

WRITINGS OF W M TOMKINS

by W.M. Tomkins

A collection of theological writings, sermons, and essays by W.M. Tomkins, compiled for study and devotional reading.

25 Chapters

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S. A False Christ and Falsehood

A False Christ and Falsehood

God's detestation of idols, so early marked in His dealings with Israel long after the call of Abraham to be a witness to the one living and true God, is clearly in view of His beloved Son, the Lord Jesus. The injunction, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them nor serve them: for I Jehovah thy God am a jealous God" (Exo 20:3-5), becomes luminous in the light of The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we have contemplated his glory, a glory as of an only begotten with a Father) full of grace and truth." "No one hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (John 1:14-15; John 1:18). In Deu 13:1-18 the possibility of "a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams," giving "a sign or a wonder," and the same coming to pass, his object being to turn them to other gods which they had not known, to serve them, is brought before the people with the striking prohibition, "Thou shalt not hearken to the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, for Jehovah your God proveth you." Does not this clearly show that no pretended communication from God could ever set aside that memorable word with which the Lord Jesus vanquished Satan in the wilderness — "It is written." The children of Israel were told to put to death the seducer "because he hath spoken to turn you away from Jehovah your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage." Could there be a stronger claim than that of redemption, or one that more appeals to the heart? Then again, it might even be "thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend which is as thine own soul," who should secretly entice to the service of other gods! but so far from the nearness of the relationship, or friendship, being allowed as an excuse for yielding to the snare, there was to be no pitying, sparing, nor concealing, but "thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death," and the claim of God's redemption is again urged (ver. 10). Is the Christian's indebtedness to Him "who delivered us from so great a death" on a less plane than that of an obedient Israelite? The judgment to be inflicted in the case of "one of thy cities," whence children of Belial have gone out with a similar seductive object, after due enquiry, diligent search, and the truth and certainty of "such abomination" being established (for God Himself never acts without sufficient evidence, as we may see in the case of Sodom and Gomorrah, where He says, "I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know," Gen 18:21), was to be even more drastic than that inflicted on some of the cities of the Canaanites; for not only were all the inhabitants and cattle to be utterly destroyed, but "all the spoil," "every whit" was to be gathered and burnt with fire in the city. The cattle and spoil of Ai, for instance, "Israel took for a prey unto themselves, according unto the word of Jehovah" (Jos 8:27). In connection with the above, I would call attention to a solemn lesson we learn from 1Ki 12:1-33; 1Ki 13:1-34. We there read, "Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Judah . . . and he placed in Bethel the priests of the high

places which he had made. So he offered upon the altar which he made in Bethel, the fifteenth day of the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised of his own heart." The true altar was the means of approach to God. Believers now "have an altar whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle," and this altar — our altar — is clearly "Jesus," who, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate, and to whom we are called to go forth "without the camp bearing his reproach" (Heb 13:10-16). Jeroboam had established a false altar; in other words had set up not the true, but a false, Christ.

Now the man of God out of Judah, as commissioned by Jehovah, when Jeroboam stood by the altar, and burnt incense, cried against it, and foretold that Josiah, of the house of David, should burn bones and offer upon it the priests of the high places; and he gave as a sign that Jehovah had spoken, a rent altar and ashes poured out. Jeroboam, indignant, put out his hand against the prophet of Judah, only to have that hand dried up, so that he could not pull it in again to him. God vindicated His word and His servant, for the altar was rent and the ashes poured out. The king then intreats the man of God for his hand, and God hears the prayer of the prophet from Judah, and it is restored. But now comes the trial of the man of God. After all that he has done, will he stand (compare Eph 6:13)? He refuses the king's offer to come home with him and refresh himself, and the reward, "For so it was charged me, by the word of the LORD, saying, Eat no bread, nor drink water, nor turn again by the same way that thou camest" (1Ki 13:9). To be in association with those who in any way are in association with a false Christ, according to John's Second Epistle (ver. 11), is to be partaker of their evil deeds. The man of God from Judah does turn to go back another way, but he lingers on the road "in this place "where he was neither to eat bread nor drink water. Alas, he falls an easy prey; and the words of the old prophet of Bethel, "I am a prophet also as thou art, and an angel spake unto me by the word of Jehovah saying, Bring him back with thee into thine house, that he may eat bread and drink water" — these words effected what the king's invitation had failed to do. How striking is the Spirit's commentary, "he lied unto him"! How truly awful. May we not ask, Has this no counterpart, today? Is it in vain that it is written, "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father, but he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also" (1Jn 2:22-23). What must have been the feelings of the man of God from Judah, when, at the table of the old prophet, a veritable message from God comes through the latter, telling the man of God, "As thou hast disobeyed the mouth of Jehovah, and hast not kept the commandment which Jehovah thy God commanded thee . . . thy carcass shall not come unto the sepulchre of thy fathers!" The lion which met him as he rode on his way home, which slew him but touched not his ass, is an eloquent tribute to what the beasts can do when man fails in his obedience to God. But oh, what a lesson for us! If I have the word of God for myself, I am bound to obey it, whatever others say. No pleading can absolve me from its claim on me, for we are set apart from conversion to obedience. Cleaving to it and to the Lord, I shall have the protection of both Himself and His word. It is no question of another saying, "I am a prophet also as thou art." He may be a fellow saint, and a worthier one; but the word to the faithful heart is what our blessed Lord said to Peter, "Follow thou Me" (John 21:21). "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken, than the fat of rams." W.N.T.

S. Asa and Jehoshaphat

Asa and Jehoshaphat 2Ch 16:1-10; 2Ch 20:1-30.

1919 193 One hardly knows anything more sad than this account of Asa. No doubt he was the Lord's, but he was out of communion, and relied on his own resources. And he begins by robbing God. Then he asked a worldly man to do a distinctly dishonourable thing: "Then Asa brought out silver and gold out of the treasures of the house of Jehovah and of the king's house, and sent to Ben-hadad, king of Syria, that dwelt at Damascus, saying, There is a league between me and thee, as there was between my father and thy father: behold, I have sent thee silver and gold; go, break thy league with Baasha king of Israel, that he may depart from me" (vers. 2, 3). If we get out of communion there is no saying what we may do. It is sad to think that the flesh has more scope in a believer than in the unconverted.

Asa gets his way with Ben-hadad, but Jehovah sends a messenger who tells him he is only a sufferer by getting his own way. Then he adds: "For the eyes of Jehovah run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show himself strong in the behalf of those whose heart is perfect towards him" (ver. 9). Those whose hearts are perfect are not those perfect in flesh, but those who know there is nothing good in them. "Cease ye from man," and begin with yourself.

We need mercy, we need wisdom. Let us ask of God, Who giveth liberally and upbraideth not. We have had here a word of warning. Now let us turn to chap. 20: 1-3.

Oh, how blessed! There is nothing finer than this. David, and rightly, "enquired of Jehovah," but Jehoshaphat "set himself to seek Jehovah," and then proclaimed a fast — setting aside the flesh. Oh, how delightful to see the people of God realizing their weakness, and gathering together to seek the Lord as in ver. 5! Mark Jehoshaphat's reasoning: he makes it a question of God, to Whom all power belongs. Clearing the ground altogether, he makes it a question of God, and God's ability.

What a delicious verse is ver. 6! But he is taking the very highest ground in ver. 7. "Abraham, thy friend"! Twice do we get the father of the faithful spoken of as the "Friend" of God! Here for the first time, then in Isa 41:1-29, and lastly in Jas 2:1-26. Doubtless, the people had behaved very badly, and Jehoshaphat is ready to own it; but if grace gives us high ground it is the merest pride to reject it. Some think it wrong to know the forgiveness of sins; but no, God says it, and the believer ought to occupy the high ground His grace gives.

Mark how he piles it up in vers. 8, 9. It is very beautiful. There is no boasting, but telling God how they have rested in Him, and now they are doing exactly what God would have them do, answering to Solomon's prayer, and relying on His promise, and He cannot deny Himself.

"And now, behold, the children of Ammon and Moab and mount Seir, whom thou wouldst not let Israel invade, when they came out of the land of Egypt, but they turned from them, and destroyed them not; Behold, I say, how they reward us, to come to cast us out of thy possession, which thou

hast given us to inherit. O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee." How blessed! He pleads with God all that His grace has given, and asks if God is going to allow the enemy to triumph. He would have us trust in all He has given us. But he makes no preparation — no war loan — no fresh taxes! No; "our eyes are upon Thee."

Then "All Judah stood before Jehovah," and the little ones are given first. You know what parade is. Here the little ones come first. The Lord Jesus was much displeased with those who would keep the little ones from Him. Here the little ones stand first before Jehovah, then the wives — not the warriors. The sons of Asaph were singers, and of them, says ver. 15 "Hearken ye, all Judah and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat, Thus saith Jehovah unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours but God's," etc. And God owns to it. They had owned God, and He answers to it. God knew exactly the place where the enemy was; they might go to their beds, for He that keepeth Israel was watching over them, and "Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still and see the salvation of the Lord with you" a remarkable expression. Not salvation for you as at the Red Sea, but with you — with the little ones, the wives and the children. "Go out . . . for Jehovah is with you."

Ver. 18: What a lovely scene! Here are these people, with the foe to be dealt with tomorrow, worshipping the LORD. There was no nonsense about it (ver. 19). Why should they not stand up to praise the LORD with a loud voice on high?

"So shall ye be established" (ver. 20) that was the point. "I commend you to God," said the apostle. "We want implicit trust in our God and Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ." Believe His prophets" — yes, always the word of God for all. Our sorrows arise because we have acted without the sanction of the word.

Ver. 21" "Beauty of holiness," rather "In holy splendour." They were not going to do it in tinpot style but "in holy splendour." They were rather previous, but they were all right, It is a very good receipt to praise beforehand" If God has promised, may we not give thanks? They began the song of triumph, and Jehovah set ambushments.

"And when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten." How lovely! Israel never shot an arrow; this war never cost them a farthing; no one got a scratch. God said He would fight for them and this is how He did it. To me, this is most delightful. The enemies all slay one another. Judah had said," Our eyes are upon Thee," now they get another sight — all dead bodies.

"They were three days gathering the spoil" (vers. 25). Can we think of these three days without thinking of that Blessed One Who won the victory for us? And on the fourth day they blessed the LORD (ver. 26). On their side it was a perfectly bloodless battle! not one soldier missing!

I am looking at it in a practical way for ourselves, but when He comes as the rightful Conqueror, we shall come with Him. They started from the house of Jehovah, and they returned there (ver. 28).

It is a true thing to look to Him. In the early days of our short little history they had not much trouble with those who wanted to come into communion the fear of the Lord was over them. If we fail, always at once confess it; keep short accounts, and rely on Him, and be obedient to the word of His grace. W.N.T.

S. Brief notes of an address on 1Pe_5:1-14.

Brief notes of an address on 1Pe 5:1-14. The word "subjection" or "subject" occurs seven times in this epistle, and "suffer" or "sufferings" nineteen times. "Likewise ye wives be in subjection" (1Pe 3:1) — likewise to what? To Him who took the subject place at the end of 1Pe 2:1-25. And how blessed to know that He who took the place of subjection here, has now His place on high with all there subject to Him, at the close of chap. 3! The holy women who trusted in God adorned themselves with the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit; and we all need it, brothers as well as sisters. We should not have quoted Sarah as in 1Pe 3:6! She only once called Abram "lord," and then she laughed in unbelief: but God is gracious To go back to our chapter. Was not the apostle a sufferer? Was he not in prison, and was not prayer made on his behalf? We need to "watch unto prayer," and to abound in it. If you watch to prayer, you will have good reason to rejoice!

"Feed the flock of God." It is very sweet to hear the Lord's sheep spoken of thus! How you find both Paul and Peter warned the saints against the love of money! With regard to the flock, we are not to treat it as our own possession. He valued the flock because of the price paid for it. It is God's. How blessed to think of the Lord Jesus Christ as my Shepherd, and my Overseer! Do I want to serve the Lord? He will give me grace to do it if I but look to Him for it. Humility does not consist in not taking the place grace assigns us. One reason why we have had all our sorrows is the lack of humility. "God resisteth the proud but giveth grace to the humble."

Those of us who seek to serve the Lord in preaching, are we not apt to forget this seventh verse, and to allow the service to come between the Lord and ourselves? I am privileged to cast all my care on Him.

It becomes us to be grave, and to be on our guard. There are some that go about who are arch-deceivers. But we are not alone. "The God of all grace" He knows how to make grace abound toward us. He "has called us to His eternal glory in Christ Jesus" You and I are bound to get there where His glory is. As sinners we came short of it: now we exult in hope of it. Here (ver. 10) we ought to have the word "shall," — "shall Himself make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." No wonder the apostle breaks out in a note of praise for it! There are similar words in 1Pe 4:11.

God in His grace encourages us in Himself. The Lord Jesus Christ is quite able to bring us through. We shall never be able to say He did not nourish and cherish His church. But we are called to be children of obedience. He cares for His own glory, and that of the Lord Jesus Christ. May it ever be dear to our hearts! Amen. W.N.T.

S. Brief notes of an address on 1Ti_2:5-10; 1Ti_6:1-21.

Brief notes of an address on 1Ti 2:5-10; 1Ti 6:1-21.

"There is one Mediator." We do not want Mary, Saints, or any one to turn the heart of the Lord Jesus to us. "The Man Christ Jesus," Who is spoken of as "King of kings, and Lord of lords" — our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ is the one and only Mediator. Oh, the dignity of His Person — what He is in Himself! And He gave Himself a ransom not for "many," but for all!

Now mark the apostle's declaration, "Whereunto I am ordained a preacher and an apostle." Did it bring him in a palace and 1,000 a year? No, persecution! "God hath set forth us, the apostles, last, as it were appointed to death. For we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels and to men." This man had been a Jew, and a persecutor, but grace works and he is now a "teacher of the Gentiles, in faith and verity."

"I will then that the men pray everywhere." Everywhere, anywhere. Have things on your heart — not only at the prayer meeting. It is indeed distressing to wait there a quarter of an hour in silence when we are there to pray. Have we nothing on our hearts? Holy brethren, hold up holy hands, without wrath or doubting. We want to be and ought to be a blessing. I want to stir you up! Let us "continue instant in prayer." It is not that sisters are excluded from praying. On the contrary, may they be stirred up to pray among themselves. But there is more than this for them. "In like manner also that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety." There is an honour put on women. "if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the good behaviour of their wives." Thus may they win by their chaste conduct. "That they adorn themselves . . . with good works." We are told later (1Ti 5:10) what are good works: bringing up children, lodging strangers, washing saints, feet, relieving the afflicted. There were women who laboured with the apostle in the gospel, though certainly not themselves preaching, and the apostle bade the saints "help these women."

1Ti 6:1-21 : But suppose I am a servant, and I have a believing master, may I not take an advantage because we are one in Christ? Nay, outside the assembly there are masters and servants and the latter are to count their masters worthy of all honour, "because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit." What benefit? Rather, what is there NOT contained in it? Oh, how the apostle reckons up (vers. 3-5) those who don't submit to these things! We are warned against riches, but these are destitute of the truth. What poverty! What tends to the exaltation of self is a snare to us, but "godliness with contentment is great gain." Contentment! Alas, ever to have murmured against that blessed God! Bring God into your circumstances. It is great gain. A child of God who has drunk deeply of the grace of Christ here, when he departs will carry that with him. What is the harm of getting rich, do you say? A well known brother once answered, "Only you may lose your soul through it." Yes, drowned in destruction and perdition — eternal ruin! But "the love of money is a root of all evil" — not the only root, for there are others.

"Thou, O man of God." It associates itself with the first verse — "the name of God." Be like Joseph — "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" "Flee these things." All I have been, was brought out in the cross; now "follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love," etc., according to God. The fight is a good one that we are engaged in though we may fight very badly. "Lay hold on eternal life." We have it: lay hold on it. "Keep this commandment." The danger is of being drawn away to other confidences besides God. But look at the Lord Jesus Christ in Psa 16:1-11. He is our Example. Keep it "till the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ." What a day will that be — His public manifestation! Where is the power of the enemy? God the blessed and only Potentate will show His Son in its own times, King of kings and Lord of lords. Then this outburst of praise in ver. 10! But he warns again of "uncertain riches." A well accredited bank may go; in contrast, here is "the living God."! Fresh from Himself, He gives us all things, and richly to enjoy! The apostle enjoyed good things. We have died with Christ, but we are to receive with thanksgiving what God gives. Are you piling up your account in the heavenly Savings Bank? It is "a good foundation against the time to come," when the Lord Jesus will have His rights. The Lord give us grace to hold fast His word. This epistle brings out many "faithful sayings." May we be delivered from vain babblings W. N.T.

S. Brief notes of an address on Rev_21:1-27.

Brief notes of an address on Rev 21:1-27.

It is well for us to anticipate what lies before us. Hope is not uncertain. Our God would have us full of hope in the power of the Holy Ghost. Hope in the world is uncertain, — not so in the word of God. Here we have the eternal state, — new heavens and a new earth, new conditions, — no sea.

How different the "holy" city to the "great" city! Holiness, fitness for the presence of God marks the bride, the Lamb's wife — the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God. Every blessing comes from Him, but he "that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." He is the One we may glory and boast in, in the fullest way, "Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." Don't we know with joy of heart that it was God Who made Him to be sin for us? and every blessing comes from Him.

Here she comes from Him: and more, — once espoused as a chaste virgin to Christ," she here comes down "as a bride adorned for her husband," the same as a thousand years before. "He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied." We know that the Lord God brought to Adam in Eden all the animals, and what he called then was their name; but when the woman was brought to him, he said, "This! this shall be called woman, for she was taken out of man."

You and I belong to the tabernacle of God. I hope we value our church privileges; there is nothing like them! God dwells in the midst — with men, not nations; all distinctions are passed away. But He Who came down into the garden of Eden has His dwelling place with man, and "God Himself, their God." Oh, the reconciliation of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Then that next verse! (verse 4). We are accustomed to such actions by our Lord Jesus Christ. He entered into all circumstances when down here. But one title is very precious — "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Our God and Father too; and here GOD wipes away every tear.

You and I came short of His glory; now we rejoice in hope of it. We are brought to God.

"No more death," — the ways of sin are paid; "no more pain," summarized as "former things," — the whole creation groaning and travailing — no more of that. It is not our imagination; the Spirit of God writes this: they never return. The arch-deceiver gets in here no more.

Look at verse 5. The Sitter on the Throne says, "Behold, I make all things new." God sets His seal, and who shall interfere? And then He "commits" Himself (as we sometimes speak). Men are careful of what they write. Job said, "Oh, that mine enemy had written a book! We rejoice in true and faithful sayings. The Epistle to Timothy is full of them. Fables then were rampant. "These things are true and faithful. It is done." God has not only "committed" Himself by writing, but it is "done." Is it not blessed to know what you and I are taken up for, even the immediate presence of our God? "I am the Alpha and the Omega" — still more secure! Our church privileges are highest, and we never ought to divorce them from the gospel. God is jealous of His grace. Look at verse 6, and compare it with Rev 22:17. The church turns round to the thirsty, or to the not quite thirsty,

"whosoever will, let him take"! God never presents anything less, or anything apart from Christ. "To anyone who is thirsty, I will give the fountain of the water of life freely." To any poor sinner who says, I would like to be in that glory, God says, I want you to be there. It is a question of what Jesus has done. No experience or aught else can be added to it. God cannot tell us of that future glory without adding this invitation.

"He that overcometh." Who is the overcomer? Turn to another portion by the same writer — 1Jn 5:4. Faith! what does it rest on? Jesus, the Son of God . . . come by water and blood. The overcomer is he whose faith rests in Him, and what He has done. "He that overcometh shall inherit these things." Here is individual blessing, infinitely precious to the soul! May we be continually praising Him in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ! W. N. Tomkins.

S. Christ and the Church

Christ and the Church The way in which Christ and the church are linked together in Scripture is indeed wonderful. In Gen 1:1-31 we read, "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have 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. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (vers. 26, 27).

How strikingly different are these words, "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness," etc., from all that we have had previously of God's speaking "and it was done. He commanded and it stood fast" Of light it was, "Let there be light," and — "light was." "Let there be an expanse," and — "God made the expanse." "Let the waters be gathered together," and — "It was so." Thus was it throughout the five days. So also on the sixth day. "God said, Let the earth bring forth," etc., and — "it was so." But when man is to be created, we see, as it were, the Trinity conferring — Father, Son and Holy Ghost — "Let us make." And further, "in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion," etc. "So God created man . . . male and female created he them." Do we see in this no veiled allusion to Christ, the Second man, the last Adam, in whom "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col 2:9)? Nor to "the church which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph 1:22-23), which, in the closing book of the Bible, is represented as "the bride, the Lamb's wife" (Rev 21:9)? The dominion given to Adam we see shared by another in companionship with him. "God blessed them, and God said unto them . . . have dominion," etc. (ver. 28). So it is, when Christ takes the kingdom, we shall be associated with Him. Though called to "endure" now, we then shall "reign with Him" (2Ti 2:12).

Then again in Gen 5:1-32 we read, "In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him, male and female created he them, and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created." Is not this a further fore-shadowing of the truth we now know as Christians — that "Christ and we through grace are one"?

There will be no difficulty to faith (if to fallen man's reason) in understanding still more. And the Lord God said, It is not good that man should be alone. I will make him an help-meet for him (Gen 2:18). The love that had blessed with so much had further good in store, and that in the form of one who should be worthy of the object of such love and goodness.

How was this to be brought about? "And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept," reminding us, firstly, of what Jesus said in Psa 22:15, "Thou hast brought me into the dust of death"; and secondly, as to the laying down of His life, "No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father" (John 10:18). "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" He went down into the dust of death, but rose again.

"He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh instead thereof, and the rib which the Lord God had taken from man builded he a woman" (ver 22). So in Ephesians, saints now are said to have been made alive together with Christ. The same almighty power that raised Christ from the dead, is the power that has wrought in quickening us who were dead in our trespasses and our sins. "God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith he loved us even when we were dead in trespasses, quickened us together with Christ" (Eph 1:19-20; Eph 2:4-5). But further. The Lord God "brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man." So speaking of the great mystery — Christ and the church — the Holy Spirit, through the apostle Paul (in Eph. 30), tells us "we are members of his body, [of his flesh and of his bones]." We have thought then of His love in the past "Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it" — a collective love which we do well to rest in, and which in no way impairs the enjoyment of the individual love of Gal 2:20, "The Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

What is the operation of that love now as regards the church? "That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word." Do we thus yield ourselves to Him to be washed, and do we seek to be obedient to Him in all things? It is a day that reminds us of the last verse of that sad book, The Judges, "In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did that which was right in his own eyes"; all authority was set aside. But we have no such excuse, for God hath made Him "both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36), and, "He is head over all things, to the church" (Eph 1:22). We are set apart by the Spirit "unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ" (1Pe 1:2), and nothing absolves us from this obligation. But what is the object of Christ's love, for the future — "That he might present it to himself" not, to another; not, here, to display it to the world, but, "TO HIMSELF," "a glorious church." Yes, not a church in shame, but glorious, "not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing," but that it should be "holy and blameless" (Eph 1:4; Eph 5:27). Is it not delightful to think that such will be the church, in that day, "brought" to Him, worthy of Him, and which He will own as "taken out of" Himself, for we are now "members of his body."

We may, however, dwell a little more on the future of "the bride, the Lamb's wife," as recorded in the word. In the eternal state, in the scene of the new heaven and the new earth, with its new conditions, with the first heaven and the first earth passed away, we have an unfading picture of surpassing loveliness, "the holy city" (not, the "great city," Babylon was that) "coming down from God" — from God Himself! Oh, what purity she must have! "Out of heaven" — no earthly one this. "Prepared as a bride adorned for her husband!" Let us ponder these last four words and ask ourselves if in the light of them we could bear the thought of indifference to His wishes now! Thank God SHE will be for HIM then.

Oh, her place in the coming day! — "the tabernacle of God," where He Himself dwells, truly with men. And their blessing? Immense! "He will dwell with them (not, visit, as in Eden), and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them their God." But this "holy city, new Jerusalem," is the bride, the Lamb's wife — the tabernacle of God — His dwelling-place.

Well, "He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new" (Rev 21:5). The enemy cannot upset nor enter in, as in Eden. He will be in "the lake of fire." And God commits Himself to it, for it is added, "Write, for these words are true and faithful." Is there one who has read of this time of eternal blessing with God — Jesus could dry up tears when on earth, but here it is God,

God Himself, wiping away every tear; "And there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain" — and who would not like to be in it, yea, in the best part of it the church's part? Well, what does God say? Does He not make you welcome to it? For He adds, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." God does not offer you less than Christ. He is the fountain. Jesus may offer "the water of life" also freely, and He does, and in the *widest way, in the closing chapter of the book, "Whoso ever will, let him take the water of life freely (Rev 22:17). But God presents His Son, and the blessing along with Him "This is the record that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." May both reader and writer ever be in the enjoyment of it! And remembering that the Lord Jesus is both Head of the church and the fulness of the gospel, may we be found in fullest sympathy with both! W.N.T.

S. David in Suffering and in Victory

David in Suffering and in Victory

1Sa 30:1-31. In Luk 24:26-27, the risen Saviour said to His disciples, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses, and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures, the things concerning himself." Do not these words afford us a warrant to expect the Holy Spirit to give us, in those sacred pages, glimpses of Him Whom, through grace, our souls love, "for he first loved us."? The view obtained of Him is often more by way of contrast than of type, as we may see in the subject of our paper. The circumstances which led to David's obtaining possession of Ziklag are not to his credit. David had shone in 1Sa 26:1-25, in his sparing Saul's life, "for who can stretch forth his hand against the LORD'S anointed, and be guiltless?" he said (ver. 9). And "Saul said to David, Blessed be thou, my son David; thou shalt both do great things, and also shalt still prevail" (ver. 25) — the enemy himself being made to bear witness of what Jehovah would do by David whom He had used to deliver Israel from the hand of Goliath, and who had also anointed him to be king in the room of Saul. It was, therefore, a giving way to sad unbelief when David said in his heart, "I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul" (1Sa 27:1) and so went to Achish, king of Gath, to request a place in some town in the country to dwell therein. Then "Achish gave him Ziklag that day; wherefore Ziklag pertaineth unto the kings of Judah unto this day." The full year and four months spent by David in the Philistines' land reveal no such lustre as attached to the time he and his followers had spent in the wilderness. Psa 99:8 says, "Thou answeredst them, O LORD Our God: Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though Thou tookest vengeance of their inventions," and this in principle holds good today. Compare 1Co 11:31-32, "But if we discerned ourselves we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world" (R.V.). So in the case before us, "It came to pass, when David and his men were come to Ziklag on the third day, that the Amalekites had invaded the south, and Ziklag, and smitten Ziklag, and burned it with fire." Amalek was the determined foe of Israel (and represents the power of Satan over the flesh), meeting them when they came out of Egypt, and smiting the hindmost, all that were feeble, when they were faint and weary. And "thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven, thou shalt not forget" (Deu 25:17-19). Better still, however, when "Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword" (Exo 17:1-16) "the LORD said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua for I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven."

Now the Amalekites had taken captive the women that were in Ziklag, "but our captivity by nature was far worse, as dead in trespasses and sins, wherein in time past ye walked according, to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Eph 2:1-22), some walking perhaps grossly "fulfilling the desires of the flesh," others morally "of the mind," but all "by nature children of wrath." The apostle even speaks of himself as once "carnal, sold under sin" (Rom 7:1-25. No wonder was it, in view of all that had taken place, that "David and the people that were with him lifted up their voice and wept,

until they had no more power to weep." And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, the people to whom he had been so kind. For when he was in the cave of Adullam, "every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them." And to Abiathar he had been able, notwithstanding all his wanderings, to say, "Abide thou with me, fear not, for he that seeketh my life seeketh thy life; but with me thou shalt be in safeguard" (1Sa 22:1-23). But how David's distress pales in view of David's greater Son and Lord, as given us in Mat 26:1-75, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death"! — Jesus the Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, who hid not His face from shame and spitting, and never before had asked for exemption from any sorrow, now making request, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me "nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt," and the second time, "O my Father, if this may not pass from me except I drink it, thy will be done," and again a third time, "saying the same words." We adore, but do not wonder at the words, for the Holy One was to be made sin for us, was to bear our judgment, and in that awful hour to know His abandonment by God!

David could seek God only by the ephod — what a contrast! and this he did having encouraged himself "in the LORD his God." In return David got more than he asked for, told to "pursue," he was assured that he should certainly overtake them and "without fail recover all." This result he had not definitely solicited, though doubtless he hoped for it. If he was thus answered, there was One "who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him out of (R.V.) death, and was heard in that he feared (or, because of his piety) "though he was a son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect (or, having been perfected) he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Heb 5:7-9). David's lack of obedience brought him into his sorrow; on the other hand, our Lord's perfect obedience spared Him not unutterable anguish and grief. David was used of God to accomplish a temporary deliverance; the Lord accords an eternal salvation to all who own His adorable person and work. How right it is that He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied! Blessed be His name. The death of the Lord Jesus may be viewed in varied ways. "By the grace of God he tasted death for everything (or one)" (Heb 2:9). "Having made peace through the blood of his cross by him to reconcile all things unto himself" (or itself — the Fulness) "whether they be things on earth, or things in heaven" (Col 1:20). As the living bread which came down from heaven, He said, "The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (John 6:51); and again, "He died for all" (2Co 5:15). Yet whilst there is this world-wide aspect, there is, nevertheless, what is special and peculiar. Caiaphas prophesied "that Jesus should die for the nation" (John 11:51), and further we know that "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Eph 5:25). But to revert to David in the scene before us. There were his two wives to be rescued, and in God's gracious counsels an Egyptian (type of a worldling) to be blessed. The names of his wives are suggestive. Ahinoam ("the beauty of the brother") — may be taken to represent Israel, and Abigail ("joy of the father"), the bride of the Lamb. Jehovah shall inherit Judah his portion in the holy land, and shall choose Jerusalem again (Zec 2:12). "For thy Maker is thine husband; the LORD of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel" (Isa 54:5). How fittingly Abigail pictures the one, now being gathered out to Christ's name in the hour of His rejection here, is exquisitely set forth in David sending his servants to take her to him to wife. "And she arose, and bowed herself on her face to the earth, and said, Behold, let thine handmaid be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my

lord." This was true humility, and quite consistent with the implicit obedience she yielded to David's word, acting in a way suited to one who was to be his wife, for she "hasted, and arose, and rode upon an ass, with five damsels of hers that went after her, and she went after the messengers of David, and became his wife" (1Sa 25:41-42). On his journey after the foe, 200 abode behind, being so faint that they could not go over the brook Besor (meaning "good news"). It is not given to all in the behalf of Christ, as to the Philippian saints, "not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake," but it is written for all in Rom 8:17, "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together." This way in which David's servants dealt with the Egyptian is worthy of note; they "brought him to David." So of Andrew, in a later day, it is recorded that he brought his brother Simon to Jesus (John 1:1-51). David's servants further "gave him bread and he did eat; and they made him drink water." So again, Jesus said unto the multitudes that followed Him from Tiberias to Capernaum, "I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst" (John 6:35). Further, David's servants gave to this young man of Egypt, "a piece of a cake of figs, and two cluster of raisins; and when he had eaten, his spirit came again to him, for he had eaten no bread, nor drunk any water, three days and three nights." Truly God's grace provides both healing and nourishment, and it appeals to us in our need, "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price." "Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." David now probes the young man and said unto him, "To whom belondest thou, and whence art thou?" and receives as answer, "I am a young man of Egypt, servant to an Amalekite, and my master left me, because three days ago I fell sick." Such indeed are the rewards of Satan's service. Take Gehazi and Judas as examples. But further comes out the raid that had been made on Judah, and the burning of Ziklag with fire. Now, all is out, and David is prepared to trust the one who had been his open and avowed enemy. He who speaks of the heaven as His throne and the earth as His footstool, and Who charges His angels with folly, says "To this man will I look even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word" (Isa 66:2). Oh, the blessing of being a repentant sinner "For "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8). But the Egyptian was not so ready to trust David, and needed his assurances. And are not divine assurances: given to the Lord's sheep? Hear these words of Jesus, "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man (or, devil, we can safely say) pluck them out of my hand. My Father who gave them me is greater than all, and no one is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand" (John 10:28-29). The man is now in the train of the victorious David, who comes upon his enemies in their pleasures, and so it will be with the world when the Lord comes in judgment of His enemies. For "when they shall say peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape" (1Th 5:1-28). David gains a spoil for himself now which he shares with his friend. Our Lord in John 17:1-26 says, "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" (vers. 4, 5). Then, in verse 22, "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one even as we are one." Some of David's followers begrudged that they who had remained behind should partake of the spoil, but David peremptorily ruled it otherwise, saying, "Who will hearken unto you in this matter?" So Paul, when speaking of the end of his course, and

saying, "Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me in that day," adds, for the comfort of those who have not gone through such manifold tribulations, "and not to me only, but unto all them that love his appearing" (2Ti 4:8). May we not then be ashamed before Him at His coming! W.N.T.

S. Divine Preparations

Divine Preparations Pro 9:1-18; Mat 22:1-46. In Pro 9:1-5 we have wisdom's feast. Who this wisdom is may be gathered from the previous chapter, where it is written, "Jehovah possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was" (Pro 8:22-23). "When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment, when he appointed the foundations of the earth; then I was by him as one brought up with him; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men" (Pro 8:29-31). Of whom could this be here but of "the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father," and who declared Him? and of none other indeed, for "no man hath seen God at any time" (John 1:18).

Wisdom sets out in connection with the house she has built, stability — "She hath hewn out her seven pillars"; and as for her feast, readiness — "she hath killed her beasts, she hath mingled her wine, she hath also furnished (or prepared) her table"; and the invite is characterised by openness and broad daylight "she hath sent forth her maidens, she crieth upon the highest places of the city." And the apostle Paul could say, We "have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God" (2Co 4:2). Further, there is no disguise as to the character of the persons invited. For, whilst making them welcome, she lets them plainly know how she regards them "Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither; as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled." How blessed it is to adopt God's estimate of ourselves and to accept of His bounty! In marked contrast to all this are the ways and allurements of the world (Pro 7:1-27) — "The stranger which flattereth with her tongue," whose call is given "near the corner," "in the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night"; for she is "subtle of heart" — no security about it. The most she can allege is, "the goodman is not at home." But, "when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape" (1Th 5:3). In 1Co 2:9 Paul quotes from Isa 64:1-12, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." But he adds, "God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit." And these things are connected with Jesus Christ, once crucified, but now glorified. And the apostle's testimony was not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, for he felt that what was entrusted to him was God's testimony. So he goes on to say, "We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained (or, predetermined) before the ages for our glory." What a mine of boasting we have in our Lord Jesus, a mine which "the princes of this world" [or, age] have rejected, for "had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." But of the blessings connected with the eternal state (see Rev 21:1-7) we read, "He that overcometh shall inherit these (not "all," as A.V.) things, and I will be his God and he shall be my son." The character of the overcomer is given us in 1Jn 5:4-5, "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is

the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God." If we think only of the millennial state, is it nothing to be part of "the bride, the Lamb's wife"? to have one's share in "the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, and her light like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal"? Nothing to be part of that city of which it is written, "I saw no temple therein, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it, and the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof"?

Truly lovely is the preparation of the king's marriage feast for his son, as given in Mat 22:1-46. In contemplating it we must be careful to note the leading thought of the Holy Spirit, which is, "a certain king made a marriage feast for his son" (ver. 2). The king "the King of the ages, incorruptible, invisible, only God" (1Ti 1:17); the son — Christ Jesus, who "came into the world to save sinners" (ver. 15). Surely at such a feast all would be of the best; it would be below such royalty to provide anything inferior, or that could even be matched. And the guests who receive and accept the invitation have an entertainment as far transcending that provided by Ahasuerus (Est 1:1-8) as the light unveiled by cloud of the noonday sun is above the glow worm's gleam. But the idea of the whole is not how the guests will fare, or even be arrayed, but what is worthy for Him whose "portion shall be with the great" and His "spoil with the strong" — for whose glory the feast was instituted, and who is in all things to have the pre-eminence. Let us seize this thought, and then everything else in a certain sense will cease to be wonderful. Yes, tell them, "Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen, and [my] fatlings are killed, and all things are ready. Come unto the marriage feast." Who, in view of such extensive preparations, could think of taking with him provisions or garments of his own? To do so would be a direct insult to the king's "all things." And who could keep away in the light of such a gracious injunction — "As many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage feast"? So these wise servants "gathered together all, as many as they found, both bad and good, and the wedding was furnished with guests." Who then could doubt his welcome? for in the world mankind is either "good" or "bad." But God's word concludes all in unbelief — there is none "good," for all have sinned, and come short of His glory (Rom 3:9-23). Do you think of the furniture that becomes the abode of royalty, and on such an occasion? Do you ponder the "white, green, and blue hangings, fastened with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rings and pillars of marble; the beds of gold and silver upon a pavement of red, and blue, and white, and black marble" (Est 1:6)? Are these, or even superior, glories the furniture that attracts the attention of the king? No. The wedding was "furnished" with guests. And every guest there spoke to the King's eye and heart of the unexampled sufferings of His Son, of the depths of the lowliness to which He went, of the grace that led Him who knew no sin to be made sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2Co 5:21). Yes; those marriage robes — how they must have brought it all before the King's heart. And if before the feast began they sang, "Unto him that loveth us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and made us kings and priests unto his God and Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen," would they not be in perfect unison with the King's own thoughts and wishes (see John 5:23)? Needless is it to remark in the vernacular of today, that a man "not having a wedding garment" was indeed not in it. But there is one other preparation we may allude to before closing. And it is a scene not of glories, blessed as they are in their place, but of the heart's affections. Before the Lord Jesus left this world He spake thus, "In my Father's house are many mansions (or abodes); if it were not so I would have told

you; I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also" (John 14:2-3). Comment fails us here. The One who comes to fetch us, the prepared place to which He will bring us after first receiving us to Himself, and the being with Him in His Father's house (and that for ever), are enough to fill to overflowing any heart that has tasted His love. W.N.T.

S. Even as He was"

Even as He was"

Mark 4:35 — 5: 1. The words which form the heading of this paper occur in no other. Gospel, and are very expressive. "The same day, when the even was come, He saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side." But what a day it had been of unwearied devotedness to His Father's will and of love to man! The many healed of plagues, the unclean spirits cast out, the appointment of twelve to be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons, the regathering of the multitude so that they could not so much as eat bread together, with the parables He taught, were all a witness of His continued service toward God and men. Do we wonder, then, that in the little ship, in which His disciples were with Him, He should be asleep on a pillow? a hard lump of wood, so great a contrast to a sofa appendage! Truly He was Jehovah of Psa 121:4, of whom it is written, "He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep," but He had deigned to become man, and to be the perfectly dependent and obedient One, and as such He could be wearied, as at Sychar's well holy, harmless, separate from sinners as He was, for weariness of body does not flow from sin, even as we read of Adam when innocent, "he slept" (Gen 2:21). But what love on His part to put off sleep till such an opportunity!

Well, now we have the circumstances all before us Himself, "even as He was, the great storm of wind, the waves successful in filling the ship, so that the disciples awake Him. Why should they? Could they possibly perish with Him in any condition on board? Why indeed were they fearful and had no faith? Blessed for us, He is "the same yesterday, today, and for ever," and He has but to arise and rebuke the wind and speak to the sea, "Peace, be still. And the wind ceased and there was a great calm." How magnificently He did it; not a zephyr stir nor any movement of ocean left! "And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this that even the wind and the sea obey him? "

Why, my reader, are you also astonished? He was the Man of Mark 1:41, the same Jesus, who, "moved with compassion, put forth his hand and touched [the leper], and said unto him, I will, be thou clean." Yes, He could dismiss defilement by His touch, but never contract it. He was the Man also of the second chapter, who could in the freest way (for faith is never a purchaser but a receiver of blessing) say to the palsied one before Him, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." We may for once agree in this point with the scribes sitting there — though entirely apart from their spirit — and say, "Who can forgive sins but God only?" for Jesus is "the Christ, who is over all, God blessed for ever, Amen" (Rom 9:5).

How quietly Mark 5:1-43 opens with, "And they came over unto the other side of the sea." Of course they did! How could it be otherwise when He had said, "Let us pass over unto the other side?" Dear fellow believer, as regards ourselves, "Christ also hath once suffered for sins the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God," and to God, as to our souls, we are brought now, and as to our bodies certainly we shall be by and by. Never should we allow anything to weaken

this confidence, for it is wholly a question of what He undertook to do; and "whatsoever God doeth, it shall he for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it" (Ecc 3:14).

Well, if it was thus all right with them when they took Him, "even as He was," what for us now that we know Him as He is? If then all power was His, what as to Him now when He is risen and glorified? Was there not a light from heaven above the noonday brightness of an eastern sun that brought the persecuting Saul to the earth, and a voice in the Hebrew tongue that in the short sentence "Why persecutest thou Me," gives us to know His undying love and interest in His own? Yes, beloved, "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? (Rom 8:34-35). Find the answer, then, in this, "We know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." Meanwhile the "God of all grace who called you unto his eternal glory in Christ, after that ye have suffered a little while, shall himself perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To him be the dominion for ever and ever. Amen" (1Pe 5:11). W.N.T.

S. Evidence of the purchase"

Evidence of the purchase"

Jer 32:11.

"These are ancient things," we may say, for even as far back as the days of Abraham, he whom Jehovah told to "Arise, walk through the land, in the length of it, and in the breadth of it, for I will give it unto thee" (Gen 13:17), was, as to actual possession, a stranger in it, and bought a burying-place therein of "Ephron the Hittite," one of the very nations whom his seed was to dispossess. The purchase-money, four hundred shekels of silver, current money with the merchant, was duly weighed and handed over, and then "the field, and the cave which was in it, and all the trees that were in the field, that were in all the borders round about, were made sure unto Abraham for a possession . . . of a burying-place, by the sons of Heth" (Gen 23:17-20); and there Abraham buried Sarah. How strange a proceeding for "the heir of the world" (Rom 4:13)! Where those title deeds were deposited for safe custody one is unable to say. But we may be sure that the God of Abraham will see to it when He, "who is of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power," comes to take up His earthly rights in connection with His ancient people.

There is another very striking transaction recorded in Jer 32:1-44. To appreciate it we must remember what was recorded of Jerusalem at that time. "Behold the mounts, they are come unto the city to take it; and the city is given into the hands of the Chaldeans that fight against it, because of the sword, and of the famine, and of the pestilence: and what thou hast spoken is come to pass; and behold, thou seest it" (Jer 32:27). Jehovah had said also, "Zedekiah, king of Judah, shall not escape out of the hands of the Chaldeans, but shall surely be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon. . . . And he shall lead Zedekiah to Babylon, and there shall he be till I visit him, saith Jehovah: though ye fight with the Chaldeans, ye shall not prosper" (Jer 32:4-5). The captivity of all the men of might, craftsmen, and smiths, with those strong and apt for war, and the taking of Zedekiah himself and his being carried to Babylon, are all fully set out for us in 2Ki 24:1-20; 2Ki 25:1-30.

Now it was in view of all this, when naturally one would think the purchase of land in such a place to be out of the question, that Jeremiah was instructed of Jehovah to buy the field in Anathoth, of Hanameel his cousin, and this he carried out, weighing for its purchase seventeen shekels of silver. As he himself adds, "I subscribed the evidence and sealed it, and took witnesses, and weighed him the money in the balances." We may observe that the payment is twice recorded; and it is not without interest to note the particularity displayed in connection with the title deeds. "So I took the evidence of the purchase, both that which was sealed according to the law and custom, and that which was open: and I gave the evidence of the purchase unto Baruch the son of Neriah, the son of Maaseiah, in the sight of Hanameel mine uncle's [son], and in the presence of the witnesses that subscribed the book of the purchase, before all the Jews that sat in the court of the prison. And I charged Baruch before them, saying, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of

Israel, Take these evidences, this evidence of the purchase, both which is sealed, and this evidence which is open, and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may continue many days" (Jer 32:11-14). Here we are told of the custodian of the title deeds, and how they were to be preserved. We have met with "an earthen vessel" before. We have it in Lev 14:1-57 in connection with the cleansing of the leper — "the priest shall command that one of the birds be killed in an earthen vessel over running water" (Lev 14:5). May not this point to Him who coming into the world saith, "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me" (Heb 10:5), with all that it involved? "We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb 10:10), and by the Holy Spirit (2Th 2:13, 1Pe 1:2), the efficacious power — the "running water," we may say. For of that same Blessed One it is written, in connection with His precious blood, "Who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God" (Heb 9:14). He through His own death and blood-shedding has made good the title deeds of far more than Jeremiah's field. We wonder not, therefore, that Jehovah said, "Houses and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land," awful though the condition of the people was, as verses 29 to 35 fully bring out. But what cannot grace do where it reigns "through righteousness even through Jesus Christ our Lord"? The people, alas, did worse than even Jeremiah describes. For when the "Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds," came unto His own, "his own received him not." Instead of reverencing "my beloved Son," when they saw Him "they reasoned among themselves saying, This is the heir: come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours. So they cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him" (Luk 20:13-15). But His title deeds, His evidence of purchase, yea, of redemption, could not be in better custody. And so we read in Rev 5:1, "I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the back side, sealed with seven seals" — the evidence, surely, both sealed and opened, which He is worthy to come and take out of the right hand of Him that sat on the throne, and He alone. For He it was, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, who had prevailed to open the book. And to Him, as the Lamb that had been slain, shall we render the ascription of praise: "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever," and — we too "fall down and worship." W.N.T.

S. Grace and Peace.

Grace and Peace. The above is the well known formula employed by the apostles in addressing the churches; and thank God, a reality both for them and the individuals who in truth compose the same. Grace is the most precious theme to a soul that has known its need, and drank into its inexhaustible supply; and "the God of all grace," is the One such a heart delights to adore, although it is esteemed mad for doing so, even as we find Paul saying (2Co 5:13), "whether we be beside ourselves it is to God" indicating that he clearly knew what it was to be ecstatic in the divine presence. And no wonder! for the grace shown to him had been "exceeding abundant, with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (1Ti 1:14). As in Ezekiel's vision (Eze 46:1-24), the waters are first to the ankles, then to the knees, and to the loins; and then "waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over." It is blessed to know that grace gives such as us, who in ourselves could have no standing there, a perfect foothold in the presence of our God — "this grace wherein we stand" (Rom 5:2): that our knees smite not one another as Belshazzar's did when he beheld the handwriting on the wall, but however feeble are confirmed, and our loins are strengthened for His service; for we know our Master not to be austere, but so gracious that, blunder as alas! we do, we may cast ourselves anew upon the impassable waters of His love, and know that they will bear us up, and thus find a positive joy in exercising ourselves therein. We know the effect it had upon the apostle Paul in relieving him from all self-reliance, as he learnt the meaning of those words "My grace is sufficient for thee." But with such a subject as grace, one experiences a difficulty in being systematic; for it has neither beginning nor end. It belongs to Him who is the Alpha and the Omega, who gives freely, and we may well say, as we meditate upon it, in our Lord's own words in Psa 40:5, "Many, O Jehovah my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to usward; they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee; if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered." It is what we have all received, "and grace for grace"; it is what, along with truth, "came by Jesus Christ." It is what we have, "being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." What we have received "abundance of," even to "reigning in life" by our blessed Lord, in contradistinction to the condemnation that was towards us through Adam's offence; it is what much more abounds now and reigns where sin has abounded; it is what Paul so valued that he would not frustrate it by any righteousness that might seem to come by law, but which he knew could not, for then Christ had died in vain; it is that wherein to "the praise of the glory" of which He has taken us into favour in the Beloved; and "according to the riches" of which "we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of trespasses." It is that, too, by which we are saved, through faith; such faith also being God's gift, so "that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding, or surpassing, riches of His grace in His kindness to us by Christ Jesus." Truly we may say He "hath given us good hope through grace," seeing that "being justified by His grace we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life"; and meanwhile for our comfort in the wilderness, Peter reminds us (1Pe 5:10) "the God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered awhile shall (R.V.) make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." Well may we add, without exhausting the subject, "To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen "

Peace! Who can sufficiently estimate its blessing? But "what hast thou to do with peace"? said Jehu to the wicked Joram's messenger. And as a preface to his letter, and apparently as something remarkable, Artaxerxes writes, "Peace, and at such a time." We had nothing to do with it once, for "the way of peace they have not known" (Rom 3:17), nor was it to be wondered at when we were in unbelief, for "there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." But since God has sent the word "preaching peace by Jesus Christ, He is Lord of all" (Acts 10:36); and Christ "came and preached peace to you which were afar off and to them that were nigh" (Eph 2:17); we, as belonging to the former Gentile class know "even at such time" when all is in confusion, uncertainty, and unrest, that we are entitled to it. Why? "For He made peace through the blood of His cross," and left it with His own, saying before He went there, "Peace I leave with you", confirming it also on the morning of His resurrection, saying, "Peace be unto you; and when He had so said He showed unto them His hands and His side," — that precious side from which "forthwith there came blood and water." The value of that blood God has answered to, for He is now "the God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant," and so, believing the infinite mercy which delivered Him for our offences and raised Him again for our justification, "we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." As regards our individual path, the way may seem dreary, but He has given us the peace He had who trod the pathway before us; "My peace I give unto you." And as regards our collective attitude, there may be much to try, but let us not be cast down; these words remain blessedly true.

"The Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way" (2Th 3:16); and "let the peace of Christ (R.V.) rule in your hearts, to which also ye are called in one body, and be ye thankful" (Col 3:15). May we therefore keep His word, for "He will speak peace unto His people and to His saints, but let them not turn again to folly," even their own thoughts and ways! W.N.T.

S. Is There Not a Cause?

Is There Not a Cause?

(1Sa 17:1-58)

David was introduced to Saul, the first king of Israel, as "a man that could play well upon the harp." Saul was seeking such an one. David was a musician, and much more. Indeed the description given of him by one of Saul's servants seems to have been almost prophetic, viewed in the light of his subsequent history. May we not say that the Spirit of God was prompting that servant to the utterance of thoughts beyond his own?

"But the Spirit of Jehovah departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from Jehovah troubled him. And Saul's servants said unto him, Behold now, an evil spirit from God troubleth thee. Let our lord now command thy servants, which are before thee, to seek out a man, a cunning player on the harp; and it shall come to pass, when the evil spirit from God is upon thee, that he shall play with his hand, and thou shalt be well. And Saul said unto his servants, Provide me now a man that can play well, and bring him to me. Then answered one of the servants, and said, Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, that is cunning in playing, and a mighty man of valour, and a man of war, and prudent in speech, and a comely person, and Jehovah is with him. Wherefore Saul sent messengers unto Jesse, and said, Send me David thy son, which is with the sheep. And Jesse took an ass laden with bread, and a bottle of wine, and a kid, and sent them by David his son unto Saul. And David came to Saul, and stood before him: and he loved him greatly; and he became his armour-bearer. And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, Let David, I pray thee, stand before me; for he hath found favour in my sight. And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took the harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him" (1Sa 16:14-23). The desire of Saul, the rejected king, was not a godly one; he should have sought in his own conduct for the cause of his trouble. But in his own sad condition we have only too truly a prophetic picture of the nation in the last days of the kingdom. Judgment had already set in. Divided, disorganised, and ruined, they nevertheless turned a deaf ear to all God's solemn warnings by the prophets. Especially was this the case when, the first captivity having taken place, God continued to plead with His people by His servant Ezekiel. Would He not have been to them, as He said, "as a little sanctuary" amongst the heathen whose captives they were? But they refused to take it seriously, or to allow their consciences to be exercised by what God had to say to them.

"Also, thou son of man, the children of thy people still are talking against thee by the walls and in the doors of the houses, and speak one to another, every one to his brother, saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from Jehovah. And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument; for they hear thy words, but they do them not. And when this cometh to

pass (lo, it will come), then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them (Eze 33:30-33).

Judah in the days of Ezekiel, and Saul in the days of Samuel, were alike in this they refused to own their sin before God and to bow to His righteous judgment. Had they done so, Saul, as well as Judah, would have been healed. God had other work for His servant David than playing upon the harp to relieve the king's malady, as later He had a serious and solemn message for the Judan captives by Ezekiel the prophet. The necessary preparation of David for the kingdom comes before us in 1Sa 17:1-58. Saul had had no such disciplinary exercises, and he showed himself to be morally unsuited for the position to which he had been exalted. David must be a prepared servant — a vessel sanctified, and meet for the Master's use. No doubt those who knew of the anointing of David to be king over Israel would regard the circumstance of the shepherd boy's introduction to the royal palace as most providential. For would it not in the most favourable manner accustom him to the responsibilities and surroundings of royalty? So the adoption of Moses by Pharaoh's daughter, with his subsequent education in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, might have been considered a providential preparation for the part he was to take in relation to Israel. But God's direct preparation of Moses was not carried on in Pharaoh's palace, but in the backside of the desert. So it is written of him, "By faith he forsook Egypt." And now, we see how God had similarly prepared David, whom He Himself had chosen for the kingdom not in the palace of Saul, but in the wilderness, and the valley of Elah. It is not that preparation is unnecessary, but that the preparation must be divine if we are to have divine suitability. Though David's ministry and music might be used of God to the relief of Saul and (it may be) to his own profit also, yet it did not advance things at all. David leaves Saul's house and is forgotten by those whom he had benefited. He went back simply and naturally enough to keep his father's sheep. There had been a false start, and so there must needs be a beginning afresh. Not that blame attaches to David in this matter. But we are given to see the worthlessness of Saul's character, and the incompatibility of human co-operation with divine purpose. It was particularly important that from the very beginning David should owe nothing to the reigning monarch, for God had rejected Saul; and the two houses must be kept distinct and separate.

We find, then (chap. 17), that God begins with David by calling him from the comparatively humble occupation of a tender of sheep into the very midst of Israel's difficulties that He might see how he regarded them and in what way they would affect him. "Now the Philistines gathered together their armies to battle, and were gathered together at Shochoh, which belongeth to Judah, and were pitched between Shochoh and Azekah, in Ephes-dammin. And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered together, and pitched in the valley of Elah, and set the battle in array against the Philistines. And the Philistines stood on the mountain on the one side, and Israel stood on the mountain on the other side; and there was a valley between them. And there went out a champion out of the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath, of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span. And he had a helmet of brass upon his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail; and the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of brass. And he had greaves of brass upon his legs, and a target of brass between his shoulders. And the staff of his spear was like a weaver's beam; and his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels of iron: and one bearing a shield went before him. And he stood and cried unto the armies of Israel, and said unto them, Why are ye come out to set your battle in array? am not I a Philistine, and ye servants to Saul? choose you a man for you, and let him come down to me. If he be able to fight with me, and to kill me, then will we be your

servants; but if I prevail against him, and kill him, then shall ye be our servants, and serve us. And the Philistine said, I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together. When Saul and all Israel heard those words of the Philistine, they were dismayed, and greatly afraid" (1Sa 17:1-11). The incompetence and helplessness of Saul is made manifest — personally and officially. As king, he should have been the one to take up the challenge of Goliath. Faith in God would have more than compensated for the physical inequality, of which he was painfully conscious; for faith is the only safe principle on which to act. The reasoning of nature is always at fault, but faith has a line of reasoning all its own (Rom 8:31-39), and David is the one to employ it here. Let us trace his way. In the first place, we have to discern and test the motives by which we are governed. Are they according to God, or for the gratification of self? Is my object Christ's glory or my own? In what way does David come upon the scene? Was it not in obedience to his father, and in love to his brethren? As far as we know, he was entirely in ignorance of the state of affairs as between Israel and the Philistines, except, of course, that there was war. Could we have more excellent natural motives than these? Filial obedience and brotherly love are surely calculated to comfort the heart and to strengthen for action. Yet it may be that even these excellencies may arouse jealousies and even unjust accusations against their possessor. A keen sense of injustice rendered me may prompt me to wash my hands of the particular business, and so, by relinquishment, fail in one's duty. Or, if vindicating oneself from a false charge, we need to guard against conduct in oneself that may be equally reprehensible, only in another form. May we not say that Paul himself — apostle as he was on a memorable occasion, in his resentment of injustice, exposed himself to the just rebuke of a bystander, from which God would surely have preserved His servant had he been more watchful? How different the lowly Jesus, when He was reviled! But only One is perfect (John 18:22; Acts 23:3).

1909 339 "And David spake to the men that stood by him, saying, What shall be done to the man that killeth this Philistine, and taketh away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God? And the people answered him after this manner, saying, So shall it be done to the man that killeth him. And Eliab, his eldest brother, heard when he spake unto the men; and Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, Why camest thou down hither? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thy heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle. And David said, What have I now done? Is there not a cause" (1Sa 17:26-29)? Not only was David blessed and strengthened of God for the service rendered to Israel that day, but through grace he was preserved in a spirit which was altogether excellent. He does not resent the imputation of his elder brother; but conscious of the integrity of his motives, he leaves his character and himself in the hands of God for their due manifestation in God's good time. His strength here, as subsequently in the kingdom, lay in the acknowledgment that Israel was the one nation God had chosen and redeemed for Himself. So, to him, it was not merely the Israelites who had been insulted and defied, but the "armies of the living God." And this was faith. Saul, on the other hand, spoke of them after the manner of their enemies Let "the Hebrews" hear. David takes up the position that God cannot deny Himself. He had pledged His word to the establishment and protection of Israel as a nation, and faith manifested itself in David in the very face of the enemy by the open and public acknowledgment of this truth. God's immutability, and faithfulness to His sure word of promise (Heb 6:16-20), has ever been the resting-place for faith amidst all the failures of the creature, "for wherein is he to be accounted of." So it was in the darkest hours of Israel's

history in the past, and so will it justify divine interference in the future. This latter we may see in such scriptures, amongst others, as Zec 3:1-10; Zec 13:1-9; Zec 14:1-21. No doubt the portion of scripture we are considering is typical of that final catastrophe of the enemy and decisive victory for God's people when the antitype of David shall suddenly and unexpectedly appear, to the surprise and discomfiture of their enemies, but for the relief of those who have waited for Him. Faith will, alas! be at a very low ebb ("when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"), yet there will be a waiting people (prefigured here by Jonathan) who will say, "Lo this is our God, we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation." In an evil day faith finds its encouragement in all that God is, and will manifest Himself to be, for His people. This then was David's answer to the senseless taunt of Eliab. Was there not indeed a ground of action? Israel insulted, the God of Israel defied, the enemy triumphant and blasphemous! Well might David query, "Is there not a cause? Saul was not equal to such an emergency as this. David takes up the challenge in a simple way, but in the reality of faith, having a clear perception and grasp of divine principles such as evidently impressed even the heart of Saul, who found it easier, no doubt, to bless and encourage another than to go himself. God was making way for His own king; He was introducing him to the nation, but in such a way that faith alone could own him and appreciate his motives. A most severe test had yet to be applied. The man of God will find himself more cast upon God and shut up to Him when the world is generous and patronising than when he has to encounter its opposition. It is the friendship of the world we have to fear, and its offers of assistance may often have to be refused. "The friendship of the world is enmity with God" (Jas 4:4). Faithfulness to Christ will strengthen the soul against its open attack, and will preserve from its ensnaring influence. The confidence of the man of faith is considered extravagant and without foundation in the eyes of the worldly wise. It is beautiful to see the youthful David, a vessel in course of preparation for the honourable position he was destined to fill, brushing aside one difficulty after another — the contempt of his brethren, the abject terror of Israel, the arrogant boast of his contemptuous opponent, the fear and unbelief of Saul — finally clearing himself of the last vestige of fleshly confidence and standing on the only safe ground of faith.

"And Saul armed David with his armour, and he put an helmet of brass upon his head; also he armed him with a coat of mail. And David girded his sword upon his armour, and he assayed to go; for he had not proved it. And David said unto Saul, I cannot go with these; for I have not proved them. And David put them off him (1Sa 17:38-39). "Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of Jehovah of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will Jehovah deliver thee into mine hand, and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that Jehovah saveth not with sword and spear, for the battle is Jehovah's, and he will give you into our hands" (1Sa 17:45-47).

There is no doubt that the pretended kindness of Saul concealed a real and dangerous snare of the enemy, for God's purpose had been openly declared (1Sa 13:14; 1Sa 15:28). It was within the knowledge of Satan, who sought in every possible way to corrupt the man after God's own heart, so as to bring about, if possible, his downfall, or at least to compromise him at the very commencement by committing him to human principles, expediency, and worldly methods. Saul

could then have said, It was my armour and my sword that was superior to the armour and the sword of the Philistine. But God watched over His servant who trusted Him, and overruled all, so that a blessed experience of the faithfulness and power of God was stored up in David's soul to find expression at the right moment in worship of God, in and for Israel's instruction and edification. This we see in David's song of praise (2Sa 22:1-51). "As for God, his way is perfect; the word of Jehovah is tried; he is a buckler to all them that trust in him. For who is God, save Jehovah? and who is a rock, save our God? God is my strength and power, and he maketh my way perfect. He maketh my feet like hinds' feet, and setteth me upon my high places. He teacheth my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms. Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation; and thy gentleness hath made me great. Thou hast enlarged my steps under me; so that my feet did not slip. I have pursued my enemies, and destroyed them: and turned not again until I had consumed them; and I have consumed them, and wounded them, that they could not arise: yea, they are fallen under my feet. For thou hast girded me with strength to battle; them that rose up against me hast thou subdued under me" (2Sa 22:31-40). The lesson for us is singularly appropriate in the present day, when man and his doings occupy such a large place, and faith and obedience are so little thought of. It was not that David despised any reasonable precaution or instrumentality even the sword of Goliath had its use, "There is none like that; give it me." But the best service we can render to God and His people, when His word has lost its value in the eyes of professors, and is in danger of losing its authority over the hearts of His own, is to contend earnestly (as Jude writes) for the faith once for all delivered to the saints. By a self-sufficient world, intoxicated with its brilliant discoveries and its imaginary knowledge, the word of God may be treated as antiquated and obsolete, but our wisdom and duty is to maintain its divine authority and sufficiency both for faith and practice, whatever may be the claims of anything new either in doctrine or methods of service. "Every scripture is given by inspiration of God ["who cannot lie"], and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work." Here is the divine competency of God's word for every good work. And "if a man therefore purge himself from these [vessels to dishonour], he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, meet for the Master's use, prepared unto every good work" (2Ti 3:16-17; 2Ti 2:21). David could say with regard to Saul's resources, "I cannot go with these; for I have not proved them." All that is worth doing is what God approves and commends to us in His word; it is proved also in the experience of all Christ's faithful servants. May we then "hold fast that which is good; abiding in the things which we have learned, and of which we have been fully persuaded, knowing of whom we have learned them. For evil men and impostors shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." "We are of God," says the apostle; "he that knoweth God, heareth us [the apostles]; he that is not of God heareth us not. By this we know the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error." G.S.B.

S. Labour"

Labour" In Pro 14:23, we read: "In all labour there is profit; but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury." Even as regards prayer, in which we are exhorted to continue and to watch therein with thanksgiving (Col 4:2) there is such a thing as "labouring fervently," as Epaphras did, of whom the apostle writes as "a servant of Christ," whose heart's desire was that his Colossian brethren might stand perfect and complete in all the will of God (Col 4:12). It will be no talk of the lips, if, instead of thinking of our prayers as something meritorious, we remember the One we are privileged to address, the Name we are authorised to plead, and who has said, "All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." What an immense comfort is this! To doubt would be to dishonour Him who "spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all," for "how shall He not with Him also, freely give us all things." Paul to the Corinthians speaks of himself as "in labours more abundant," and to the Colossians, in whom was Christ, the hope of glory, he says "Whom we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ, whereunto I also labour, striving according to His working which worketh in me mightily" (Col 1:27-29). Let us remember that the reward in the coming day will not be according to the success which the servant may here have seemed to have achieved, but "every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour." In Rom 16:12, amongst the salutations, Tryphena and Tryphosa are alluded to as, "who labour in the Lord," and "the beloved Persis who laboured much in the Lord," and in Php 4:3, these "women who laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and other my fellow labourers, whose names are in the book of life," which blessed fact as to themselves had not rendered them careless about those who have no hope. The apostle "laboured and suffered reproach because he had his trust in the living God who is the Saviour (or Preserver) of all men, specially of those who believe," a ground of confidence infinitely to be preferred to uncertain riches "Your work of faith and labour of love "are remembered along with "the patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of God and our Father" (1Th 1:3). "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love which ye have showed toward His Name, in that ye have ministered to the saints and do minister" (Heb 6:10). Truly labour in the Lord has many a sphere for its activities.

Besides the foregoing there is a labour we are apt to neglect, namely, a labour to enter into that rest "which remaineth for the people of God." Doubtless we shall better do so if "we labour that whether present or absent we may be accepted of Him," or as another has translated it, "Wherefore also we are zealous, whether present or absent, to be agreeable to Him" (2Co 5:8). If we wish to serve well our God and Father and the Lord Jesus, such service has, of course, its cares, but these are included in the "casting all your care" upon Him. It has its secrets, as John 2:9 shows: "the servants who drew the water knew," and in result it should lead to increased communion. Much more might be written on this subject, but let this suffice: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1Co 15:38). W.N.T.

S. Laish

Laish Jdg 17:1-13; Jdg 18:1-31.

One can hardly read the account given us in these chapters, of the movements of the tribe of Dan and of the conduct of the man of mount Ephraim, Micah, without being arrested by the way in which the Holy Spirit describes the *whole proceedings. In the book of Judges we read twice, "In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Jdg 17:6; Jdg 21:25), and again, twice, "In those days there was no king in Israel" (Jdg 18:1; Jdg 19:1). Were not these days to be deplored? And are not the events here recorded written for our learning, that we may be saved from motives of lawlessness? For "lawlessness" is sin, and, "sin is lawlessness" (1Jn 3:4) — this being, what grammarians call, a reciprocal proposition, both clauses being convertible. What can one think of a man stealing eleven hundred shekels of silver from his mother, and she cursing about it? but when the son owns to the theft, the mother, instead of rebuking him for what he had done, unconcernedly saying, "Blessed be thou of Jehovah, my son." Had she forgotten, "Thou shalt not take the name of Jehovah thy God in vain" (Exo 20:7)? Blessing her boy for thieving! And then again, on his restoring the money to his mother, she further says, "I had wholly dedicated the silver unto Jehovah, from my hand, for my son, to make a graven image and a molten image," in direct contravention of the command, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth." Can we in any way imagine God accepting aught offered in contravention of His will and word? Yet here we have His name on the lip, and things dedicated to Him for uses which are an abomination in His eyes.

Further, the mother takes two hundred of the silver shekels, and gives "them to the founder, who made thereof a graven image, and a molten image; and they were in the house of Micah. And the man Micah had an house of gods, and made an ephod, and teraphim" quite a pantheon in its way — "and consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest." In process of time, however, "a young man out of Bethlehem-judah, of the family of Judah, who was a Levite," comes to Micah's house. In Jdg 18:30 we read, "Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh, he and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan," etc., but if we follow the Revisers (who, supported by Jewish authority, believe the text as we have it here to have been corrupted) we shall read, "Moses," in place of "Manasseh." From this it would appear that Jonathan was Moses' grandson, and if so, it marks the conduct of Jonathan in becoming a priest to such a man as Micah all the more sad and reprehensible, for Moses was no idolater, even if Aaron his brother fell into the snare and sin of making the golden calf in the wilderness. This Jonathan then, the grandson of Moses, Micah engages to be to him for the yearly salary of ten shekels of silver, a suit of apparel, and victuals — a father and a priest, and he consecrates him, saying, "Now know I that Jehovah will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to my priest."

What is the sequel? The Danites are seeking an inheritance to dwell in, and send from their family five mighty men to spy out the land, who come to mount Ephraim, to Micah's house. They

recognise the voice of the young man the Levite, and learn all about his relations with Micah, and end by requesting him to ask counsel of God, "that we may know whether our way which we go shall be prosperous." It is not recorded whether he did ask counsel, but that he said unto them, "Go in peace; before Jehovah is your way wherein ye go." The five men come back and tell the Danites about the people of Laish, and their habits; six hundred girded men go forth to take the place, and on their way they call at the house of Micah. It is instructive to note what they say to their brethren, "Do ye know that there is in these houses an ephod, and teraphim, and a graven image, and a molten image?" — evidently things right in their eyes, and to be desired — "now, therefore, consider what ye have to do." The result of their deliberations was, that despite Micah's remonstrance, they forthwith appropriate all these things, with the young man the Levite, who acquiesces in it all, thinking it better to be a priest unto a family and tribe in Israel than to be so to only one man.

Then they "came unto Laish, unto a people that were at quiet and secure, and they smote them with the edge of the sword, and burnt the city with fire. And there was no deliverer because it was far from Zidon, and they had no business with any man" (Jdg 18:27-28). A similar description is given in ver. 7 of the same chapter. Do we note what we may reverently call the pitying way in which the Holy Spirit describes this transaction? and have we any such compassionate record of the taking of Jericho and Ai, when Jehovah's commandments were being carried out in the destruction of the inhabitants of these two cities?

Note further, "They built a city and dwelt therein, and they called the name of the city Dan, after the name of Dan, their father, who was born unto Israel." Why are we told this? Not indeed because we do not know it well. Are we anywhere else told about the doings of any other of Jacob's offspring in a similar manner? There is then a reason for this remark. And may it not be this that we could hardly have believed (without the Holy Spirit's assertion) that the descendants of one of Israel's sons could have done such things — things "right in their own eyes"? But what may not a believer do when not following the Lord? "He that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins" (2Pe 1:9). Yes, it may even come to that!

How refreshing to turn to Him who could say, "He wakeneth morning by morning. He wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned" (Isa 1:4); again, "Who is blind, but my servant? or deaf, as my messenger that I sent? Who is blind as he that is perfect, and blind as Jehovah's servant" (Isa 42:19)? And, further, speaking of the Rod out of Jesse's stem, of the Branch out of his roots, and the Spirit of Jehovah resting upon Him, it is written, "And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of Jehovah, and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears" (Isa 11:3). We read of the Lord's own words as to His Father, "I do always those things that please him" (John 8:29); also of the Holy Spirit's testimony regarding Jesus, "For even Christ pleased not himself, but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me" (Rom 15:3). And for us it is written, "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12). May we have grace so to follow Him, for His name's sake! Then we shall neither be found doing, nor shall we want to do, what "is right in our own eyes," as if we had neither guide nor authority. We have both the guidance of His Spirit and the authority of His word for both individual and corporate walk and testimony till Christ comes for His own. "Behold I come quickly, hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." "Yet is

he not crowned except he strive lawfully." "So run, that ye may obtain." W.N.T.

S. New Testament Scripture

New Testament Scripture

There is a disposition at the present time to belittle the writings of the apostle Paul on the alleged ground that his teaching is superseded by that of the then surviving apostle John, who lived some thirty years beyond. It was bad enough when some at Corinth said, "I am of Paul, and I of ApoHos, and I of Cephas," but this is infinitely worse; for in their writings, which we have, they were divinely and equally inspired, and preference is therefore out of place. The Lord Jesus specially prayed for the apostles. "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. While I was with them in the world I kept them in thy name" (John 17:11-12). And further on, He adds, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word" (John 20:1-31). "Their word" then should be of all importance to all those who have, through grace, been given to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ through their testimony whether that testimony be of an apostle appointed by the Lord when on earth (Luk 6:13), or of an apostle commissioned from on high by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead" (Gal 1:1).

Now we find in 1Co 14:37 the apostle Paul thus writes: "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord." And remark here that it is not what "we," but what "I" write, and further, it is written, "The word of the Lord endureth for ever" (1Pe 1:25). Let us turn now to the apostle John, and hear what he has to say. "WE are of God: he that knoweth God, heareth US; he that is not of God heareth not US. Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error" (1Jn 4:6). We may note the use here of the plural pronoun, in contrast with the singular as in the case of St. Paul, so that his testimony goes along with, and not apart from, any of the others.

Come we now to the apostle of the circumcision, and listen to St. Peter, when writing his Second Epistle. "This now a second epistle, beloved, I am writing unto you, in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance, that ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Saviour" (2Pe 3:1-2). Then, as if the Scripture foresaw the slight in these last times to be put upon St. Paul, he adds, in the same chapter, "And account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation — even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you — as also in all (not, some only) his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction" (2Pe 3:15-16). We thus see how that Peter, at any rate, gives to the writings of Paul the same reverence as he did to the "other Scriptures."

Jude, too, exhorts in his epistle, brief but all-important as it is, "But ye, beloved, remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Jude 1:13). Not one only, nor some, but all. In Eph 2:1-22 we are told that we are built upon the foundation of "the apostles and prophets," Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone (Eph 2:20). This brings

in the writings not only of apostles, but of prophets (i.e. of the New Testament, compare Acts 13:1), such as, for instance, Mark and Luke of the Evangelists, who, though not apostles, were nevertheless "prophets," whilst Matthew and John were "apostles." Yet are the truths of Mark and Luke equally binding on us as those of Matthew and John.

Paul, in view of his departure, and of the entrance of "grievous wolves," who would come in not sparing the flock, warned the Ephesian elders thus: "And now I commend you 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" (Acts 20:32). How blessed to be thus commended to what always abides! We have no sufficiency in ourselves, and we need both God and His word, and this is vouchsafed. He is the eternal "I am," and the word of our God shall stand "for ever" (Isa 40:8). So also Peter, equally solicitous for the saints in the prospect of the putting off of this "my tabernacle," desires that what he writes should be had in remembrance. "I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance" (2Pe 1:12-15). How truly we need his writings even as those of John and Paul!

We may therefore, finally, thank God that "all (or every) scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto every good work" (2Ti 3:16-17). If we are obedient to but a part of Scripture we cannot be thus perfected. But may we heed the words of Agar, "Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar" (Pro 30:5-6). W.N.T.

S. Practicalities

Practicalities

There is a danger of being satisfied with what is of the tongue only, and the apostle John warns the whole family of God as to this. "Children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth" (1Jn 3:18). Nor is he alone in this, for St. James asks, "If a brother or sister be naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled: notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful for the body; what doth it profit" (Jas 2:15-16)? Such conduct is only a veiled form of apathy, or Laodiceanism, so utterly distasteful to the Lord. In writing to the young converts at Thessalonica so dear to the heart of the one whom God had used to them — the Apostle speaks of being bound to give thanks always to God for them, and styles them "brethren beloved of the Lord" (2Th 2:13). What a depth there is in these words, recalling John's favourite appellation of himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved"! And then Paul brings out that God had from the beginning chosen them to salvation — the soul now, the body by and by through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth. In no way was it of works, but the gift of God, and God's testimony was believed. He then goes on to show that they had been called by the glad tidings they had received to nothing less than "the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." The Saviour Himself had spoken of it as an accomplished fact in speaking with His Father "the glory which Thou gavest me I have given them" (John 17:22). The apostle then exhorts them to stand fast and "hold the traditions." We are better off than they, as we now have the whole completed word of God to which we may ever refer, but may we not say we need more than they the exhortation to hold fast? Thank God we have equally the abiding Spirit.

He then bursts out into a lovely prayer, "Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself." When you have "our," you have what appeals to the affections. Take one example, "The God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus that great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the everlasting covenant" (Heb 13:20) "and "Himself "is the exquisite addition in Luk 24:1-53. "Jesus Himself drew near and went with them" (ver. 15). "Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you" (ver. 36). Where it is "the Lord Jesus Christ," we have authority, as for instance, 2Th 3:12, "Now them that are such (i.e., unruly) we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work and eat their own bread." Coming back to our verse (2: 16) the apostle adds, "God, even our Father." In "God "we have all power. "My God shall supply all your need." In "our Father," we remember how He spoke when He rose from the dead on that first of the week, putting that relationship first, "My Father and your Father." "Which hath loved us (how deeply, who can tell?) and hath given us (not a passing, but an) everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort (or encourage) your hearts, and establish you in every good work and word "(for such is the order). He then desires their prayers for him "that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified, even as it is with you."

Further, we may observe, practical fellowship in addition to prayer is of great value. Paul speaks of men and also "women who LABOURED with me in the gospel "not merely wishing him God-speed

and it was a woman who had learnt in measure the truth of having the sentence of death in herself, who prayed and said, "Jehovah is a God of knowledge and by him actions are weighed" (1Sa 2:3). Let us ponder this; it is an admirable answer to any of Satan's suggestions, and preserves us from being occupied with what is within. God knew how to weigh the action of Abraham when he offered up Isaac, and Paul could say with a lovely calmness that disposed of all questions as to his preaching, "From henceforth let no man trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus" (Gal. 6: 27). May we have grace to be "doers of the word and not hearers only" (Jas 1:22)" W.N.T.

S. Return unto Me."

Return unto Me."

One particular root of evil against which we need ever to be on our guard shows itself by "an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God" (Heb 3:12). The pathway of restoration is that of a return, not to observances of an outward sort, but to Himself, and nothing short of that. "If thou wilt return, O Israel, saith Jehovah, return unto ME" (Jer 4:1-31). As regards His people, blessed be His Name, our God is satisfied with nothing less than their heart, and this, not in the sense of what they can be to Him, but in what, rather, He can be for them. "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, in that he understandeth, and knoweth me, that I am Jehovah which exercise loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth: for in these things I delight saith Jehovah" (Jer 9:1-26), and we too, as believers, should earnestly seek "that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." May we never forget that our blessing as believers is linked up with the glory of our God and Father, and of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, with the honouring of the Holy Spirit, and subjection to the word of His grace and cannot be divorced! The Scripture is enough to prove this, "the church . . . was edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost was multiplied (Acts 9:31). Though our lot be cast in the perilous times of the last days (so fast closing), it is good for us to know that what is essential abides — the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, in all their varied relationships to us, together with the living and abiding word of His grace, for ever settled in heaven. Departure, however, is so easy, as we know to our cost. The apostle Paul could say, "not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts." Bearing this in mind will make us distrustful of, and give us to judge, ourselves, and this is always well. It will also serve to make us practically meek and lowly — and how healthy for us is this we can see from Isa 29:1-24, "the meek also shall increase their joy in Jehovah."

Further, Jehovah says, "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against ME"; and as concerning Himself, "Israel doth not know, my people cloth not consider." Do we wonder then, such being the case, that He adds, even about the very things He had ordained for them, "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me, saith Jehovah: I am full of burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats, I delight not"; and "Bring no more vain oblations incense, — it is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting"? Coming down to church times, how deeply solemn is the word to Ephesus (notwithstanding all that the grace of the Lord Jesus led Him to commend), "Nevertheless, I have against thee that thou hast left thy first love. Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen; and repent, and do the first works" (Rev 2:1-29)! It was, in His eyes, a tremendous fall. Persisted in, the consequences would be most serious.

Let us ask ourselves the question, beloved, Are we declining in the enjoyment of His love, the love of Him who "loveth us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood," Who "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 wholly and without blemish." "For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it even as Christ the church" (Eph 5:25; Eph 5:29). In view of such faithful and undying love, beloved, if we have wandered in any way, let us, with deep repentance, hie back to Himself; and may we with increasing watchfulness be wary of "the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines" — of everything that would mar for a moment our communion with Him! Jehovah could say to His people of old, "Therefore will Jehovah wait that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted that he may have mercy upon you: for Jehovah is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him" (Isa 30:1-33). Such are some of the ways of Him who is our Father.

Oh! the blessedness of seeking Him! In that wonderful sixty-fifth chapter of Isaiah, Jehovah says, "I am sought of them that ask not for me; I am found of them that sought me not," and adds, "And Sharon shall be a fold of flocks, and the valley of Achor (i.e. the place where Achan the son of Carmi, was buried, who took of the accursed thing, Jos 7:1-26) a place for the herds to lie down in for my people that have sought ME." And again, as showing His willingness to bless such, "It shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear" (verses 1, 10, 24). May then both reader and writer be of those who fear the Lord, and speak often one to another, for in Malachi's days there was such a company, in regard to whom it is said that "Jehovah hearkened, and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared Jehovah and that thought upon HIS NAME"! Resulting blessing shall be the portion of all such, to His glory and praise. W.N.T.

S. Social Intercourse.

Social Intercourse.

Exo 18:1-12; Luk 24:13-53. The meeting of Moses and his father-in-law, recorded in Exo 18:1-27. is all the more interesting and of moment to the believer now, inasmuch as it was an event which took place before Israel had so foolishly placed themselves under law; and is a fine exposition of the injunction in 1Pe 3:8, "love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous."*

[*The true reading as attested by the best MSS., and adopted by all the Editors from Lachmann down to the Revisers, is here not "courteous" but "lowly minded." Ed.]

If "The man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's servants, and in the sight of the people," his greatness could in no way have been diminished by the magnificent manner in which Jehovah had used him to carry the people through the Red Sea; and it was no wonder that his father-in-law, when they were journeying in the wilderness, should seek to come to him, and bring also Moses' wife and two sons, as he had heard of all that God had done for Moses, and for Israel His people. That Moses, encamped at the mount of God, greater than any prophet, "faithful in all God's house with whom Jehovah would speak mouth to mouth, apparently, and not in dark speeches" — should not remain in his tent, but go out to meet one so much inferior to him, though his father-in-law, and do obeisance too, was lovely; and that he should kiss Jethro and they ask each other of their welfare, and then come to rest in the tent, is a wilderness scene that the heart can linger over.

It is to be noted that in speaking to Jethro, Moses leaves out all mention of himself (an example that we may covet to follow); and using the name of relationship in which God stood to Israel, simply "told his father-in-law all that Jehovah had done unto Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, and all the travail that had come upon them by the way, and how Jehovah delivered them," Blessed it is for believers now, when what their God and Father has wrought in His beloved Son, and the mercy that delivered from so great a death and does deliver, form the topic of their conversation and their praise when they meet. It is beautiful to observe that Moses' narrative caused his father-in-law to rejoice and bless Jehovah, and brought him really into the spirit of the song recorded in Exo 15:1-27 where Moses and Israel had sung, "Who is like unto Thee, O Jehovah, among the gods? Who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" for Jethro adds, "Now I know that Jehovah is greater than all gods: for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly He was above them." This was followed by his taking a burnt offering and sacrifices for God: and the party, increased by the coming of Aaron and all the elders of Israel, did "eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before God." Beloved, it is well for us "to use hospitality one to another without grudging" (1Pe 4:9); and to remember that, for us, God links His glory even with a social meal; "whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (Rom. 10: 31).

One does not dwell on Jethro's tender solicitude for his son-in-law, but merely note that he speaks of him and all this people going to "their place in peace." In Luk 24:1-53 we have the two distressed ones journeying to Emmaus, joined by the One of whom they had been speaking, and Who led out their hearts to tell Him what had been the subject of their converse, whilst in faithful love He had to reprove them; nevertheless, "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures, the things concerning Himself." No wonder that reaching the place whither they went (it was only a village), they should constrain Him to stay with them, though He had made as though He would have gone further. And that He should yield was like Himself; but oh, the grace that would deign to partake of their meal! for "He took bread, and blessed, and brake, and gave to them," and (what a moment of joy, but all too short!) "their eyes were opened, and they knew Him, and He vanished out of their sight." The good tidings they could not keep to themselves; and so, returning forthwith to Jerusalem, they communicate to the eleven and to the others there with them the glad news now confirmed by the presence of the Lord Himself, who shows them His hands and His feet; and so brings Calvary before them, and the victory He has obtained. But their joy is too much for them; their faith is not in exercise, and He will partake of a meal in order to bring Himself before them; for in response to His enquiry "Have ye here any meat?" "they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and of an honeycomb; and He took it, and did eat before them." After this, in due course, He instructs and commissions them, "Ye are witnesses of these things." Then, while at Bethany, in the act of blessing them, He is "parted from them and carried up into heaven." To adopt the words of Jethro, we may say, He went to His place; and "this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11), and shall take us there, too. Are we looking for Him, and, meanwhile, do we heed the exhortation, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares" (Heb 13:2)? W.N.T.

S. The Altar and the Hebrew Servant

The Altar and the Hebrew Servant Exo 20:24-26; Exo 21:1-6. That the awful terrors connected with the giving of the law should be immediately followed by two enactments which beautifully and significantly bring before us the person and work of the Lord Jesus, and God's grace by Him, is like an evening rainbow after the thunder, lightning, and storm of a summer's day.

"An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen: in all places where I record my name I will come unto thee and bless thee" (Exo 20:24). That the law could never bring, for "cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But the altar here prescribed with its offerings gave a means of approach to God in which the comer would be blest. Anything that would savour of man — his tool on stones, or steps by which he might carry himself up — would only work pollution, and discover man's absolute nakedness or want of resource. In Psa 84:1-12 we have the utterance of a heart that delights in the tabernacles of Jehovah of hosts, that would be, not in spirit only but, in heart and body there, which is what we are to understand from the words, "My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." And he is jealous of the birds that find a resting place in such courts. But what must be the ground on which I can be there? The answer is, "Thine altars, O Jehovah of hosts, my King and my God" (verse 3). Well will it be for Israel in that day when they seek no longer to a law that can only condemn! and their petition shall be, "Behold, O God, our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed" (ver. 9). One can understand how a brief day spent in thy courts is better than a thousand" passed elsewhere. Do we long, beloved, to be in the place where, as He says, "I record my name"? "For where two or three are gathered together to my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Mat 18:20), or, are our hearts cold about it? Oh! that we might gather up somewhat of the Psalmist's warmth in this matter! For "we have an altar whereof they have no right to eat that serve the tabernacle" and a righteous title of entrance within the veil is ours because "Jesus also that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate." Yes, called as we are to go forth to Him without the camp, bearing His reproach, we have, on the other hand, boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus, who so suffered for us. May we be stirred up, therefore, having a great priest over the house of God, to draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water" (Heb 10:22). "By him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, confessing (margin) to his name" (Heb 13:15). In the Hebrew servant of Exo 21:1-36, how blessedly we see Him who is "My servant, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth" (Isa 42:1-25)! Assuredly, He is the one who distinctly said, "I love my master," for is not this (we say it reverently) the Master's account of Him, "Who took upon him the form of a servant," who "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross"? He, by that death, glorified God (and how fitting that God should always have the first place!), and met, too, the need of the wife and the children, for whose sake He would not go out free. It is good to trace this Hebrew servant who did "not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street," who never asserted His rights, yet He is the One

whom Jehovah has given, not only to be "a covenant of the people," but "for a light to the Gentiles," "to open the blind eyes, to bring the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house." He alone can do it, and will do it unaided. And surely the seal is set to that in this that follows: "I am Jehovah; that is my name, and my glory will I not give to another."

View again the servant "in whom I will be glorified" in Isa 49:1-26. Apparently, as regards Jacob and Israel, He has spent His strength for nought and in vain, but "though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of Jehovah." Truly He is. For "God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 9-11). Thank God for this, and for what Isaiah adds, "It is a light thing that thou shouldst 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" (Isa 49:6). And so the Perfect Servant's commission, when He had died and risen again, was, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15-16). And how fitting that He, "Jesus Christ the Son of God" (Mark 1:1), this wondrous Servant, should have it recorded of Him in the concluding chapter of this Gospel, "So then, after the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God!" And our hearts would have it so indeed, for He is worthy. W.N.T.

S. The Perfume"

The Perfume"

Exo 30:34-38.

It seems worthy of note that this perfume consists of three sweet spices with pure frankincense — four component parts — whereas the holy anointing oil, just before alluded to, was made up of four principal spices and of oil olive, or five ingredients. In the case of the perfume, each ingredient was to be of a like weight, though that weight seems purposely not to be stated; but in the anointing oil, the weight of each compound is given and varies. The perfume brings the excellencies of Christ for God very specially before us. The ingredients, represented by the figure four, set forth completeness on earth, and are generally divided into three (reminding us of the Trinity) and one. The four Gospels may serve as an instance, three leading up to the rejection of our adorable Lord, and one, that of St. John, commencing with it.

It is said that stacte (nataph) signifies "to distil"; and that it was "distilled myrrh." Onycha (shechaleth) is understood to be the cover of a shell fish, like the purple, found in the spikenard lakes of India, and giving a sweet odour; for the shell fishes there feed upon spikenard. And galbanum (chelbenah), derived from a root signifying "fat," was useful as an ingredient to make the perfume retain its fragrance. Taken together then, do not these compounds speak to us of the depths of suffering, divine love made the Lord Jesus to endure?

Think of Gethsemane and of the "distilled myrrh" — His being overwhelmed" as in the inspired heading of Psa 102:1-28, and yet as the One who had made the fragrant, yet perishable, shell fish, for "they shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed (Psa 102:26)! And is there no preserving galbanum in this that follows: "But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end" (ver. 27)? Beloved, may we never forget the perfume was to be beaten "very small" (Exo 30:35)! The marginal reading of the 35th verse of our chapter seems preferable to "tempered together," and reads "salted." Pure and holy, it also was. Do we wonder that in Exo 30:36 it is written, "It shall be unto you most holy"? In Exo 30:25 we read of the oil as "an holy anointing oil," and in Exo 30:32 it is said of it, "It is holy, and it shall be holy unto you"; and, anointed with it, the tabernacle, the ark of the testimony, the table and its vessels, the candlestick and its vessels, the altars of incense and of burnt offering, with the vessels, the laver and its foot — all are sanctified, "that they may be most holy; whatsoever toucheth them shall be holy." But of the perfume itself it is recorded, "it shall be unto you most holy." Is not the reason for this to be found here, "Ye shall not make to yourselves according to the composition thereof: it shall be unto thee holy for Jehovah"? As one has written, "Here it seems to be not so much what we have by Christ, but the fragrance in Christ Himself, of which God alone is the adequate judge, and which rises up before Him in all its perfection. How blessed for us! It is for us, but it is only in Him before God."

We can appreciate to the full the five component parts of the holy anointing oil, which was not to be poured on man's flesh, but only on Aaron and his sons. Still, as they were taken from among men, five was the figure used, as is the case when man is in question, and it was excellent for "ordinances of divine service, and the worldly sanctuary" (Heb 9:1). And blessed are these seven (mystical perfection) ordinances, given us in verses 26 to 28, and lovely in their place as types. Nevertheless, as we contemplate what is represented by the perfume, one can but feel that here, as elsewhere, there is "the glory that excelleth" (2Co 3:10). W.N.T.

S. Thy right hand"

"Thy right hand" May we not recognise in these three words of Exo 15:6, a latent reference to our Lord Jesus Christ? Here we have the magnificent victory over the enemies of Israel, when Jehovah saved His people out of the hand of the Egyptians. "Thy right hand, O Jehovah, is become glorious in power; Thy right hand, O Israel, hath dashed in pieces the enemy." Infinitely more glorious was the victory of our Lord Jesus over all the powers of evil at the cross, where "having spoiled the principalities and the powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it." And not only this, but "when he ascended up on high he led captivity captive," so that now, our enemies vanquished, His people are for ever free.

Yet was the victory obtained through weakness. "He was crucified through weakness," and it is written, "It pleased Jehovah to bruise him. He hath put [him] to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see [his] seed, he shall prolong [his] days, and the pleasure of Jehovah shall prosper in his hand." That pleasure could only have been effected by Jesus (the name of humiliation and exaltation), and in such a way. For the objects of eternal love, whatever their class and whatever their election whether to heavenly or to earthly glory and to whatsoever sphere in either, were lost, ruined, yea, dead in trespasses and sins. And grace could only take them up in virtue of His sufferings who tasted death for every man (or, thing), and bearing the judgment of sin, "that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, Jesus suffered without the gate" (Heb 13:12). But that pleasure prospers now, for "as concerning that he raised him from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David" (Acts 13:34). These sure mercies (to quote from the same chapter) are all found on the "word of God" (verses 5, 7, 44, 46), and in connection with "the doctrine" or "word of the Lord" (verses 12, 48, 49). They provide the believer with "a Saviour" (ver. 23), "salvation" (26), "forgiveness of sins" (38), "justification" (39), "everlasting life" (46), all flowing from "the grace of God" (43).

Salvation of the soul (though now enjoyed, and its fruition awaited in connection with the body) does not, however, even in the wilderness, preserve the believer from conflict. "Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt, how he met thee by the way and smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary" (Deu 25:17-18). So, many a believer, in weakness of body, has felt the cowardly assault of the enemy and has rejoiced in the intercession of One whose arms need no holding-up, and "who is able to save them to the uttermost (or, completely) that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Moreover, what a triumph! "The hand upon the throne of Jehovah will have war with Amalek from generation to generation" (Exo 17:16). Yes, "the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly" (Rom 16:20). And it will be by our Lord Jesus Christ, whose grace the apostle prays to be with us. In Dan 5:1-31 we have an awful instance, not merely of pride (as in Nebuchadnezzar's case, for he had been proud enough, yet through grace he had learnt his lesson), but of impiety and of deepest dye. Those golden and silver vessels taken out of the temple in Jerusalem, in one way or another, pointed to the adorable person of the Lord Jesus. And that profane lords and wives, etc., should drink wine out of them to

praise the gods of gold and silver, was to Daniel intolerable. "In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote" (Dan 5:5). No wonder "that the joints of his loins were loosed and his knees smote one against another!" Christ in judgment is an awful reality. Nor need we be surprised that Daniel in his bearing towards Belshazzar was altogether different to what he was to Nebuchadnezzar. As to the latter, he could be astonished, and his thoughts trouble him. Addressing him as "My lord," he desires that "the dream be to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies," and could give counsel "if it may be a lengthening of thy trap. quility." To Belshazzar he shows not the same respect, "Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another. Jehovah's Christ was attacked, and the indignation just. Do we know how to make these differences? Has the incident no voice to us? "Then was the part of the hand sent from him (i.e. the Lord of heaven): and this writing was written. And this is the writing that was written, Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin. This is the interpretation of the thing: Mene, God hath numbered thy kingdom and finished it. Tekel, Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. Peres, Thy kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians" (Dan 5:24-28). Contrast this with "the hand" — the Lord Himself — in the three ways here spoken of. First, Peter in his Second Epistle, exhorts (2Pe 1:11), "For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" — not, one that can be "numbered and finished." Second, of the Lord Jesus it is recorded, "Who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" (Heb 7:26). And He could say, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (John 17:4) — not, weighed in the balances and found wanting." Third, as regards the earthly kingdom of our Lord Jesus, we read, "Then [cometh] the end, when he delivers tip the kingdom to the God and Father: when he shall put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet" (1Co 15:24-25). No earthly monarch has ever done the one or the other, for they have been called away, either by violent or natural death, and have never reigned to the exclusion of others. His kingdom will never be divided, nor given to others. In 1Ki 18:44-46, we have, in connection with "the hand," the triumph of grace consequent on the acceptance of Elijah's burnt sacrifice. "And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand. And he said, Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare [thy chariot] and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not. And it came to pass in the mean while that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain." "There shall be showers of blessing" (Eze 34:26) even towards such an one as that. Are you surprised at this? Remember, when it is a question of making a marriage for the king's son, "both bad and good" are gathered together, and it is only the wedding garment that avails there (Mat 22:1-13). Well for us, then, that whilst saying with Job (Job 9:32), "He is not a man as I [am, that] I should answer him [and] we should come together in judgment," we can blessedly add (in contrast to his next words in ver. 33) that there is a "daysman betwixt us that can lay his hand upon us both." "For [there is] one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all to he testified in due time" (1Ti 2:5-6). W.N.T.

S. Till He come"

Till He come"

Surely if any words find an echo in the believer's heart the above are they. And if there is any centre on earth to which with peculiar significance they attach it is surely when, mindful of the Lord's own words, Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed," we gather to His name on the first of the week, to remember Himself, and to announce His death "till He come." Has not that death brought us all we have? Was it not at the cost of that body given for us, and by God's will once offered, that we are sanctified — here shown in the loaf? And was it not also that He might sanctify the people with His own blood — shown in the cup, He suffered without the gate? Can we forget those sufferings on Calvary? Yet, alas! we may forget. We need the table of remembrance to call back our hearts to Him, and His devoted love to us, until the time come when we shall need it no more, when He shall come to meet us in the air and we shall be for ever with the Lord. May it then be emphatically true for us, "As often as ye eat the bread and drink the cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come" (1Co 11:26). At other times He says to us, "Occupy (or trade) till I come" (Luk 19:12-13), for we are His servants. It is only in Luke that He is spoken of as "a certain nobleman." Such, indeed, He was and is. When here, He "went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with Him." Yet "not this man, but Barabbas," was the object of the popular choice. Do you ask His life? It is not to be found in the earliest list of peers that we have, even amongst the dukes of Esau as given in Gen 35:1-29. That would be far below His dignity, as St. James says in Jas 2:11, "Our Lord Jesus Christ of glory," and St. Paul in 1Co 2:8, "the Lord of glory." Well, "He has gone to receive for Himself a kingdom and to return." It is now our business here to serve Him, as in that coming day His servants shall, "and they shall see His face, and His name shall be in their foreheads" (Rev 22:3-4). As the One who has gone to the Father's house of many abodes (which in no way conflicts with His having taken His seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high as the purger of our sins), He says, "I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am there ye may be also." Is this "blessed hope" (not to be confounded with His appearing, which, too, we love) to be stigmatised a selfish one? If so, may we in like spirit with the spouse of Song of Solomon 7:10, who could say, "I am my beloved's, and his desire is towards me" — may we desire, in face of all animadversion, to become even more selfish than ever in this respect, that is, to court His approval and delight in us. For do we not "love Him because He first loved us"? Then, truly, we shall desire earnestly that "upon Himself shall His crown flourish" (Psalm 122: 18). Yet will not the wish to be with Him predominate? And would He not have it so? "He that hath the bride is the Bridegroom." In view of His coming for us, how blessed is the assurance given in Rev 3:10, "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience," not merely "my word" (as in John 14:23, R.V., where "word" comprehends His words as a whole), but "the word of my patience." He is patiently waiting for those concerning whom He says, "I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee." How blessed, then, is His assurance that "I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world to try them that dwell upon the earth." Connected

with these words of cheer, what gravity, nevertheless, in the promise and exhortation, "Behold I come quickly! hold fast that which thou hast that me man take thy crown." The crown may be taken. Or do we despise the warning? For these words are the words of the Lord Jesus Himself, though given to us by the apostle John, who in his second epistle (ver. 8) admonishes us in connection with the glory of Christ's person, "Look to yourselves that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward." Well, "He that shall come will come and will not tarry" (Heb 10:37). May we, then (as "the just"), live by faith and not draw back, lest it should have to be said of us, "My soul does not take pleasure in him."

We have been meditating on the Lord's coming for us. Let us, for a while, consider it as regards His coming to Israel.

Jacob's dying charge to his sons is particularly blessed as to Judah "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a law-giver from between his feet until Shiloh come; and unto Him shall the gathering of the peoples be" (Gen 49:10). Now, if Shiloh be taken to mean "sent," or "peace," as some aver it may be, how comforting it is to know that He who at His first advent came unto His own and they received Him not, shall, when He comes back, "receive the obedience of the peoples unto him" (R.V.)!

And, again, "Out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion, and shall destroy him that remaineth of the city" (Num 24:19). "For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet" (1Co 15:25). Cain's city was built after the murder of his brother, and when he "went out from the presence of Jehovah." But destruction shall fall on "him that remaineth of the city." But there is a city — not of man — which Abraham, the friend of God, looked for, even "the city which hath the foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb 11:10).

Until He come! "And thou, profane, wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity [shall have] an end. Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Remove the diadem and take off the crown." What now is shall be no more. The word is, "I will overturn, overturn, overturn it; and it (or, this also) shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it" (Eze 21:25-27).

Further, He shall repay recompence. So shall they fear the name of Jehovah from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the spirit of Jehovah shall raise up a standard against him. And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith Jehovah" (Isa 59:19-20). Yes. "They shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know Jehovah, for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more" (Heb 8:11-12). But for ourselves, we wind up with the promise thrice given in the last chapter of the Revelation, and a threefold cord is not easily broken, "Behold, I come quickly; blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book" (Rev 22:7). And, "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me to give every man according as his work shall be" (Rev 22:12). Finally, "He which testifieth these things saith (not, behold), Surely I come quickly" (Rev 22:20). May our hearts respond, "Amen, come, Lord Jesus"! Meanwhile, may His grace be "with all the saints," and be enjoyed and counted on by them, for His name's sake! W.N.T.

S. Undervalued Saints

Undervalued Saints

It is well to have our judgment respecting the Lord's own, as indeed in regard to everything else, formed and governed by the word of God. In Mary of Magdala we have one whose character has been foully aspersed, as though she had been an impure woman. Scripture does not so speak of her, nor should we, though men may call institutions founded for poor fallen ones after her name. What is recorded is, "out of whom he had cast seven devils" (Mark 16:9). It may be noticed moreover that, in the three instances of this immoral class given us in the Gospels, the Lord does not disclose their names. His grace had met the woman of Samaria (John 4:1-54), as also the sinner of the city who found her way into Simon's house (Luk 7:1-50); and to the one brought into the temple (John 8:1-59) He does not indeed speak peace, nor would He then condemn, but as the true light that searches the conscience of all He says to her, "Go, and sin no more." Mary of Magdala had in a special way been under the power of demons. We were all at one time the willing slaves of the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. But Mary showed her appreciation of the mercy that had been extended to her by being one of those "who also when he was in Galilee followed him and ministered unto him" (Mark 15:44); and although she was not as well instructed as her namesake of Bethany, or she would not have brought sweet spices to the sepulchre to anoint Him, yet she showed the depth of her devotion to His adorable person by remaining there even when Peter and John "went away again unto their own home." She is a fitting type of the church, knowing the Lord when it was yet dark, and commissioned by Him to deliver that wondrous message to the disciples, "I ascend unto my Father and your Father, unto my God and your God." In Canticles (where we have the language of days yet to come of the Jewish people as Christ's earthly bride) it is twice said, "My undefiled" (Song of Solomon 5:2; Song of Solomon 6:9). Could we imagine therefore the Lord using Mary of Magdala as He did if it had been otherwise with her?

"Quartus the brother" (Rom 16:23) is also sometimes looked down upon because nothing special is said of him, as is of others, in a chapter which so exquisitely discriminates amidst so many lovely traits. But is it nothing to be "the brother Quartus"? Are we not exhorted to "let brotherly love continue" (Heb 13:1)? to be "kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love" (Rom 12:10)? Was it not a commendation of the Thessalonians that Paul writes "as touching brotherly love ye have no need that I write unto you, for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another" (1Th 4:9)? And whilst brotherly kindness is to be added to by charity or love, itself is to be added to "godliness" (2Pe 1:7). Yes, we are to "love as brethren" (1Pe 3:8). Let us therefore esteem Quartus "the" brother. In Obadiah also (1Ki 18:1-46) we have one who we are told was governor of Ahab's house, a king who did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him! As if, however, to guard our minds against entertaining unworthy thoughts about the one who was over Ahab's house, because he was servant to such a master, the Holy Spirit is careful to tell us, "Now Obadiah feared Jehovah GREATLY." We may well, therefore, pause before we pass judgment on him, for "the fear of Jehovah is the beginning of

wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do His commandments" (Psa 111:10). And the first act recorded of Obadiah is, "For it was so, when Jezebel cut off the prophets of Jehovah, that Obadiah took a hundred prophets and hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water." A noble deed, which might have cost him his life, had it come to the knowledge of Jezebel, Ahab's wife, for she, we are told, stirred Ahab up to work the wickedness which he wrought. Though the world may and does hate the ways of a godly man, yet it knows in such an one there is what can be relied on for truth and uprightness. No wonder, then, that when Ahab wants to know how the land is faring under the word spoken by Elijah, "there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word," if he goes himself through one half of the land unto all fountains of water, and unto all brooks, he chooses Obadiah to go through the other half on the important mission. When unexpectedly Obadiah meets Elijah, he does him obeisance; and when commissioned by the prophet to tell Ahab, "Behold, Elijah," he pleads, not without reason, that to deliver such a message might endanger his life. For he knew the murderous search that Ahab had made for Elijah in every nation and kingdom, and he feared that when he had delivered the message the Spirit of Jehovah might carry the prophet away. It is, then, as the occasion seemed to demand it, that he himself tells Elijah what the Holy Spirit also records of him in the narrative. Was it wrong in Obadiah to wish not to throw away his life needlessly? Did not the Lord Jesus say to His disciples, "When they shall persecute you in this city, flee ye to another" (Mat 10:23)? Again, let us not forget that when assured by Elijah that he would surely show himself to Ahab that day, Obadiah was obedient, and forthwith "went to meet Ahab, and told him." It were better to have Obadiah's care for God's people and his obedience to His word through the prophet, than rashly to cavil at the servant. Let us admire the grace that could maintain the man in such a king's palace, even as it did Daniel when he was made "ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon," or, in other words, prime minister to that, at one time, most idolatrous first monarch of world-empire, Nebuchadnezzar.

Turning again to the New Testament, we forbear to say much on Erastus, the chamberlain or treasurer of the city with which his name is linked. There have been godly treasurers, as the one serving under Queen Candace; and he and Erastus are not to be belittled in view of the word, "Let every man wherein he is called there abide with God" (1Co 7:24). If he be the same Erastus as is spoken of in Acts 19:22 as ministering to Paul, and as abiding at Corinth (2Ti 4:20), we may thank God for such a saint, bearing in mind that "not many mighty, not many noble are called"; and that, as to honour, we should take the lead as regards one another, not in expecting, but in paying, it according to Rom 12:10. Where the circumstances preclude this abiding "with God," then indeed, as Christ's bondmen, we should seek disentanglement from what prevents our having "always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men" (Acts 24:16). We are called to glorify God in our body. Further, as Christians, partakers of a "heavenly calling," we have, for us, the contrast in 1Co 4:8-16 to Psa 45:16, where the future earthly people of God are in honour when the King's throne is established in Zion, and the arrows are sharp in the heart of His enemies whereby the peoples fall under Him. Then, it is judgment (Psa 45:3-6), the glory and majesty of the Mighty One riding prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness. Now, it is grace, not judgment; the Lord Jesus on high, not yet reigning. When He reigns, we too shall reign, for we are His joint heirs. Meanwhile, we are called to be followers of Paul — sufferers with and for Christ; as the apostle John could say, "Your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ." "If we endure, we shall also reign with him" (2Ti 2:8-13; Rev 1:9).

W.N.T.

S. Who are we?"

Who are we?"

This, with a special emphasis on the "who," is a question sometimes raised by persons who dislike the isolation of a separate path, which the Lord's claims impose on such as would walk in obedience to His holy word; and to avoid which it is pretended they are laying claim to a greater sanctity than others who are not treading the same narrow pathway. My fellow believer, I would beseech you earnestly to brush aside this question and substitute for it Paul's questions in the Acts (Acts 22:8-10), "Who art Thou, Lord? and "What shall I do, Lord" as infinitely more profitable than a self occupation which would lead to a denial of His rights, either individually, or in association, and of our duty in relation thereto. As to "who are we?" Well, we "are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours" (1Co 1:2). Nothing can be more inclusive for every true believer, for all time, and everywhere, now and until they are called to meet the Lord in the air; and remember, as Peter says in his First Epistle, we are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ" (1Pe 1:2). This then is the character of our obedience, not mere law servitude, but His who could say "I delight to do thy will, O my God."

Dark and trying times can furnish no excuse Godward for the absence of such obedience, but on the contrary are the very seasons which call for its display, and this we shall find ever to have been the case, whether we turn for an illustration to the Old or to the New Testament. In the Old, we read in Deuteronomy (Deu 25:17-19), "Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way when ye were come forth out of Egypt; how he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, [even] all [that were] feeble behind thee, when thou [roast] faint and weary; and he feared not God. Therefore it shall be when Jehovah thy God hath given thee rest from all thine enemies round about, in the land which Jehovah thy God giveth thee [for] an inheritance to possess it, [that] thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven: thou shalt not forget." Now when Saul is inducted into the kingdom, Samuel, speaking in the name of Jehovah of hosts, says to him, "Go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass" (1Sa 15:3). What follows? "Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all [that was] good, and would not utterly destroy them; but everything [that was] vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly" (1Sa 15:9). Who are we? Saul might have said; and he did say to Samuel, "the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto Jehovah thy God." As king, of course, he ought not to have allowed it, and hence he is told, "Jehovah hath rejected thee from being king over Israel." "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1Sa 15:22). Has this no voice to us, beloved? Was not the elect lady warned against an evil association thus, "Look to yourselves that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward;" and "if there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed; for he that

biddeth him God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds" (2Jn 1:8-11). How weak such a question, "who are we?" appears, in view of loss so personal, and a fellowship of evil so profound!

It is refreshing, however, to turn to the dark days of Esther, when it might have been pleaded that they wore not in the land, but only poor captives under a foreign despot, and in an alien clime; and that consequently the injunction of the last few verses of Deuteronomy no longer applied! We read however (Est 3:1-2), "After these things did king Ahasuerus promote Haman the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, and advanced him, and set his seat above all the princes that [were] with him. And all the king's servants that [were] in the king's gate bowed and revered Haman: for the king had so commanded concerning him: but Mordecai bowed not, nor did [him] reverence." And this exile who would carry out God's word, as far as he was able, and would not compromise His truth by a bow of the head, was enabled through his faithfulness to execute His word altogether, and to hang Haman and his ten sons. Thus according to his times was Mordecai's blessing. He did not stop to ask "who are we?" but knowing there was a vast difference between a true child of Abraham however poor, and a descendant of the royal house of Amalek however exalted, he acted in a simple-hearted faith that was pleasing to God.

Come we now to the New Testament, and we find the apostle Paul speaking of himself as "the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God" (1Co 15:9). And again, "who am less than the least of all saints" (Eph 3:8). Further, in 2Co 12:11 he says, "though I be nothing." "Who are we?" indeed! He evidently did not think much of himself! But did this true lowliness, which we may seek to cultivate, hinder him from standing up for the rights of the Lord in relation to the gospel? Look at the same man in Gal 1:1-24 and you will find no want of firmness there, nor of true love either, which ever seeks the good of its object. "To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you." And again, "But of those who seemed to be somewhat, whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me; God accepteth no man's person." How truly refreshing! God brought in; the instrument forgotten; save to carry out this truth; and of others justly valued as "seeming to be pillars," one, the chief "apostle of the circumcision," afterwards withstood to the face, "because he was to be blamed!" The Lord give us grace then (apart from all questions of "who are we?"), since the days are so bad, "to earnestly contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints," and which, despite all length of time, has not lost its virtue; and "building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life (Jude 1:3; Jude 1:20-21); We are told to "buy the truth and sell it not" (Pro 23:23). W.N.T.

S. Who gave Himself"

Who gave Himself"

These precious words occur six times in the New Testament, and we propose to look at them in the following order, viz.:

(1) In the Epistle to Timothy where God is so fully revealed as a Saviour God, we read, "God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who GAVE HIMSELF a ransom for all, to he testified in due time (1Ti 2:3-6). Could there be a finer declaration of mercy than is here given — Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one God, shelving here their willing mind for salvation to every creature? He, the Word made flesh, "having found eternal redemption," said before His ascension to the right hand of the majesty on high, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). Man must be brought to the knowledge of the truth, and of his own utterly lost and ruined state. And God does indeed grant repentance unto life, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, the one Mediator, who needs no virgin Mary, no saint, nor angel to turn His heart toward men. He is the "one mediator . . . who gave himself a ransom for all." His one sacrifice needs no repetition; for "this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God." The testimony since that day has gone, and is going, forth. Are my brethren and sisters everywhere praying for it, and are we every one seeking to adorn in deportment and dress the doctrine of our Saviour God in all things? Surely, it is not only that we know His willing mind to save us, but we can also say, "Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose (who can thwart it?) and grace (who can measure it?), which were given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."

(2) In Galatians — "Who GAVE HIMSELF for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil age according to the will of our God and Father" (Gal 1:4). Yes, not only for sins of worldly lusts, but for sins of religiousness, whatever would belittle Christ Jesus our Lord, and the infinite value of His grace in which we have been called. For if we are His, we have tasted that the Lord is gracious; and God forbid that we should allow anything that adds to the sufficiency of "Jesus Christ, who hath been evidently set forth crucified amongst" us. May we rejoice that what we were has been judged in His cross, and may we have constantly before our souls the grace of our Saviour God, so that we may say, as said the apostle indignantly, "I do not frustrate the grace of God; for if righteousness come by law, then Christ is dead in vain" (Gal 2:21)!

(3) But it is our privilege to live not as men in the flesh. How then? We are blessedly entitled, each one, to say, "I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and GAVE HIMSELF for me" (Gal 2:20). Oh, what a satisfying object for our hearts, the loving Lord, who still loves us each so devotedly, having washed us from our sins in His own blood (Rev 1:5)! It is quite true that He has loved us, but this verse, correctly read, brings before us His continuous love. "Unto him that loveth us, and has washed us." May we everywhere and in everything find our all in Him, and he strong in

His grace!

(4) The Lord Jesus (Mat 16:18) spoke of the church, to Peter, as "My church." We know it is also "the church of the living God" (1Ti 3:15); "the church of God which he has purchased with the blood of his own" (Acts 20:28). Of Christ, however, it is written in Ephesians, "Christ also loved us, and GAVE HIMSELF for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour" (Eph 5:2). How affecting is this, "and gave himself"! How much it cost Him! Hence, the believer is accepted, or taken into favour, in the Beloved. What motives for a holy walk, and for all that the apostle enjoins upon us in the rest of that chapter!

(5) Again, we have (Eph 5:25) "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 glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." That He might present it to Himself, not to another! Does it not thrill us? It ought so to do. It should make us, in view of such love, very subject to Him now, and to His word; walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, who is rightly jealous of His glory. May we, too, be so, and value nought else!

(6) Lastly, in Paul's Epistle to Titus, how touching an appeal! We there read (Tit 1:1-2) of "the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness; in hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie, promised before the world began." This hope of eternal life is quite consistent with the believer's possession of it now. It is God's gift to him. But there were those who, professing to know God, in works denied Him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate" (ver. 16). We are looking, however, for "that blessed hope, and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who GAVE HIMSELF for us, that he might redeem from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works" (Tit 2:13-14). The blessed Lord Jesus is no inferior person of the Godhead. Whilst, as the Saviour, He gave Himself for us, it was not to win us to good works only, but to Himself; and in making us zealous of good, it is "to Himself." May we then indeed, whilst thus engaged, see to it that we seek the honour that cometh, not from man but, from the only God, that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ our Lord! Aught else is valueless. When the work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope, in our Lord Jesus Christ, are in the sight of our God and Father, all is well, and as it should be; man's praise is not sought for. May it be so with us for His name's sake, until He come! W.N.T.

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