casts them off utterly. “If they shall confess their

iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers.... and that they have walked contrary to me.... then will I remember my covenant with Jacob... also my covenant with Abraham will I remember, and I will remember the land." (Ver. 40-42.)

Turn now to Deut. 30:1-10: "And it shall come to pass when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind amongst all the nations whither the Lord thy God hath driven thee, and shalt return unto the Lord thy God that then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee.... and bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it: and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers," &c. This is not so striking as Lev. 26, where the promises to the fathers are alluded to. Deuteronomy is more the principle of their acceptance as a nation after failure, and when "Lo Ammi" had been written upon them. It also lays down the principle of their acceptance at individuals in the interim by the gospel, and righteousness by faith. See the use made by the Apostle Paul of Rom. 10:11-14.

There are other promises in view of their restoration, especially that to the house of David, to be made good in Christ. We read in 1 Chron. 17:11-14, "And it shall come to pass, when the days be expired that thou must go to be with thy fathers, that I will raise up thy seed after thee, which shall be of thy sons, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build me an house and I will establish his throne forever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son; and I will not take my mercy away from him, as I took it from him that was before thee, but I will settle him in my house and in my kingdom forever, and his throne shall be established for evermore." This passage is applied to Christ in Heb. 1:5.

We find the promises to the fathers alluded to in view of their full deliverance in the end. See Mic. 7:19, 20. The prophet expresses the adoration of his heart in contemplating the goodness of God in their deliverance; he says, "Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn to our fathers from the days of old." We must ever remember that if God were to fail in fulfilling those earthly promises to Abraham, we have no reason to suppose that He would not also fail in His spiritual promises to him, which latter come to us. Consult Gal. 3:6-14. Neither, we know, can ever fail.

Again, when Christ came, "As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever." (Luke 1:54, 55.) In verses 69-74, when both the promises to the fathers and to David's house are recalled, "He hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David.... to perform the mercy premised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant, the oath which he aware to our father Abraham." It is almost needless to say that the earthly blessings were deferred, because of the rejection of Christ by the nation.

Turn now to Isa. 49 We find that Israel having failed as God's servant, is set aside, and Christ presented as the true servant; and yet He says, "I have labored in vain;" for we know that Israel rejected Him. The answer of God comes in verse 5, &c. It was a light thing to raise up the tribes of Israel, but He should be exalted and given as a light to the Gentiles. In verse 8, He is given as a covenant to the people to deliver them in the end. The language of the prophecy is very beautiful: "Sing, O heavens, and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains, for the Lord hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted." Zion, apparently forsaken, then

learns that the Lord's faithfulness is greater than a mother's towards her sucking child. “Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls (Jerusalem) are continually before me.” Her children make haste to return to her, and her destroyers go forth from her. “Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold all these (the restored and gathered remnant of the people) gather themselves together, and come to thee. As I live, saith the Lord, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on thee as a bride doeth. For thy waste and thy desolate places, and the land of thy destruction, shall even now be too narrow by reason of the inhabitants, and they that swallowed thee up shall be far away. The children which thou shalt have, after thou hast lost the other, shall say again in thine ears, The place is too strait for me: give place to me that I may dwell. Then shalt thou say in thine heart, Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro? and who hath brought up these? Behold I was left alone: these, where had they been? Thus saith the Lord God, Behold I will lift up my hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people, and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall he carried upon their shoulders. And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers: they shall bow down to thee, with their thee toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord, for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.” The thought of applying this to the Church is almost too over-strained to need a remark. When does the Church ever say, “The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me” and that at the very time when the blessing is complete?

In Rom. 11 the Apostle Paul deals with this subject, showing that God hath not cast off His people; and he gives three leading reasons as his argument. First: there is a remnant according to the election of grace. Secondly: through the fall of his nation, salvation is come to the Gentiles to provoke Israel to jealousy (See Deut. 32:21), and not to reject them. And, thirdly, “There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob,” at the time that all Israel (that is, as a whole, or nationally), shall be saved.

When we consider the third point proposed, many of those promises of restoration will come before us, connected with the judgment of the apostates of the nation, and the Gentiles.

As to the next point, we will turn to Dan. 9:24-27, where we find the answer to the prayer of Daniel, who was one of the captives of Israel in Babylon. Naturally the subject of all others most dear to his Jewish heart and affections was the restoration of his people; and the subject of most importance was to ascertain the length of time they would be subject to their captors, under whose yoke they were reaping what they had sown when owned of God. In the beginning of the chapter we find that, like any godly man, Daniel was a student of Scripture; and in the first year of Darius the Mede, who took the kingdom after the fall of Babylon, he had ascertained from the book of Jeremiah that the seventy years of the desolation of Jerusalem were now past. Faith was at work in his soul, and he set his face to wait upon God and to humble himself before Him about his nation with prayer and supplication, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes. He puts himself in the position of the nation according to its sins before God, and identifies himself with them. (See Lev. 26:40, 41.) His heart owns the God with whom he had to do, as One who never changed—a merciful and gracious God. God Himself is his confidence. “O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee. To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him.” It is

something beautiful how his faith calls Jerusalem “thy city,” and Israel “thy people,” as Moses did when the people made the golden calf, and God could not own them. We read, “Whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel the man Gabriel informed me,” &c; and in the communication which follows—that is, the prophecy of the seventy weeks—the answer to his prayer. We may remark that God speaks of the people to Daniel as “thy people” —as to Moses on the occasion to which we have referred; and the prophecy relates to the Jewish people, and to Jerusalem. “Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, to finish transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy (place). Know, therefore, and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, unto the Messiah the Prince, shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after (the) threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off and shall have nothing (marg., which is correct): and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm a (marg.) covenant with many for on week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.” Here then is a clearly defined period mentioned, at the end of which a remarkable change would be brought to his people, the Jews, and to their city—their return and complete re-establishment in grace—transgressions pardoned, sins made an end of, iniquity forgiven, and everlasting righteousness introduced, the vision and prophecy sealed up, and the most holy place anointed. Now let us call to mind the state of Judah and Jerusalem, as we saw when examining the past history of the people of Israel, at the time that Judah went into captivity to Babylon, in the closing chapters of 2 Kings. The king of Judah and the nation were brought into captivity (Israel, or the ten tribes, had long before been brought into captivity by the Assyrian), the city was broken up, and the house of the Lord burned with fire, and a few of the poorer of the people left to be vinedressers and husband men in the land. And let us compare that state with what is here, in Dan. 9, where we find a complete and perfect restoration and re-establishment promised.

During the continuance of those seventy weeks of years (490), it assumes, or declares, that the people or a remnant of them, will be in the land; but not yet owned as God's people, and still under the power of the Gentiles; the temple rebuilt, and the city restored. This is of much importance, so let us bear in mind those three points which characterize the continuance of the seventy weeks.

1. The people (or some of them) are in the land, but not owned of God.

2. The temple rebuilt, and the city.

3. The Gentiles still in possession of the throne of the world, or in other words, the “times of the Gentiles” not run out.

These three things do not characterize the present time.

The seventy weeks are divided into three periods, or divisions: seven weeks, sixty-two weeks, and one week. The first division of seven weeks, or forty-nine years, counts from the going forth of the

decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, this was the starting point. “Know, therefore, and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, unto the Messiah the Prince, shall be seven weeks and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.” First this rebuilding goes on for seven weeks of years. We read in Nehemiah that it was a time of great distress and trouble. “But it came to pass that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews. And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?” &c. Then we have sixty-two weeks of years from the rebuilding of Jerusalem unto Messiah, in all sixty-nine weeks of the seventy. Messiah is then cut off and rejected, and does not get His kingdom. “After the threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off and shall have nothing.” Christ presents Himself to the nation as their King, and instead of getting His kingdom, He is crucified after the threescore and two weeks; and the counting out of the seventieth week ceases for the time. Then the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. This was accomplished under Titus and the Roman armies at the destruction of Jerusalem, after the rejection of Christ. The people whose armies accomplished this were the Roman people. In John 11:48, we find the fears of the Jewish leaders absolutely prophetic of this event. “if we let him (Christ) thus alone, all men will believe on him, and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.” And the Lord Himself predicted when He beheld the city, and wept over it, “For the days shall come upon thee that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground.” (Luke 19:43.) And again, “And some spake of the temple how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, He said, As for these things which ye behold, the days will come in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.” (Luke 21:5, 6)

Messiah having been cut off after the sixty-ninth week, the chain of events with the Jewish people ceases (absolutely, when the city was destroyed), and time therefore ceases to be counted from that period to the present. God, as we have seen, becomes occupied with other things. The seventieth week was to bring in and establish in full prosperity and blessing the people, according to verse 24; but instead of the blessing, the cutting off of Messiah after the sixty-ninth week, the city and sanctuary trodden down, and a long nameless period of desolations to the people and city follow. Evidently, as we have seen, it was the Roman people who were to do what is stated in verse 26. “The people of the prince that shall come,” &c. The prince was not there, only the people are named, but the prince himself was not come. He is brought before us after this long timeless period of desolations, still running on, “He shall confirm a covenant,” &c.

The rejection of Christ, therefore, suspended all relations and dealings of God with the Jewish people, as His people, and this allotted period of seventy weeks ceases to run on. And when the Jews are the objects of God's dealings again in the short period of judgment before He owns them as His nation, the period which remains of the seventy weeks will be counted out and will bring in the full restoration. This short period is, therefore, as we may easily see, synchronical with the closing events, or crisis of the history of the world, introductive of the kingdom.

We find the same thing in many other scriptures either assumed or declared. (See Isa. 8:14—22; 9:1-7) Christ becomes a stone of stumbling to the nation—the testimony is confined to His disciples—the Lord then hides His face from the house of Jacob for a long, timeless period, and the prophet passes over to the last days, which introduce the kingdom by judgment. Again in Isa. 61:1, 2, when the Lord announced His mission in the synagogue of Nazareth, He stops short in the middle of verse 2, which is separated from the next clause already for more than eighteen hundred years, and which clause announces the “day of vengeance,” and the comforting them that mourn, the remnant of the nation in the kingdom.

(To be continued.)

Chapter 246

# The Ways of God: 6. 2. The Judgment of Israel and the Nations Introductive of the Kingdom Continued

Now consider the testimony of Scripture as to the third point proposed. Turn to Deut. 32 In the closing verses of chapter 31. Moses gathers the elders and officers of the people of Israel together to recite in their ears the prophetic song given to him by the Lord as a witness, in view of their failure. He says, “I know that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way that command you, and evil will befall you in the latter days, because ye will do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke Him to auger through the works of your bands.” Then in chapter 32 they are viewed as having corrupted themselves. “They have corrupted themselves; their spot is not the spot of his children they are a perverse and crooked generation.” He then goes on to relate their wonderful history, and the counsels and care of God as to them, and the return they made to Him. “Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked. . . they provoked him to jealousy with strange gods. . . they sacrificed unto devils. . . And when the Lord saw it, he abhorred them. . . and he said, I will hide my face from them; I will see what their end shall be, for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith. They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God.... and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people.” And then in His anger He casts them off utterly, heaping mischief upon them. When thus cast off He acts in His own sovereignty, and in view of this He declares, “For the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he sees their power is gone, and that there is none shut up or left.” He judges His people, avenges the blood of His servants. When His hand takes hold on judgment he renders vengeance to His enemies—makes His arrows drunk with blood—His sword devours much flesh; then He turns in mercy to His people and to His land. The result of this judgment on the nations, is that the Gentiles sing the song of deliverance with the remnant of His people who are delivered. (See Psa. 67, 107).

Psa. 2; 8-10 In the first of these Psalms we find Christ presented as King in Zion and rejected, yet God's purposes only set aside for a while. Christ takes in resurrection the wider glory of the Son of man, according to Psa. 8; we saw before that the Holy Ghost, in Acts 4, quotes the first two verses of Psa. 2 and stops. The Lord is represented as laughing at their rage, but for all their rage He declares, “Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion.” Messiah is desired, “Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance,” &c. When rejected, and about to be crucified, He represents Himself as praying for His disciples, “I pray for them, I pray not for the world” (John 17), but the time is coming when He will ask for His inheritance, and the answer comes, “Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.” He inherits them by judgment, in which His people now being gathered have their place with Him; proof that, wherever Christ is spoken of in the Old Testament, we find the portion of the Church as well. “He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations. And he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken in pieces, even as I received of my Father.” (Rev. 2:28.) This however is not his best portion, for “I will give him the morning star” Christ Himself. And then not only is the name of Jehovah excellent in all the

earth, but He sets His glory above the heavens (Psa. 8:1), and stills the enemy and the avenger. Psa. 9; 10 show us the position and circumstances in which the nation is found in this crisis of judgment. The delivered remnant say, “For thou hast maintained my right and my cause.... thou hast rebuked the heathen, thou hast destroyed the wicked, thou hast put out their name forever and ever. . . the Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands. . . The wicked shall be turned into hell and all the nations that forget God. For the needy shall not always be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall not perish forever. Arise, O Lord; let not man prevail; let the heathen be judged in thy sight. Put them in fear, O Lord; that the nations may know themselves to be but men.” It is when there is none to say, “How long?” that the Lord appears to their deliverance. Again, “The Lord is King forever and ever: the heathen are perished out of his land. Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart (that is of the spared ones who are trained for the kingdom); thou wilt cause their ear to hear,” &c. How mistaken to think the Psalms are the expression of Christian experience as such! How often the simple-hearted Christian has been stumbled at the cry for vengeance on enemies, running through this class of Psalms, put in his mouth, whose calling is to do well and suffer for it, and take it patiently, while in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ! The kingdom and power will be looked for by these Jewish hearts, as that which brings their deliverance. The trials of the heavenly saints end, just before those of the Jewish saints begin. See Rev. 12, where we find rejoicing in heaven when the accuser is cast down, and woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea, “for the devil is come down to you.” He then turns his rage against the woman and her seed, the Jewish people. The Spirit of Christ has graciously entered into these trials, that He might give a voice to the remnant, in the closing days, before the kingdom.

Read now Psa. 110 Christ rejected by men, and by His people as their king—who said, “We have no king but Caesar,” “We will not have this man to reign over us” —is exalted to God's right hand. God said, “Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.” (See Heb. 1:13; 10:13.) He remains then for the nameless time “until” that hour known only to the Father. The Lord, when that hour comes, sends out of Zion the rod of His strength; and Christ rules in the midst of His enemies. His people are willing in the day of His power. (They are unwilling in the day of His humiliation.) “The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath. He shall judge among the heathen,” &c.

Turn to Isa. 1-4. Blessing and rest are proposed in chapter 1 consequent on the repentance of the nation; but they would not hearken. Eventually it is brought in by judgment— “Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness; and the destruction of the transgressors, and of the sinners shall be together.” The result of this judgment is in chapter ii. 1-4; iv. 2-6, a time of peace and glory. “It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains and all nations shall flow unto it He shall judge among the nations and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.” How different the time in which we live, while the times of the Gentiles are running on, characterized by those words of our Lord, “Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom upon earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring, men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth,” precursors of the Son of man's coming with power and great glory. (Luke 21:10, 25-27.) The

remaining part of Isa. 2, &c., shows the connection between the judgment of the nations and that of Israel. “Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty. The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down.... For the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty: and the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of man shall be made low: and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.” The result of this universal judgment is the establishment of His people in the glory of the kingdom. “It will come to pass that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy; even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem: when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof, by the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning. And the Lord will create upon every dwelling-place of Mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and a smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defense. And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the day-time from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain.” His own presence will be there, when His people are delivered, as in the wilderness of old.

Isa. 11. The reading of this chapter is so plain as scarcely to need a word. A time of universal blessedness and peace; His people restored and under the government of Messiah, introduced by judgment, which falls on them and the nations. “He shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.” “The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off,” &c Isa. 13; 14, treat of the same time, a time of universal judgment on the imperial throne of the world. (Chap. xiii.) “The day of the Lord,” when “all hands shall be faint and every man's heart shall melt.” “For the Lord will have mercy on Jacob and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land; and the strangers shall he joined with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob and they shall take them captives whose captives they were, and they shall rule over their oppressors in the day that the Lord shall give thee rest from thy sorrow, and from thy fear, and from the hard bondage wherein thou wast made to serve.” “This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth; and this is the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations.” (Chap. xiv. 1-3, 26.) It goes on to the destruction of the Assyrian after their deliverance (the power that occupies at that day the territory of their ancient enemy); I say “after,” because before the Assyrian fell before Babylon; here, which proves its future application, he falls after Babylon is judged.

Isa. 24-27. This prophecy we have examined and the deliverance of a remnant; the Lord's throne is established shortly before; it shows the universal judgment upon the nations and Israel, in Zion, the reproach of His people removed, the veil taken away from all nations. The Lord had hidden his face from the house of Israel while they were disowned: but He is spoken of as coming out of His place for their deliverance. “Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee, hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the Lord cometh out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; the earth also shall disclose her blood, and no more cover her slain. . . And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem.”

Isa. 30 “Moreover, the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun: and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord bindeth up the breach of his people and healeth the stroke of their wound. Behold the name of the Lord cometh from for, burning with his anger, and the burden thereof is heavy; his lips are full of indignation, and his tongue as a devouring fire: and his breath, as an overflowing stream, shall reach to the midst of the neck, to sift the nations with the sieve of vanity: i.e., and there shall be a bridle in the jaws of the people causing them to err And the Lord shall cause his glorious voice to be heard, and shall show the lighting down of his arm, with the indignation of his anger, and with the flame of a devouring fire, with scattering, and tempest, and hailstones. For through the voice of the Lord shall the Assyrian be beaten down which smote with a rod. And in every place where the grounded staff shall pass.” (the rod of vengeance which God hath decreed), “which the Lord shall lay upon him, it shall be with tabrets and harps” (when it is laid on the Assyrian, it is the source of joy and deliverance at the end of the indignation, to the remnant of Israel), “and with battles of shaking will be fight with it. For Tophet is ordained of old, yea, for the king it is prepared” (the Antichrist, who has this title amongst the apostate nation); “he hath made it deep and large; the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, cloth kindle it.”

Isa. 59:15 - 21. Verse 20 of this passage is quoted by the apostle in Rom. 11, in view of the future restoration of the people. “The Redeemer shall come to Zion and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob.” And then He establishes the new covenant with Israel; His spirit is with His people, and His words are in their mouth, which would abide with them forever. Verse 18, &c., shows that it is introduced by judgment. “He will repay fury to his adversaries, recompence to his enemies: to the islands he will pay recompence; so shall they fear the name of the Lord from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun.” The next chapter declares that Jerusalem is restored in the glory of the kingdom, and her sons and daughters gathered from every side.

Isa. 66. This chapter gives the judgment which introduces the glory and blessedness of the restored nation described in the latter portion of chapter 65. First we have the remnant who fear the name of Jehovah and wait for Him; then the apostates of the nation. The former are encouraged with the promise that the Lord would appear to their joy and deliverance, and to the shame of the apostates, who said in contempt, “Let the Lord display his glory.” “Behold, the Lord will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of tire. For by fire and by his sword will the Lord plead with all flesh: and the slain of the Lord shall be many.” (Chap. 66:15, 16.) This passage shows that He comes suddenly, like a whirlwind, and renders to His enemies the fire of judgment. Then we have the result of this in verses 6-14; the laws are set up again in a wondrous manner, and Jerusalem restored. “Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her all ye that love her: rejoice with joy for her, all ye that mourn for her.. for thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream as one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you: and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem. And when ye see this, your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like an herb: and the hand of the Lord shall be known towards his servants, and his indignation towards his enemies.” Then, in verses 19, 20, the spared remnant go forth to declare the glory of the Lord among the Gentiles, and to bring back the dispersed of Israel. The whole chapter shows most clearly the connection between the universal judgment of the nations and Israel, with the deliverance of a remnant, and the Gentiles who are spared blessed around the

people of God.

Turn to Jer. 25. We referred to this chapter before; it declared the length of the captivity of Judah in Babylon to be seventy years: but God, having given the throne of the world to Babylon, when He had set aside His people and removed His presence from their midst—in principle, when Babylon is overthrown His people are delivered, because it was the only power that held its dominion directly from God—the other Gentile powers followed providentially. Jerusalem was only partially restored; however, it shows the principle. In examining this chapter, we find that the judgment goes on to the end, in which His people are involved; primarily it referred to the judgment which was executed on Jerusalem and the nations at the time to which the prophecy referred, Babylon falling last of all, which had executed it; and serves as a type of the final crisis of judgment of all the nations of the world.

“For, lo, I will call for a sword upon all the inhabitants of the earth, saith the Lord of hosts A noise shall come even to the ends of the earth: for the Lord hath a controversy with the nations, he will plead with all flesh..... and the slain of the Lord shall be at that day from one end of the earth even to the other end of the earth,” &c. (Ver. 29-33.)

Jer. 30-33. In this beautiful series of prophecies we find, first, Judah restored; then Israel; then both established under the new covenant; the land restored; Messiah and the priesthood, all introduced by judgment on the Jews and the nations, which finds Jacob at the height of his distress. Let us examine it more closely. In chapter 30:7; the prophet writes, “Alas for that day is great, so that none is like it; it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it. For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off thy neck, and will burst thy bends, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him, but they shall serve the Lord their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them. Therefore fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, saith the Lord, neither be thou dismayed, O Israel, for, lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid. For I am with thee, saith the Lord, to save thee, though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee; but I will correct thee in measure and will not leave thee altogether unpunished Therefore all they that devour thee shall be devoured, and all thine adversaries, every one of them shall go into captivity, and they that spoil thee shall be a spoil and all they that prey upon thee will I give for a prey. For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the Lord, because they called thee an outcast, saying, This is Zion, whom no man seeketh after the city shall be builded upon her own heap And ye shall be my people and I will be your God The fierce anger of the Lord shall not return, until he has done it, and until he has performed the intents of his heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it.” Chapter 31 sets forth the deliverance, at the same time, of all the families of Israel: and they shall plant vines in the mountains of Samaria and eat them as common things. The language of this deliverance is touchingly beautiful. “Behold I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child, and her that travaileth with child together; great company shall return thither. They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them, and I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters by a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble, for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn. . . He that scattered Israel, will gather them. . . Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness

of the Lord, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock, and of the herd; and their soul shall be as a watered garden; and they shall net sorrow any more at all. . . Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah" (both houses, the entire nation), "not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand, to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which covenant they brake. . . But this shall be the covenant. . . I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts. . . and they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sins no more.... If those ordinances" (of creation) "depart from before me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever." When Messiah was cut off, the blood of this new covenant was shed, and all necessary on God's part was accomplished to their righteous establishment under it. Plainly the return from Babylon, of the remnant of Judah, was not this re-establishment; for it will be established with all Israel, as it declares, and in grace. The blessing of it however never brings them within the veil, as is the place of Christians now. "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that the city shall be built to the Lord, from the tower of Hananeel, unto the gate of the corner. And the measuring line shall yet go forth over against it upon the hill Gareb, and shall compass about to Goath. And the whole valley of the dead bodies, and of the ashes, and all the fields unto the brook Kidron, unto the corner of the horse-gate towards the east, shall be holy unto the Lord; and it shall not be plucked up nor thrown down, any more forever."

In chapter 32 the Lord takes up the circumstances of the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar to declare His counsel in grace as to their final restoration. The prophet is caused to buy a field in token that the people would again possess the land. "Behold, I will gather them out of all countries whither I have driven them in mine anger. . . and I will bring them again into their place, and I will cause them to dwell safely. . . Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart, and with my whole soul."

Chapter 33 repeats the blessings, looking forward to the day when their Messiah would be with them. "I will cause the captivity of Judah and the captivity of Israel (both) to return. . . and I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me: and I will pardon all their iniquities whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David: and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land." ("Judgment shall return to righteousness, and all the upright in heart shall follow it." Psa. 94:15.) "In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The Lord our righteousness. For thus saith the Lord, David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel," not merely Judah. "Thus saith the Lord, If my covenant be not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth; then will I cast away the seed of Jacob, and David my servant, so that I will not take any of his seed to be rulers over the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; for I will cause their captivity to return, and have mercy upon them."

Turn now to Ezek. 20. The Spirit here retraces the idolatry of the entire nation from the time of their deliverance out of Egypt. God had brought them out, and given them His sabbaths to be a sign between Him and them: but they had ever rebelled in the wilderness against Him, and polluted His

sabbaths. “Notwithstanding the children rebelled against me: they walked not in my statutes. . . they polluted my sabbaths. . . in the wilderness.” God had told them (Deut. 32; Lev. 26) that He would scatter them amongst the heathen. Yet when they had been brought into the land they had forsaken the Lord for the high places, and the Lord had sworn that He would not be inquired of by them; but the nation, hardened in their idolatry, had resolved to be like the heathen, and serve wood and stone. Then the Lord said that with fury poured out He would rule over them. “And I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered. . . and I will plead with you face to face. . . and I will cause you to pass under the rod. . . and I will purge out from among you the rebels (the apostates), and them that transgress against me. . . and they shall not enter into the land of Israel. . . For in my holy mountain. . . there shall all the house of Israel, all of them in the land, serve me when I shall bring you into the land of Israel; into the country for the which I lifted up mine hand to give it to your fathers. And I will kindle a fire in thee. . . and all flesh shall see that I the Lord have kindled it: and it shall not be quenched.” (Ver. 33-48) Israel is here dealt with, amongst the nations of the world, for idolatry; as Judah for the rejection of Christ (for Israel never returned to have their Messiah presented to them, as Judah), which was her special sin, in which she was joined by the fourth Gentile empire, represented by Pilate. In the end she is found in close alliance with, and politically favored by, the Gentile empire in its revived state. The unclean spirit of idolatry did not return to the Jews after the return of the remnant from Babylon. The Lord notices this in Matt. 12: “When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished; then goeth he and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it he also unto this wicked generation.” Verse 48 shows the connection of the judgment of the nations with that of Israel.

Ezek. 36-39 In this series of chapters we get, first, the moral renewing of the nation; then the quickening and restoration of the people in national resurrection; then when restored and in their land, their last great enemy, which occupies the territory of the Assyrian, comes up against them; and is destroyed in the mountains of Israel.

Chapter 36. The past failure of the nation is put before them that they may own it before God. The heathen said, “These are the people of the Lord and (yet) they are gone forth out of his land.” (Ver. 20.) But then God remembers that His name is involved, and for His holy name's sake He delivers them. Then, as He had shown to Nicodemus, a master in Israel, the new birth was necessary even to the enjoyment of earthly blessings; which, as a teacher in Israel, he ought to have known from the testimony of the prophets. “I will sprinkle clean water upon you. . . a new heart also will I give you. . . and I will put my spirit within you. . . and ye shall dwell in the land that I gave your fathers. . . And I will multiply the fruit of the tree and the increase of the field. . . I will also cause you to dwell in the cities and the wastes shall be builded,” &c. The nation is thus morally renewed that they may loathe themselves for their sins before God.

Chapter 37. In the vision of this chapter we have a figure of the national resurrection of the people. The prophet sees a valley of dry bones, to which he prophesies as commanded; and there was a noise and a shaking, and the bones came together, and the sinews and flesh came up upon them, and the breath came into them and they lived. “Then said he unto me, Son of man, these bones

are the whole house of Israel; behold, they say (in captivity), Our bones are dried, our hope is lost; we are cut off from our parts. . . Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. . . and shall put my Spirit in you, and ye shall live; and I shall place you in your own land" The figure of resurrection is here used to show the gathering of the nation, long apparently lost amongst the nations of the world, into their land. Clearly it only applies to this, not actual resurrection of the saints who have died in the Lord; it would not be "in the land," but to heaven, they would be brought. In what follows, we find that Judah and Israel, long apart, are united into one nation, under one king. God sets up his tabernacle and His sanctuary amongst them, and establishes His covenant of peace.

In chapters 38, 39, the Assyrian, the ancient enemy of the people when owned of God— "the rod of the Lord's anger" (Isa. 10:5) against His people, to chastise them for their sins—is here introduced under the title of Gog, the prince of Rosh (Russia); Mesbech (Moscow); and Tubal (Tobolsk). He embraces the territory under Russia, or which that power shall have gathered under her in that day. He is represented as wickedly coming up against the nation in Palestine when at rest and restored. "Thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwalled villages: I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely… to take a spoil, and to take a prey; to turn thy hand upon the desolate places that are now inhabited, and upon the people that are gathered out of the nations, which have gotten cattle and goods, that dwell in the midst of the land.... Thus saith the Lord.... it shall be in the latter days, and I will bring thee against my land.... art thou he of whom I have spoken in old time by my servants the prophets of Israel and it shall come to pass when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, saith the Lord God, that my fury shall come up in my face and I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood.. and I will turn thee back, and leave but the sixth part of thee.... Thou shalt fall upon the mountains of Israel.... Behold, it is come, and it is done, saith the Lord God; this is the day whereof I have spoken. Then shall they (the house of Israel) know that I am the Lord their God, which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen; but I have gathered them into their own land.... Neither will I hide my face any more from them; for I have poured out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord God." Compare also for this destruction of the Assyrian, after the people are restored, Isa. 14:24, 25; 33 We must carefully distinguish Gog the land of Magog in Ezek. 38; 39, from Gog and Magog of Rev. 20. The former comes up when the people are restored, in the beginning of the kingdom; the latter, after the thousand years of the kingdom have expired. "When the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog," &c., (Ver. 7, 8.)

(To be continued)

Chapter 247

# The Ways of God: 6. 3. The Judgment of Israel and the Nations Introductive of the Kingdom Continued

Dan. 12 We have before seen that the time of the great tribulation, spoken of here, is that to which the Lord Himself alludes, as happening at the time the abomination of desolation is set up in the temple, and which ends by the coming of the Lord Himself, and the deliverance of the people. It is the closing half of the seventieth week, when the re-formed Latin empire is the full expression of Satanic energy, the destruction of which makes way for the kingdom under Christ. We read, “At that time shall Michael stand up.... for the children of thy people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time; and at that time shall thy people be delivered And many (not all) of them that sleep in the dust of the earth” (this is a figure analogous to the moral death and resurrection in Isa. 26:13 - 19, and the national resurrection as conveyed by the figure of the valley of dry bones in Ezek. 37) “shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to (instruct many in) righteousness, as the stars forever and ever.... And one said.... How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?” that is, to the end of the tribulation, and he aware, “that it should be for a time, times, and a half,” to put an end to the dispersion of the holy people: the closing half of the seventieth week of Dan. 9.

Joel 3 It is but necessary to read verses 1, 2, 9-17, to show the connection. “For, behold, in those days.. when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat (the judgment of Jehovah), and will plead with them there for my people, and my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles assemble yourselves, and come, all ye heathen, and gather yourselves together round about. Let the heathen be waked, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat; for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about” (this is the judgment of the quick, or living nations). “The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and.... will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel.... then shall Jerusalem be holy, and then shall no stranger pass through her any more.” She shall be no more trodden down of the Gentiles; their times shall have been fulfilled.

Mic. 4; 5 This prophecy shows in the most wondrously beautiful manner, the coaling and rejection of the Bethlehemite by His people, who are then given up for a time until Zion, which travails, shall have brought forth, and the Son be owned as born to the nation (see Isa. 9); and the remnant shall be restored. The Assyrian then comes up, and He whom they had rejected is then their peace. “And he shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord And this man shall be the peace when the Assyrian shall come into our land, and when he shall tread in our palaces.” He “shall deliver us from the Assyrian and the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people, as the dew from the Lord, as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men.” Jacob shall be the channel of refreshing grace from God to the world, and a testimony to His power.

Zeph. 3:8-20. “Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the Lord, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations to pour upon them my indignation for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy.” The remnant is thus encouraged to wait for this time of judgment from the Lord, when He would rise up to the prey; this alone would set them free, and teach the nations to call upon the Lord, and serve Him with one consent. In that day God would gather His dispersed people from beyond the rivers of Ethiopia (Euphrates and Nile) and have in their midst a people that trust in the name of Jehovah; and “the remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth: for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid. Sing, 0 daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem; the Lord hath taken away thy judgments, he hath cast out thine enemy; the King of Israel, even the Lord, is in the midst of thee; thou shalt not see evil any more. In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not; and to Zion, Let not thine hands be slack. The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty: he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love; he will joy over thee with singing I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the Lord.”

Hag. 2 “For thus saith the Lord of hosts, Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts.... The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former.... I will shake the heavens and the earth; and I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen saith the Lord of hosts.” This universal judgment, introductive of Christ and the glory of the restored nation, is referred to by the Holy Ghost in Heb. 12:26, as yet to come.

Zech. 10-14 In this series of chapters we have the restoration of Judah and Israel at a time of universal judgment; and this is spoken of still as future, long after the return of Judah from the Babylonish captivity. “And in that day I will make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people; all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem. And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all nations that come up against Jerusalem.” The verses following, which speak of the repentance of the house of David and the nation, are extremely beautiful. The rejected Messiah is the Jehovah who delivers them. They look upon Him whom they have pierced. There is a great mourning in the land as in the valley of Megiddo of old. This allusion to 2 Chron. 35:22, &c., is touching in the extreme. There, in the closing days of their former history, their faithful king, Josiah, had fallen, and there the nation had mourned and made great lamentation over their slain king. Here they learn to mourn in the dust, when they learn that the king whom their nation crucified is the Lord of hosts Himself.

In the past history of the nation we saw how that they had failed—the people, the priests, the prophets, and the kings. Here we find these classes all represented in this national and yet individual repentance. The house of David, which represents the kings—the house of Nathan, the prophets—the house of Levi, the priests—and the house of Shimei (Simeon), the people.

Judah is here dealt with, in the land, for the rejection of Christ; not like Israel, as we have seen, for idolatry. “And in all the land... two parts therein shall be cut off, and die, but the third shall be left

therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and I will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name and I will hear them; I will say, It is my people; (Ammi) and they shall say, the Lord is my God." The sentence "Call his name Lo Ammi, for ye are not my people, and I will not be your God," (Hos. 1:9,) is removed.

In chapter xiv. the Lord appears to their deliverance, in the place from which the "glory" of the God of Israel departed, when He transferred the "sword" to the Gentile. From the same place He had entered Jerusalem as their King, according to this prophet chapter ix. 9. riding upon an ass's colt. On the same mount of Olives He sat, in Matt. 24 surrounded by His Jewish disciples; after He had left His nation, until the day when they would say, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord," and instructed them as to the restoration and gathering of their nation from the four quarters of the world, at the coming of the Son of man in His glory. And from the same mountain did He ascend, having been rejected by His nation and crucified, to heaven. (Acts 1) And on that same mountain shall His feet stand when He returns to their full and complete deliverance in grace! "Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations. . . And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east. . . And the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee. . . And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem. . . And the Lord shall be King over all the earth. . . All the land shall be turned as a plain, from Geba to Rimmon, south of Jerusalem; and it shall be lifted up and inhabited in her place, from Benjamin's gate, unto the place of the first gate, unto the corner gate, and from the towers of Hananeel unto the king's wine-presses. . . And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem, shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles."

We have now followed without much comment, and allowing scripture to speak for itself; which it has done, from the law, the prophets, and the Psalms, giving the testimony of a time of universal judgment; when God turns to occupy Himself, directly, with the world again; the nation of Israel being the special object before Him. All these dealings making way for God's kingdom in Zion and the restored earth; at the time of the restitution of all things—and we have seen most distinctly that this time of judgment is synchronical with the counting out of the closing part of the seventieth week of Dan. 9—the crisis of the history of this world. And before closing this subject, I would shortly notice the position of the heavenly and glorified saints—the Church of the firstborn—during these scenes of universal judgment. We saw them taken up at the time of the first resurrection to be "ever with the Lord," (when the saying of Isa. 25:8, 1 Cor. 15:54, is brought to pass, "Death is swallowed up in victory,") when this period of judgment begins. We find this in the Book of Revelation, in chapters 4 - 19, which are occupied with this period of judgment, precursory of the kingdom. It is assumed also in other Scriptures. In chapter 1 we have "the things which thou hast seen," the vision of Christ walking amongst the candlesticks. Chapters "the things that are," (ver. 19,) or the time-state of the Church as a light-bearer here below for Christ. In her place of responsibility the various features which would mark her existence in the world are portrayed, from the time of her departure from her first love, till she is threatened with total excision— "I will spew thee out of my mouth."

No doubt seven actual assemblies in Asia are addressed, but the moral state of each is seized to describe that which would be found in Christendom. That these seven assemblies, and they alone, could not be termed "the things that are," is clear, as they did not constitute all that existed then;

and besides, chapter 3:10 clearly indicates that the whole time existence of the Church is converged, as it promises that the overcomer who kept the word of Christ's patience would be kept from “the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world to try them that dwell upon the earth” —the period of judgment we have been considering, which introduces or rather precedes the kingdom. Chapter iv., &c., “The things which shall be after these things” (μετα ταυτα) begins this period. “Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be after these things.” There are doubtless features in these chapters that show the leading features which characterize the protracted period from the apostolic days to the end of the age; but when we come to details, the interpretation can only apply, in truth, to the crisis of the history of the world.

All through the course of these chapters of the Apocalypse, we find a company seated in heaven, calm and peaceful, amidst the thunders and lightnings and judgments, cognizant of the mind of God; and with full understanding of all that goes on beneath them in the world. In chapter 4 we find them, in the presence of a throne of judgment, seated as kings and priests, clothed with white raiment, and on their heads crowns of gold—the complement of the heavenly saints received up at Christ's coming. In chapter v. one of their number explains to the prophet that which caused his thoughts to be troubled; and they are again seen exercising priestly services around the Lamb. Again in chapter 7 we find them in heaven, and one of their number explains to the prophet the one hundred and forty-four thousand of Israel, and the palm-bearing multitude of Gentiles who had been Sealed for preservation through the judgments for the millennial earth, no more to be subject to hunger, or thirst, or sorrow. Again, in chapter 12, we hear their voices celebrating the casting out of Satan and his angels from the heavenlies: “Woe to the inhabiters of the earth,” proclaimed because Satan had gone down in great wrath, having but a short time—the closing one thousand two hundred and sixty days of the beast's power. The sorrows of the saints for the heavenlies cease when they had been caught up, and just before those of the Jewish saints, sealed for preservation, begin. In chapter 13 these saints are the objects of Satan's blasphemy through the beast; be can now no longer accuse or cause them sorrow, so he blasphemes “those that dwell in heaven.” In chapter 19, after the marriage of the Lamb, we see Christ as King of kings, and Lord of lords, coming forth to judgment, accompanied by the armies of heaven, clothed with fine linen, which is the righteousness of saints. (Comp. also chap. 17:14) He comes forth to exercise His power over the nations, and to rule them with a rod of iron, in which the saints have a part with Him. See Psa. 2:9, “Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel,” with Rev. 2:28, “He that overcometh to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken in shivers: even as I received of my Father.” Then, in chapter 20, the thrones are set, and “they sat on them, and judgment was given unto them they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and they shall reign with him a thousand years.” In verse 4 we find three classes. First, those who had been received up at the coming of Christ; second, those who, during the interval of judgment before His appearing, “were beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God,” the souls that were martyred under the fifth seal (see chap. 6:9); and, third, those who, during the raging of the beast in his last effort, set on by Satan, “had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads or in their hands.” These last two classes are not deprived of their blessing for having suffered. They lose those of the kingdom below, but are not forgotten, and receive the heavenly blessing with the others who had been received up at Christ's coming.

Chapter 248

# Fragments Gathered Up: A Dying Paul

A dying Paul.-2 Timothy illustrates the victory of faith and hope in Paul's soul. He was in prison, forsaken by brethren, apprehensive of the ill condition and of the coming apostasy of the Church; but all was faith and hope in his soul, sure and bright; and in further proof of this victory, he is thoughtful of others. Hope has purified him. See like victory in dying Jacob and in dying David. (Gen. 47, &c.; 1 Chron. 28, &c.) See it also in the camp at the close of their journey. (Josh. 1 - 4) Faith overcame all accusing recollections; hope overcame all present attractions in Jacob and David.

The sense of the glory lies so instinctively on Paul's heart that he speaks of it as “that day” indefinitely. (Chap. i. 12, 18; iv. 8.) Faith and hope get their perfect victories in the soul of Christ. (See Heb. 12:1, 2.) See Him as dying. (John 13, &c.; xix. 27.) The Church is always to be thus. (Rev. 22:17.)

The person of Christ is the object of faith; but he who believes has part in the righteousness of God, which is revealed as the portion of the believer.

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Chapter 249

# Fragment: What God Is to Us

God is to us “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” as much in what He does not give, as in what He does.

Chapter 250

# When One Walks With the World

One may say, I shall have no intercourse with such an one; he is quarrelsome, disagreeable, vain, proud, or a tale-bearer. But if one is living with saints, there is no such turning one's back. There is still love as being one family—God's family—and the need of patience, forbearance, &c. This makes the great difficulty of saints living in one house when one walks with the world, one may say, I shall have no intercourse with such an one; he is quarrelsome, disagreeable, vain, proud, or a tale-bearer. But if one is living with saints, there is no such turning one's back. There is still love as being one family—God's family—and the need of patience, forbearance, &c. This makes the great difficulty of saints living in one house.

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