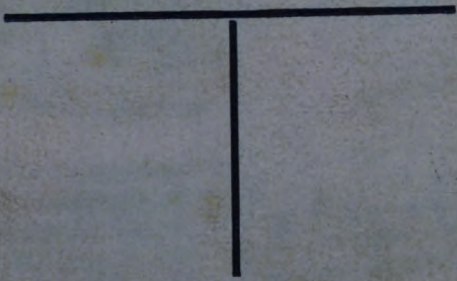

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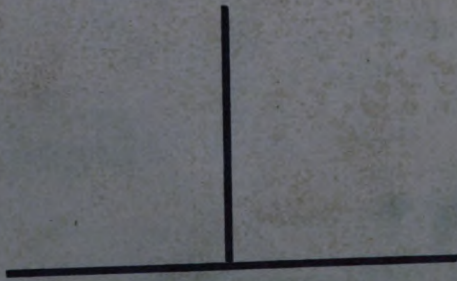
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THE GRACE AND GLORY OF GOD



CHOICE MEDITATIONS ON
THE GOSPEL OF THE GLORY
OF THE BLESSED GOD



ANDREW MILLER

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THE GOSPEL OF THE GLORY
OF THE BLESSED GOD

BY

ANDREW MILLER

Author of "The Song of Solomon," "The Beatitudes," etc.



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PREFACE.

MANY years have passed away since some of the following incidents from real life were witnessed and recorded. But, though great changes have taken place amongst the actors in those scenes, the moral condition of the sinner, the grace of God, and the blood of the Lamb, remain unchanged. The cross of Christ is the standing witness of what man's heart is towards God. Jew and Gentile, priest and people, king and subject, were gathered around that cross, and united with Satan, in crucifying the Lord of life and glory.

But in place of this crowning act of man's wickedness shutting the door of heaven against the rebellious race, grace opens it wider than ever. The blood of the cross became the righteous ground in the boundless love of God for the richer display of His grace. Every covenant promise and blessing of the long-privileged Jew was now forfeited for ever; every mouth was closed, and the whole world became guilty before God—guilty of the death of His beloved Son. What was now to be done? If man's guilt is to be measured and estimated by the cross of Christ, what

must the judgment be ? It was no longer a question of law-breaking merely, but of the murder of the sinless One. Thus stood all mankind without one solitary claim on the compassion of God ; but mercy, as at the threshing-floor of Arnon the Jebusite, "*rejoiced against judgment.*" "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound—that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." Romans v. 20, 21.

This is the gospel of the grace of God—the good news that *grace reigns*. Sovereign grace, no doubt, has always been God's ground of blessing for the sinner, through the foreseen sacrifice of Calvary ; but its full, unhindered, unmeasured outflow, awaited the death and resurrection of His beloved Son. All partition walls were then broken down ; all barriers removed. The cross was thus the great crisis in the world's history, and the moral centre of all the ways of God. His relationships with man were all changed from this time. The long period of man's probation closed in the cross. He was now declared to be a lost sinner, guilty of the blood of Jesus, condemned already, and shut up to grace or judgment.

This gives a peculiar solemnity to the preaching of

the gospel ; the issues of life and death, heaven and hell, are involved in its proclamation. "For we are unto God," says the apostle, "a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish. To the one we are the savour of death unto death ; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things ?" (2 Cor. ii. 15, 16.) This weighty and solemn truth is known to all Christians, and should lead all to watch and care for the salvation of immortal souls. True, all are not evangelists in the sense of being public preachers, but all may evangelize by saying a word for the heart or conscience as the Lord gives opportunity. All that is needed for such a work is love for souls—a love which acts in harmony with the heart of Christ. This is the best gift of the evangelist. Millions of souls will be in heaven at last, and swell the song of the redeemed, who were brought to know the Lord by a word fitly spoken, by personal conversation and prayer. All-important as the ministry of the word to Christians most surely is, it is never a question of life and death.

The Lord has His special workers for the different departments of His service, yet ALL may seek to win souls for Christ. He who said, "Feed my lambs," "Feed my sheep ;" also said, "Go ye into all the

world, and preach the gospel to every creature ;" and "COMPEL them to come in that my house may be filled." And the great apostle, who cared for the flock of Christ as none since have done, could say, "Neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, *to testify the gospel of the grace of God.*" And again, "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel." And, with his latest breath, he exhorts his son Timothy to be a "partaker of the afflictions of the gospel ;" and charges him to "do the work of an evangelist." Acts xx. 24 ; Luke xiv. 23 ; 1 Corinthians ix. 16 ; 2 Timothy i. 8, iv. 5.

"It is an unhealthy symptom," says one, "when the simple gospel is not relished. It shews that the mind is at work, rather than the conscience exercised before God, or the affections engaged with Christ. The Spirit, who leads into all truth, connects everything in His teaching with those great primary truths, the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ." There are not a few, alas, in our own day who are affected with this *unhealthy symptom*. "It is only the gospel," say some, especially those who assume a high tone of spirituality, and who speak slightly of earnest gospel workers.

But whatever may be our individual thoughts of the gospel, we are bound to think of it according to the word of the Lord and for the sake of the unsaved. "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark viii. 36.) Here the blessed Master assures all His servants that one human soul is of more value than the whole material world. And can it be a light thing in His sight, for any of His servants to be indifferent to the means of the eternal well-being of that which is so precious to Him? Did He not commend in the highest way, the zeal of the *four men* who brought, in spite of every difficulty, the palsied man and laid him at His feet? "When he saw *their* faith"—not *his*—"he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven." (Mark ii.) We want such zeal now, in connection with all our preaching-rooms—earnest hearts that would bring in faith poor palsied souls to the place where the Spirit of God is working. Such zeal is sure to meet its bright reward. In no other way can a preacher be so helped and encouraged. He who honoured the faith of the *four* then is unchanged and honours such faith now.

A great responsibility thus rests with all who know the gospel—the glad tidings of salvation to the lost.

To hold back this truth, or in any way to hinder its full and free proclamation, is to rob the sinner of his only hope of heaven, and Christ of His special glory as the Saviour. "It is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." What dignity and glory this gives to the gospel! It is nothing less than the power of God—"the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe; according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places." Such are the marvellous results of the blessed mission of the gospel of the grace of God. It raises all who receive it from the depths of their guilt and misery, and sets them in the presence of God, pardoned and accepted in the Beloved.

This is the gospel which the Lord has committed to His servants; or, as Paul expresses it, "According to the gospel of the glory of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust." (1 Tim. i. 11.) Unspeakable privilege! Solemn responsibility! To be commissioned by the Lord Himself to proclaim that gospel, far and near, which is the highest display of the divine glory in the richest display of sovereign grace to man. Exodus xxxiii. 18, 19.

May He in mercy grant that both reader and writer may be found faithful to this sacred trust. And may He graciously own and bless, in the service of the gospel, the following papers now going forth in a collected form ; and may His name alone have all the praise and the glory.

A. M.

London, 1881.



GOD'S SALVATION AND MAN'S CONDITION.

(HEB. ii. 1-4.)

THERE is no subject of such importance to a sinner as that of salvation—the salvation of his own soul. Compared with this, all others dwindle into utter insignificance. Indeed, were he truly alive to his condition as such, he could think of no other, feel interested in no other, occupy himself with no other, until he knew that this all important one was really settled on a solid basis. He would seek *first* to have this secure, whatever else was left in uncertainty.

The unsaved sinner is like a person on the brink of an awful precipice, up to the very edge of which an enemy has decoyed him, and then, with fiendish subtlety, watching his opportunity to give him the fatal push, that would plunge him headlong down the fearful abyss. Now, what should we think of a person, in such a condition, who could remain unconcerned, if he knew his danger? who, though faithfully warned of his position, and of the enemy who was seeking his destruction, nevertheless, gave no heed to the warning, manifested no desire to flee from the

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danger, or to escape from the hands of his crafty, cruel foe? We should justly conclude that he was an insane person, one who was alike insensible to the dangers of his situation, the kindness of his friend, and the treachery of his enemy.

Well, such, and worse than such, is the condition, and the conduct, of every unpardoned sinner, who *neglects* God's "great salvation"—who despises, or trifles with the faithful warnings, and the affectionate invitations of the gospel. He is on the very brink of the slippery precipice of the lake of fire. He is every moment exposed to the yawning gulf beneath. Another step, and his doom may be sealed for ever—for who can tell what a moment may bring forth? Yet, strange to say, he professes to know his danger, and dares to make light of it. Awful delusion! but he believes the lie of Satan rather than the truth of God, and shuts his eyes to the danger he is in. Such, indeed, is the awful condition, the imminent danger, of every one who *neglects* the "great salvation." He may be kind, loving, gentle, moral, amiable. He may not openly despise or avowedly reject salvation, but in heart he *neglects* it—treats it with carelessness—and the only termination of such a course, if persisted in, is eternal condemnation. "*How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?*" And oh, what immense numbers there are of this class! Many

of the most moral and well conducted amongst men, are living in the utter "neglect" of God's "great salvation." Oh, fearful condition! fatal delusion! And the great enemy of souls and salvation is doing his very utmost to hide from the view of his poor deluded victims, the reality of their position, until it be too late. Moreover, while the sinner's ear continues shut to the voice of God, and his heart closed to the love of God, he is in the hands of Satan, "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." He is led on by him as his prince, and energised by his spirit. He may think he has an independent will of his own, and may boast that he can think and judge for himself, yet all the while he is the merest dupe of Satan, and led "captive by him at his will." 2 Timothy ii. 26.

Some he leads on very gently, getting them to believe that God's time for their conversion is not yet come, and that they must wait His time, He only can change the heart; but, in the meantime, they may take their enjoyment, such as the world offers, in a rational way, honestly confessing they are not Christians yet, so that they are quite consistent. Such, alas! are as surely, though quietly and orderly, on the broad road, as those who are rudely opposed. This is a subtle, but most successful snare of the enemy. It well suits those who have a measure of light, but at the same

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time a real love for the world. Some who have less light, and less conscience, he pushes along more roughly; while others he drives furiously, and their race is soon run. But at whatever speed, and in whatever character they go, his only terminus is the burning lake, where there is weeping, and gnashing of teeth. But, blessed be the God of all grace, so long as the soul is on this side of the lake it is in the place of hope. God is above Satan; He is above all. He keeps the door of mercy wide open, night and day, for the chief of sinners. "And let him that is athirst come: and *whosoever will*, let him take the water of life freely." (Rev. xxii. 17.) The first look of faith to Jesus is immediate deliverance. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." (Is. xlv. 22.) Many have been rescued by the Saviour-God, when on the very brink of hell, and plucked as a brand out of the fire. He only can do it, and we must look to Him. We have many examples recorded in scripture, and set up as finger-posts, pointing out to us the way of escape, and the way of eternal life. Such are the dying thief on the cross, Saul of Tarsus, and the Philippian gaoler. Let us look for a moment at the latter. When, by Satan, driven to the very point of despair, "He drew out his sword and would have killed himself." But the voice of love from "the inner prison," that cried aloud,

"Do thyself no harm, for we are all here," stayed his hand, and rescued him from the snare of the enemy. He was just about to strike the fatal blow, and rush headlong into the gulf of hell. For a moment, he stood quivering on its slippery edge, and Satan eager to push him in ; when, lo, the sweet accents of love and mercy from the heart of God, fell upon his ear, arrested his attention, and turned his thoughts to the voice that spake. Those kind words, "Do thyself no harm," broke the poor gaoler's heart, and he fell a captive, not to the malice of Satan, blessed be God, but to the victorious love of Jesus. The prey was taken from the mighty, and the lawful captive was delivered from the terrible one. (Is. xlix. 24.) "Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved ? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house And he rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." (Acts xvi. 29, 34.) Oh ! that my dear reader may be led to pause, and listen to the voice of love. It is Jesus that speaks, and words of perfect grace fall from His lips. I am come, He says, "to seek and to save that which was lost." Oh, then, turn to Him, ere you take another step. As a lost one turn to Him. "Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." (Ps. ii. 12.) Reader,

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think of this. All who are not in the arms of Jesus, are in the grasp of Satan. There is no middle place.

That which may, alas, be treated with neglect, thought little of, and cared little for, is, nevertheless, God's "great salvation." Hence the solemn warning, appeal, and exhortation in the word before us. "*Therefore* we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; **HOW SHALL WE ESCAPE, IF WE NEGLECT SO GREAT SALVATION?**" These truly solemn words were first spoken to the Hebrews, who had made a profession of Christianity, but were in danger of slipping back into Judaism. Still, they are equally true and applicable to us, and to all who, at any time, or on any ground, are found neglecting this salvation. The subject is one of universal and individual importance, and cannot be overlooked or disregarded by any without incurring God's sore displeasure. "Salvation is of the Lord." (Jonah ii. 9.) It is of His providing and preparing. "Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage." (Matt. xxii. 4.) It is divinely suited to man's condition. It is ready *now*, ready for the accept-

ance of all who will receive it. It is full and free—free to the most unworthy. “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.” Isaiah lv. 1.

It is emphatically called the “great salvation.” And that for several reasons. We will notice some of them.

1. Because of the greatness, and authority of Him by whom it was published. “Which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord.” “God hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.” (Heb. i.) The law was spoken by angels. The Jews “received the law by the disposition of angels.” (Acts vii.) But God hath spoken to us, by His own beloved Son, who is essentially and officially above angels. “For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?” What a messenger! Oh, what importance must be attached to the message which He brings! “THEREFORE we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard.”

2. Because of the greatness and glory of Him by whom it was accomplished. When Christ, “by himself,” had “purged our sins,” He “sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high.” He who, in perfect grace to us, when working out our salvation, went down to “the lowest

parts of the earth," is now in the highest place in heaven. The cross has been exchanged for the throne, and the reed of mockery for the Royal Sceptre of universal dominion. "But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever : a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom." Oh ! what a workman ! What must His work be !

3. Because of the greatness of the guilt and ruin from which it saves. How few know their real condition in the sight of God, though it is written on every page of scripture. Vain man's thoughts of himself, and God's true statement of his condition, are widely different. By nature, he is a child of wrath ; because of unbelief, "condemned already." Yet out of all this sad, sad condition, God's "great salvation," effectually and immediately, delivers. "Giving thanks unto the Father, which *hath* made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Who *hath* delivered us from the power of darkness, and *hath* translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son : in whom we *have* redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." Revelation iii. 17 ; Colossians i. 12-14.

4. Because of the greatness of the blessedness into which it introduces. "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might *bring us to God*." We can never get higher or better than this. To be brought

to God, is to be brought to the knowledge of God—into fellowship with God—full conformity to God—and the eternal enjoyment of God. This is perfect blessedness. “We also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.” Oh! what a place to be brought into! “The midst of the paradise of God.” This is rest—God’s own rest; a higher, a holier, a happier, can never be found. And to feed on Christ there, as “the tree of life.” No “tree of the knowledge of good and evil” there. How different from man’s paradise! “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” 1 Peter iii. 18; Romans v. 11; Revelation ii. 7.

Well may the grand theme of the gospel testimony be called the “great salvation.” Oh, how great—how good—how glorious! It is salvation from the depths of hell to the heights of heaven; from “the wrath to come,” to an “eternal weight of glory.” And is this—is this really—what so many are neglecting? Is this what so many are despising and rejecting? Few will say, in plain terms, that they are doing the latter, but many will confess to the former. Many will acknowledge that they are neglecting the “one thing needful.” Well, my dear reader, be assured that the former comes to the same thing as the latter

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in the end. "How shall we escape if we *neglect* so great salvation?" Escape from eternal woe is utterly impossible, if we persist in neglecting Christ, in whom alone salvation is to be found. "How shall we escape?" is the deeply solemn and unchangeable word of God.

May you be led, my dear reader, to realise its full weight on your heart and conscience *now*. May you be kept from trifling with a matter of such immediate, unspeakable, and eternal importance to your own soul. Can anything compensate for the loss of your precious soul? "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" No amount of pleasure, gain, or gratification, in this world, can ever make up for eternal misery in the world to come. Why, then, oh! why should you be so thoughtless, careless, and negligent about salvation, "which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory"? Oh, receive Him by faith, as your Saviour, and then you receive salvation "with eternal glory." Then you possess, as your present and everlasting portion, "the unsearchable riches of Christ." All is open and free to faith. "Only believe." Salvation is by faith alone—faith in Jesus. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." But oh! believe on Him now. His word can never be truer, His salvation can never be freer, and you can never be more welcome. Why not come now? He is waiting for

you. It will be joy to His loving heart to embrace you. It will be joy to all heaven to receive you. Can you delay? Surely not. Flee to the arms of His mercy—flee at once. To-morrow may be too late. “Behold, *now* is the accepted time; behold, *now* is the day of salvation.”
2 Corinthians vi. 2.

Salvation! oh, thou bleeding Lamb,
To thee the praise belongs:
Salvation shall inspire our hearts,
And dwell upon our tongues.

THE LOWEST STEP IN THE LADDER.

B. Good morning —. I want to ask you a question; you know I like to puzzle you people a bit, who think yourselves so wise on doctrines.

A. Well, let us hear it; you generally favour me with a few when we meet. I know your mind is ill at ease, so that I can understand all about the questions.

B. Now, I know you will be giving me the old story, about not being done with myself, but I want a direct answer to my question. Well, then, I got up this morning at six o'clock, say, and after the usual morning duties, left at eight for business. But now, observe, up to that hour, eight o'clock, suppose I had confessed all my sins

to God, and been forgiven, but at nine o'clock, I drop down dead; what about the sins I committed between eight and nine?

A. Well, if your forgiveness depended on your confession of sin, and asking forgiveness, and you had not done either, of course you would have died in your sins. But if, on the other hand, your forgiveness depends on the efficacy of the blood of Christ, they would have been all forgiven, whether you confessed them or not; on the ground, mark, of God acting in grace towards you, through the atonement of His beloved Son. God forgives the believer, not merely because he confesses his sins, though that is always right, but because Christ put them away on the cross.

B. That is a point I cannot see. It is certainly a comforting one for those who believe it. I know it is your doctrine. I believe we can only be forgiven through faith in the blood of Christ, but we must apply to it—confess our sins, and ask forgiveness. “Whoso confesseth and forsaketh shall find mercy.”

A. Just so. Confession, I fully admit, has an important place in the word of God. “If we confess our sins,” the apostle says, “he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John i. 9.) Whenever we truly confess our sins, God graciously forgives them. It is His own appointed way for

the relief of the conscience. But suppose you commit a sin, and remain ignorant of it all the days of your life, what then? you can neither confess it, nor ask forgiveness. How are you to be forgiven in such a case?

B. That is exactly what I want to know. But I want it explained from scripture. Of course, we are to pray for the forgiveness of sins, *known and unknown*. But I freely confess that my mind is not at rest. I am not satisfied. I cannot feel as you do, that I am perfectly safe, and as sure of heaven as if I were there. Indeed, I very much question if any man on earth can really know that. My belief is that no one can be *perfectly certain*, while he is here. And I think I am right too. We are so constantly sinning, are we not?

A. Yes, indeed we are; for the thought of foolishness is sin. But what does the word say on this most important point? "If any man *sin*," not, observe, if any man repent, *sees* his sin, is *sorry* for it, and confesses it; but simply, "If any man *sin*, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." (1 John ii. 1.) The full, immediate, and perfect forgiveness of every believer, is founded on the finished work of Christ *for us*. His advocacy is founded on His righteousness and His propitiation. He may, by the Spirit through the word, lead us into deep exercise of soul about

sin, but the forgiveness is complete on another ground.

But now, will you excuse me referring to "the old story, about not being done with self"? How much of Christ, think you, is there in all your theories and reasonings? What of His precious blood? You seem to reckon up things without Him. I know you don't mean it. But does it not simply come to this, "What would have become of *me*, this morning at nine o'clock, had *I* not done so and so, between eight and nine?" As if the whole weight of your salvation depended on your own opportunity and ability to deal with sin. Now, what is this? Look fairly at it. Is it not putting self in the place of the precious blood of Christ? To me, it is, because the scriptures so plainly teach "that without the *shedding* of blood is no remission." God alone is competent to deal with the question of sin, and this He did *once for all*, on behalf of the believer, in the cross of Christ. By the shedding of His blood, it was *eternally settled*. It can never again be raised. Blessed, blessed truth!

B. Excuse me, I believe that as firmly as you do. It is only the blood of Christ that can wash away our sins. But how am I to know, how can I be sure, that all my sins are pardoned?

A. Only through believing: there is no other way: "Whosoever believeth in him *shall* receive remission of sins." (Acts x. 43.) If you are really

resting on the sacrifice of Christ, and trusting to that alone for pardon, you may be quite sure of the full and everlasting forgiveness of all your sins. For the value of that sacrifice is infinite. And being so, it extends to every moment of your life, and to every point in your condition. Were its efficacy only to reach to eight o'clock, and you to live till nine, it would be insufficient for your need. In short, it would be imperfect. Only see where we land, when we get off the lines of divine truth. But what does that word say to every believer in Jesus? "We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." (Eph. i. 7.) This is a full statement of the case, and whenever you have got to the end of yourself, as an utterly lost sinner, and have no refuge but in the grace of God, flowing through the sacrifice of Christ, you will be at perfect rest, and ready to go at any hour of the day.

B. Now don't you speak too strongly. I want an explanation. There is no good in putting one down with strong expressions. I want to *see* it. They may appear plain enough to you, but they are not so to others. I feel quite sure that nine-tenths,—nineteen-twentieths of your hearers do not understand the meaning of that word "grace," which you are so constantly speaking about. Take any congregation you please, in London, and you will find very few who understand the meaning

of such words. I know it. And you use them, as if all understood them as well as yourself. I believe a great deal of preaching goes over people's heads. Whenever you are going to preach a sermon about grace, you tell me, and I will come seven miles to hear it.

A. Thank you, —. But come when you will, I trust you will hear me preaching grace—the boundless grace of God to ruined sinners. I know of nothing else that meets the sinner's condition. Every man must know either grace or judgment; there is no privileged class now. The cross has broken down every partition wall.

But, tell me, why is it that so few gospel hearers understand what *grace* is? The word itself occurs very frequently in the scriptures. And to a lost sinner it is the most important word in the Bible. It is the source and spring of every mercy that we receive from God. As the Apostle Paul says, "by the grace of God I am what I am." (1 Cor. xv. 10.) But for that precious grace he would have continued to be the "chief of sinners," and gone as straight, and as fast, to hell as ever he could go. And but for the same grace, so would every child of Adam, without exception. "There is none that seeketh after God." (Rom. iii. 11.) The believer is *saved* by grace,—he *stands* in grace, and throughout eternity he will *shine* in grace, the pure unmingled grace of God.

But now, why is it, think you, that grace is really so little understood? Just because so few know their *need* and *helplessness*, as seen in the light of the cross. To know grace we must know the cross. Whenever we have learnt the meaning of these two words *need* and *helplessness*, we shall soon find out the meaning of the word *grace*. The "woman of Canaan," when led to take her true place, as a Gentile dog, at the foot of the master's table, learnt it there in the school of Christ. But it was under a deep, deep sense of her pressing need, and utter helplessness. (Matt. xv.) This is the only place, my dear friend, truly to learn the meaning, and appreciate the value of divine grace. We must be at the lowest step in the ladder, where grace flows, before we can understand the meaning of that precious text, "where sin abounded, *grace* did much more abound." Romans v. 20.

B. Well, yes, it is very plain, I can see what you mean; I understand it. You need not say any more on that point. But you must remember that every one has not the same faith. She had great faith.

A. True, she had, but on what was it founded? What had she to look to? Only grace. The grace that dwells in the heart of Jesus. All the promises were to the children of Israel. He was the Minister of the circumcision. And she was one of the outcast race of Canaan, on whom the

curse of God rested. She had no right, no title to Christ as the Jewish Messiah. And she was brought to feel this in the bitterness of her soul, that the grace of God might shine forth in all its divine sovereignty, freeness, and fulness. But she trusted His heart of love. She counted on the grace that dwelt there, notwithstanding His seeming harshness. She knew that He had only to speak the word and her every need would be met. But she knew also, that she had no right to that word, no claim upon Him. This was crushing—awfully crushing to proud human nature. And then, to hear from those lips of grace, “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel,” must have greatly increased the anguish of her soul. Still, she clings to Him in the energy of a faith which counts only on Himself, notwithstanding His covenant engagements with Israel. “Lord, help me,” was the earnest believing cry of her heart. “It is not meet,” He answered, “to take the children’s bread and to cast it to dogs.” “Truth, Lord,” was her instant reply, “yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from the Master’s table.” Wondrous faith! but, now she is in her true place, and grace flows out. The struggle is over. The victory is won; she is satisfied with what grace gives. It was to this point He was leading her, and He waited till she got there. And now, that heart of perfect love, which was only waiting for the

opportunity, flows forth, in streams of living grace. He could not say—I have not a crumb for thee; that would have been to deny the whole truth of God. “Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith; *be it unto thee even as thou wilt.*” She had touched the deepest spring of His heart and the full resources of His love are thrown open to her. This is a true picture of the sinner’s place and condition, and of the grace that immediately and perfectly meets both.

Now, my dear friend, whenever you are brought by faith to this point, all will be victory and peace. Your anxieties and struggles will be over. The moment we take this place, we are met and blessed by God, according to the love and grace of His own heart. He acts from Himself, on the ground of the perfect, and eternally efficacious sacrifice of Christ. We are pardoned, justified, and accepted in the Beloved. We have eternal life in Him. And, now, the clock may chime either eight or nine, or any hour in the twelve, but neither measured time nor unmeasured eternity can ever break the bond that binds our hearts to the blessed Jesus. “We are in *him* that is true, even in *his Son Jesus Christ.*” “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are *in Christ Jesus.*” (John v. 20; Rom. viii. 1.) But I must be off, I have stood more than an hour with you. Good bye. The Lord be with you.

B. Well, good bye, God bless you. I will think on what you have been saying. I am coming some evening to —.

A. Pray think of the sinner's place, *the lowest step in the ladder.*

Oh ! what has Jesus done for me ?
 He pitied me—my Saviour.
 My sins were great ; His love was free ;
 He died for me—my Saviour.

Exalted by His Father's side,
 He pleads for me—my Saviour.
 A heavenly mansion He'll provide
 For all who love my Saviour.

Jesus, Lord Jesus,—
 Thy name is sweet, my Saviour,
 When shall I see Thee face to face,
 My wondrous, blessed Saviour ?



A WORD TO A TROUBLED CONSCIENCE.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIEND,

I was not sorry to hear of your distress of soul. It must soon give place to peace and joy. Many, alas ! are not distressed enough, who have good reason to be so ; but Satan succeeds in keeping their eyes so firmly bandaged, that the light is effectually shut out, and they see not their danger. Have you ever thought of that solemn

passage in 2 Corinthians iv. ? “ But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost ; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the *light* of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.” Here, you will observe, the gospel is compared unto “ light,” which is self-evident, yet they see it not, though it is shining around them, because of the blinding of Satan, the god of this world. I am always thankful to hear of persons being concerned about the safety of their souls. I know what the issue will be. It is, generally speaking, the pathway to perfect and eternal repose. Nevertheless, we must bear in mind, that our distress, however great, forms no part of the ground of our acceptance, or in any way recommends us to, or fits us for, the presence of God. The work of Christ is the only ground of acceptance.

Your perplexities, my dear friend, like those of many others, flow from the common mistake of looking to yourself, and being occupied with what is going on there. From what you say, I should judge, that your distress arises from the *presence*, not the “ *absence*,” of God’s Holy Spirit. I dare say you will be surprised at my saying so, as you speak so much about the “ teaching ” and “ enlightening ” of the Holy Spirit. It is perfectly true, that He is “ the Comforter,” and that without His teaching, we should remain in ignor-

ance of divine things ; and without His enlightening, we should remain in darkness. Still, I hardly think you rightly understand the true character and effects of the Spirit's action by the truth in the soul. By His light and teaching, you get the knowledge, not merely of good and evil, but the knowledge of the *difference* between the two. This is *conscience before God*, namely, *the knowledge of the difference between good and evil*. Now, when the conscience gets occupied with the evil in place of the good, or, in other words, with *self*, in place of *Christ*, it must be in trouble. And the aim of the enemy will always be, to get the eye turned in upon self, in place of up to Christ, the true object of faith.

There is a great difference, between what we may call the testimony of God as to what we are before Him, in Christ, and the testimony of the Spirit as to what we are in ourselves. Both, of course, are perfectly true, and each is important in its own place. But I shall try and explain what I mean ; and first, as to the testimony of God.

I. He testifies as to what we are in His presence, through the efficacy of the work of Christ *for us*. He sees the believer as that work has made him, and not as he thinks of himself, judging from his own feelings. For any one to say that the believer is not perfect in the sight of God, would be to deny His word, and cast an

indignity on the sacrifice of Christ. In virtue of that blessed work, every believer, the least as well as the greatest, is placed in the holy presence of God, without a single spot or stain, and so fitted to be there for ever. "For Christ also hath suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, *that he might bring us to God.*" (2 Pet. iii. 18.) Now, mark the expression, *that He might bring us to God.* That means, to the knowledge of God—to the favour, the friendship, the presence, and the enjoyment, of God for ever. "The just one" took our place, that we might get His. He having once suffered and died for our sins, we now stand before God as complete and perfect as the work of our divine Substitute can make us. "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." (Heb. x. 14.) When this all-important truth is understood, and kept before the soul, its distress and troubles all vanish, and it is filled with the peace and rest of God. To a newly converted soul, this is indeed an immensely important point. I am most anxious to have your attention fully drawn to it; for I know that the testimony of your own experience, to which you are so prone to look, will just be the opposite of God's.

II. The feelings and experience of the believer himself, through the work of the Holy Spirit in him, are exactly the opposite of peace and rest. "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the

Spirit against the flesh ; and these are contrary the one to the other ; that ye should not do those things which ye would." (Gal. v. 17.) The presence of the Spirit in the soul produces conflict. He discovers sin there, and many things that are unlike Christ, and contrary to the word of God ; things which, of course, we should seek to mortify. But if these things occupy us before we know that Christ has put them away, our distress may be very great. And if the conscience is kept lively, its anguish will continue until we see the completeness of our forgiveness, justification, and acceptance, through faith in the precious blood of Jesus. Now, my dear friend, such a discovery of the true character and utter worthlessness of the flesh, ought to make us very humble, but it ought not to fill us with doubt and despair. For, be assured, all the evil which the Spirit reveals, has been put away by the cross of Christ, out of God's sight for ever. And that which He has put away can never be brought up against you. When this blessed truth is seen, instead of being cast down, and questioning your forgiveness and salvation, you will, every day, be learning more and more of the fulness, perfectness, and blessedness of Jesus and His finished work, and your own good-for-nothingness. You will be taught, not to think less of sin, but more of Christ.

But now, what is the Spirit's testimony to

Christ, and to His finished work on our behalf? Does He not testify, by His presence in the believer's soul, that He who was on the cross for us is now on the throne as Head of His body the church? Blessed truth! our sins are all put away, and we are one with Christ in glory, through the presence, power, and in-dwelling of the Holy Ghost in us. "He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit." We have eternal life in Him. The great thing is to get the eye off self, to "have no confidence in the flesh," and to be wholly occupied with a risen, ascended, and glorified Christ at God's right hand.

We have a striking illustration of the flesh and the spirit, in the two sons of Abraham, Ishmael and Isaac. The true character of Ishmael was manifested by the presence of Isaac. We hear nothing of the naughtiness of the former, until after the latter was born. But the bond-woman and her son were to be cast out, for the son of the bond-woman could not be heir with the son of the free woman. (Gen. xxi.; Gal. iv.) This was grievous to the heart of Abraham. It was a hard struggle with nature to cast them out. But Isaac was the sole heir of his father Abraham. The mere child of nature can never be heir to a single promise. Christ is the heir of every promise, and we are joint heirs with Him. But, blessed be God, we are, by faith, His children, and His heirs too, in the full credit of Christ Himself. For,

“if children, then heirs ; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.” (Rom. viii. 17.) When thus we have learnt to be done with the pretensions of nature, and occupied with the rights and titles of Christ, our struggling, labour, and trouble of conscience will be at an end. Depend upon it, my dear friend, this is the cause of all your distress. We struggle hard, to take, at least, a part of self into heaven with us. But no ! God says it must be cast out. The “strait gate” is only wide enough for Christ to pass through, and the “narrow way” is only broad enough for Him to walk in. So we must be content to leave self outside, and enter, simply, in Christ. But oh ! many a long, hard, and weary struggle we have, before we are convinced that self can never get through.

Let your mind dwell much on the word of God as to your position, standing, and acceptance in Christ. Surely it is enough, when God Himself testifies as to your cleanness in His sight, through the precious blood of His own beloved Son. You will now see the point I desire to press on your consideration, namely, the testimony of scripture as to what we are in the presence of God, compared with our own experience.

Take one example more. When Moses speaks of the children of Israel as they were in his sight, what does he say ? “Thou art a stiff-necked people from the day that thou didst

depart out of the land of Egypt, until ye came into this place, ye have been rebellious against the Lord." (Deut. ix. 6, 7.) What a testimony! and from God's own witness in the midst of the people. But what does God say about this same people? "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel." (Num. xxiii. 21.) Amazing truth! What a testimony from the holy One of Israel! But how, you may ask, can both statements be true? Moses states what the people were in their nature and practical ways: God declares what they are in His sight, in virtue of the blood of atonement. Observe, God does not say, there *is no iniquity in Jacob*, but that "he had not beheld it." There was plenty there, sure enough, but, typically, they were a redeemed people, and under the shelter of the blood of the Lamb. And the Lord had said, "When I see the blood I will pass over you." He could not see both the iniquity and the blood that was shed to wash it away. His eye rested on the blood of the Lamb, and not on the iniquity of the people. *He* looked at them "from the top of the rocks:" Moses, from the plains below. But, nevertheless, when God dealt with them in government, it was another thing. Then He chastened them for their iniquity and perverseness. When Christ had accomplished the work of redemption, according to the glory of God, we hear Him saying, "Holy Father, keep through

thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are." (John xvii.) He brings the redeemed ones back, and lays them on the heart of the Father, who now receives them as children, watches over and disciplines them; but it is as a father with the children, He sees *no* sin on them. The Son has fitted them for the bosom of the "Holy Father," and then He says they are "*clean every whit.*"

May your weary soul now know the sweet repose—the perfect, eternal rest, which the bosom of the Father gives.

Ever, most faithfully and affectionately, yours
in Christ,



"COMPEL THEM TO COME IN."

(READ LUKE XIV. 15–24.)

THE grace of God may be compared to a stream gushing from the mountain side; which, though frequently meeting with opposition, flows on. The force of the current manifests the fulness of the fountain. It has many obstacles to overcome; but the stream being fed by an exhaustless spring, it acquires strength in its progress; and rushing past or over every hindrance, it runs on, refreshing the region of its course, until it reaches the meeting-place of kindred streams.

The believer, looking up to God his Father, can say, "All my springs are in thee." The stream of life-giving grace which has reached his soul, flows from the heart of God. "God is love." "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." (1 John iv. ; Rom. v.) From this everlasting spring the stream of saving grace has been flowing on, through our sin-blighted and barren world, ever since the lost condition of man called it forth. It was always there ; the shed blood of a spotless victim opened up a channel for its righteous flow, "that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." Faith's eye will always see the stream of grace, tinged, as it were, with the blood of Jesus.

But oh ! with what opposition, from all quarters, has grace had to contend ! How often, for a moment, has its course been interrupted, and violently forced into another channel ! The nature of God's grace is entirely contrary to man's selfishness. He is angry with God, and hates his brother, because the highest favours of heaven are bestowed on the most unworthy of the children of men. Hence Cain was angry, and killed Abel ; and the elder brother was angry, and would not go into the house where grace reigned. (Gen. iv. ; Luke xv.) It has ever been so. Naturally, man dislikes it—speaks against it—seeks to turn it aside and get rid of it

altogether, like Israel at Sinai, or, failing in this, he seeks to pollute the pure stream of heaven, by mingling with it the fancied worthiness of his own feelings and doings. In all ages of the world, from every human heart, grace has met with determined opposition; but such is the depth, fulness, and energy of the love of God, the native source of all grace, that nothing can effectually stay its course, or even hinder its progress. The fountain can never fail, the channel can never be choked, and grace, *free grace*, in spite of every obstacle, must flow on through this desert world, until it has visited, refreshed, and blessed its most distant nations.

These thoughts have been suggested in reading Luke xiv. 15-24. Here, our Lord points out the onward course of the pure grace of God, and the spring from whence it flows. In reply to the one who said, while He sat at meat with Him, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God," the Lord immediately assured him that the supper was ready, that grace had provided and prepared everything, and that he had a free invitation to come and eat of that heavenly bread. "Then said he unto him, a certain man made a great supper, and bade many; and sent his servants at supper-time to say to them that were bidden, Come, for all things are now ready." They had been previously invited, but now they are intreated to come, for it was "supper-

time" and all things were ready. But, alas! "they all with one consent began to make excuse." None of them said, in plain terms, "I will not come," but they were full of excuses. How like the reception that the full, free, and hearty invitations of grace still meet with from many! Few will say plainly, I shall have nothing to do with Christ or His salvation; yet how often are both neglected, nay, despised, for a worldly pleasure — a self-gratification — a shadow — a nothing.

From the beginning God had acted in grace, and saved them that believed His word. But the full expression of His grace was reserved until Christ came. He was "full of grace and truth." (John i. 14, 16, 17.) "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." (2 Cor. v. 19.) Grace reigned. None, observe, were unfit or unwelcome guests for the feast on account of their sins. God was not imputing their trespasses unto them. He was acting in grace—pure grace—grace without rebuke. So that there was full forgiveness to the chief of sinners, according to the riches of grace. The guest that was cast out, according to the account given by Matthew (chap. xxii.), was condemned by the king, not on account of what he had done, but on account of what he had refused. Grace had provided everything. But he despised the robe that was suited to the feast.

He was a rejecter of the free grace of God in Christ Jesus. "And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment? And he said unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having on a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Here, observe, nothing is said to the man about what we may call his sins in general, but simply that of having come hither without the wedding garment; and having refused the grace of God, which alone could meet his need, all his other sins, of heart and life, remained, and sank with him into the place of outer darkness. This is deeply solemn. Every remembrance of the ground of condemnation must prove an awful pang of in the depths of woe.

Christ alone is the sinner's salvation. He alone meets all our need. "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." Clearly, then, the Son must be received, or we can never receive eternal life, for the life is in Him. The one question then is, Have I received the Son as my eternal life—my eternal all? When Christ is received by faith, all is received—life—righteousness—pardon—peace, and acceptance.

“My strength, my shield, my safe abode,
My robe before the throne of God.”

We have all in Him. “He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son hath not life.” (1 John v. 10, 11.) Until Christ is received, nothing is received. The sinner remains in all his guilt, and under the awful weight of his unpardoned sins. Oh! how marvellous that any should be found refusing to be saved, refusing to be clothed in the king’s raiment, decked with the king’s jewels, and made happy for ever in the king’s royal favour. Oh, then, destitute sinner, come! Christless, graceless, homeless sinner, come! Thy God calleth thee, the Saviour inviteth thee, the Holy Spirit entreateth thee, “for all things are *now* ready.” A home, a robe, a welcome, a royal feast, all await thee. Why not come? Why not come now? Remember, oh, remember, that ere long, it must either be the king’s banqueting house, or the deep, dark pit of eternal despair.

Our blessed Lord, in the parable before us, refers to three classes in connection with the stream of grace.

1. To those who were much engaged with their own earthly interests, and so had little relish for a heavenly feast. A piece of ground, five yoke of oxen, domestic duties, were more to them than the rich provisions of grace. These things, though right and lawful in themselves, so filled

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their hearts, as to lead them to slight and neglect heavenly things, and thereby proved their eternal ruin. The king at last most solemnly declares of all such, "that none of those men who were bidden shall taste of my supper." They were not condemned, observe, for having, or for attending to these things, but because they were satisfied with them, cared nothing for the provisions of grace, and so refused the invitation to the "great supper." But grace, though disregarded by such, flows on to others.

2. The second class, to whom the Master sent the invitation, were those who were poor and helpless, in the streets and lanes of the city—the right class to value kindness from others. When brought to see and feel our need, and our utter helplessness, such as are here pictured before us, the kindness that offers to meet all our need will be welcomed and appreciated. And what a picture the Lord here draws of man's spiritual condition! Poor, maimed, halt, blind. In poverty, and without hands to work, or feet to walk, or eyes to see. Oh, what a condition! What but the pure grace of God in the Gospel of His Son can meet such a state of things? It is not enough merely to open a place in a locality, and announce that there will be preaching. If grace be at work, it will do much more, knowing the soul's deep necessities. The neighbourhood must be visited, the streets and the lanes searched, that

the spiritually destitute may be found out, an invitation given with beseeching earnestness, and, if possible, brought, it may be, in the first place, to where the Gospel is preached, but with the one object of their being brought to Christ, that they may, ere long, fill the house of the Lord, and dwell with Him for ever. "Go out *quickly* into the streets and lanes of the city," is the Master's own most urgent command.

3. The third class are found in the extreme outer circles, "the highways and hedges." The nations of the Gentiles, which, when compared with the city of Jerusalem, God's earthly centre, are the distant places of the earth. But grace flows on, its energy and power manifestly increasing notwithstanding the world-wide circle of its course, and the opposition it has had to overcome in every inch of its progress. Its source is in the living God.

Two things seem to characterise the scene of Gospel labour before the banqueting-house is filled, and the door closed.

1. The Master's longsuffering, and patient perseverance in grace. To the first class, He "sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, *Come: for all things are now ready.*" To the second class, He says, "GO OUT QUICKLY AND BRING IN HITHER THE POOR," &c. But to the third, He says, "GO OUT AND COMPEL THEM TO COME IN."

Evangelists should be like the press-gang of heaven.

2. The energy of the servant, as one who has caught his Master's spirit. He can return from his preaching mission and say, "Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room." Blessed is that servant who can give in such an account, "Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded," and still be as fresh for work as ever. "Yet there is room;" as if he had said, May I go out again, and find some more to fill up that room? Oh, what a happy state of things, in any sphere of worthy service, when the servant enters into the Master's spirit, but surely, most of all, in such a sphere as this.

"I think I see the meaning of that text, now, Compel them to come in," said an earnest preacher to the writer a few days ago, and gave in substance the following explanation. "If I meet a friend in the street that I am anxious to see in my own house, I do not merely say to him, The door is open, come in, we shall be glad to see you. No; I entreat him, I urge him, I take him by the hand, and so cause him to feel the earnestness of my heart, that he is compelled to come in. Well, so should we cause unconverted sinners to feel assured of our love for their precious souls, as to compel them to come to Him who loves them infinitely more than we do. I was so convinced that this is the spirit of that text, that last

Lord's day evening I was constrained to adopt a new line of action. I felt great earnestness for the conversion of souls in preaching. At the close of the discourse I stated to the people that I should be happy to remain for prayer and conversation, as the Lord might lead, after the usual service was over. I gave a hearty invitation to all, but especially to those who were anxious. Very few left. And, for the first time in my life, in place of remaining near to my desk until the people had removed, I went straight in amongst them. Some of the brothers prayed most earnestly. I began to speak to some who were in deep concern; others followed my example; so that in a short time we had quite a scene of deep interest, and rich blessing—indeed, such as we have never had before on any occasion. Several were brought into peace, others were passing through deep exercise of soul. One man was so pressed in spirit that he stood up, and in a few simple words, declared what God had done for his soul. The effect was most blessed. We have had special meetings for prayer, that the work may go on. The brethren are all stirred up.”

Thus the stream of God's rich, full, unwearied, persevering grace flows on, and thus it must flow on, ever deepening, widening, and extending, until it has reached the utmost limits of God's purposes of love, and gathered from the nations

of the earth as many precious souls as shall fill the house, which is as large as the heart of God.

May the Lord, the heavenly Master, so teach, guide, and lead all His dear servants now in the gospel-field, fully to carry out the true meaning of the text, in the divine power of the Holy Spirit, so that many around us may be morally compelled to come in, and that His house may soon be filled.

“I want an even, strong desire,
I want a calmly fervent zeal,
To pull poor souls out of the fire,
So snatch them from the verge of hell,
And turn them to a pardoning God,
And quench the brands in Jesu's blood.”

THE BAD HALF-CROWN.

A FEW months ago, while waiting for my ticket in a country railway office, I observed a half-crown nailed to the counter. The young man who was giving out the tickets, also attracted my attention. He seemed a sharp youth, and had an air of importance about him, becoming the responsibilities of his office. With his hand raised to the ticket department, and the finger ready to pounce upon the right one, he shouted, “First or second, sir?”

Being the last one that was then waiting, I thought I should like to have a few words with our young friend about the half-crown, so I said to him as I was picking up my change, "What is this you have got nailed to the counter, my boy?"

"A half-crown, sir."

"But why have you it nailed to the counter?"

"Because it is a bad one, sir."

"So you were determined it should go no further. But now, tell me, does it remind you of anything very serious?"

"I don't know," (looking very straight at me and paying great attention).

"Well, I'll tell you, my boy, what it has brought to my mind,—that will be the end of all hypocrites, they will at last be nailed down under the awful judgment of God. And they will never be able to get away from it. Now, *you* look at that half-crown. A nail driven through it,—fixed to the one spot, and exposed to public condemnation. Every one sees that it is a detected hypocrite, and exhibited there as a warning to others.

"Now, mark, such will be the end of all who make a profession of religion, but who have not Christ in their hearts. Like that half-crown, they may deceive many for a time, but they cannot deceive God. Can they? Oh no! that half-crown may have passed through a good

many hands before it was detected, but at last it fell into the hands of a judge who knew that it was not real, and so condemned it, and would let it go no further. And now, *you* remember this, God will, at last, ring, as it were, every professor on His counter—His judgment-seat; and every one that is counterfeit, not real, will then be detected, condemned, and nailed to the place of judgment for ever; so that every time you throw down a ticket, and look on this bad half-crown, you are reminded of the awful end of those who are not right in heart with God."

This last sentence was evidently more than our young friend could comfortably bear, for he immediately exclaimed, with his usual sharpness, "I'LL HAVE IT TAKEN UP." After a few words as to the certainty of coming judgment, we parted.

Finding we had to wait a little for the train, a friend who was with me, and who had listened to the conversation, returned to the office for a platform ticket; and without saying a word to the lad, he merely gave him a playful look, pointing to the half-crown, when the youth again said in a very determined tone, "I'll have it taken up."

How like, thought I, to the natural heart. "I'll have it taken up." It had been nailed there for the purpose of warning others against passing bad money, lest they might be detected and brought to judgment. But as soon as it was

made to bear as a warning for his own conscience before God, he immediately declared that he would have it removed. Rather than be reminded of the fearful end of those who have not Christ as their righteousness, he would silence the testimony by removing the witness. But ah! what a poor, self-deceiving way this is of getting rid of a present difficulty. The future trouble remains. Yet, alas! how constantly this is done, both by young and old.

The natural mind soon manifests its dislike to the most affectionate warnings of truest friendship. The witness, if not removed, will be unheeded or avoided. How often the lips of wisdom are silent, while the heart burns with the most yearning anxiety to say a faithful word in sweetest, tenderest love, to the object of its deep solicitude. But in vain. Guessing at what is coming, the warning voice is rudely hushed, by a heartless, "I have heard all that before, many a time—what's the good of always coming out with the same thing? I know it quite as well as you can tell me." Under such circumstances the heart must seek relief in pouring out its burning, pent-up love into the bosom of God. The icy indifference of the deceived, perishing sinner, forms a wonderful contrast to the genial sustaining presence of God. "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee." "Let your requests be made known unto God, and the peace

of God which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Psalm lv. 22; Philippians iv. 6-9.

Most in our day, and perhaps all who read this paper, know, that no man can stand approved before God in his own righteousness. He may have been, touching the outward letter of the law, blameless, but when tried by God's standard, he will surely be found deficient, disapproved, and rejected. "Enter not into judgment with thy servant," said David, "for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." "All our righteousnesses," says Isaiah, "are as filthy rags." (Psa. cxliii. 2; Isa. lxiv. 6.) These truths are absolute. We have not to wait till we reach the judgment-seat to know God's estimate of man's righteousness.

It is something peculiarly offensive to Him. Not only is it as "rags," compared with a perfect garment, but as "filthy rags," compared with the robe of spotless white. Such a condition of soul is most loathsome to the holiness of God, and must be judged by His righteousness. Woe, woe, eternal woe, must be the sinner's portion who appears before the judgment-seat in such a state.

Had scripture said "all our *wickednesses* are as filthy rags," there might have been some hope for the righteousnesses, but when it says, "all our *righteousnesses* are as filthy rags," all hope is cut

off. The best things we have, or can produce, are totally rejected as utterly unfit for God, and for the place of His holiness. Fair appearances there may be, and that which will pass among men as genuine enough for any one. But God looks on the heart. He has but one standard. He looks for Christ. He tests the heart's estimate of Him. If that dear name be found graven on its tablets as its all in all, it will surely pass as the genuine, current coin of the realm of heaven. But oh! where Christ is not the stamp of the heart, all is utterly worthless to God. If He fills it not, it must be empty indeed, whatever else may be in it. If there be no Christ in the heart, there can be no pardon, no peace, no salvation, no eternal life. Sin remains, and all its direful and never-ending consequences. What will, what can, God say to a Christless soul at the judgment-seat? "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared (not for you, but) for the devil and his angels." (Matt. xxv. 41.) This must be the fearful and inevitable doom of all who live and die without a personal interest in Christ, whatever their appearances, or professions may have been in this world. Nothing but the blood of Christ can save a soul from the lake of fire. Nothing but the preciousness of Christ can stamp a soul for the rank of heaven. His precious blood alone cleanseth from all sin, and He, *Himself*, is the

righteousness of God to every one that believeth.
Ephesians i. 7; Romans x. 1-13.

I observed that the bad half-crown had a shining face like the good ones, and, outwardly, it had the same stamp upon it. But at heart it was bad, there was no silver there. Only base metal. It was a hypocrite—a mere professor. It pretended to be what it was not. It had a fair outward appearance, but no reality in heart. I observed, further, that the nail of judgment pierced both the head and the heart. Mournful illustration of the seat of the thoughts, the understanding, the will, the desires, the affections and passions, being penetrated with the iron rod of God's sore displeasure. Oh! is such, in very deed, the end of the mere formalist? Unquestionably; and of all Christless, graceless, souls. The righteousness of God must judge evil. But I also further thought, will the wicked at last be fixed to one place? The doomed half-crown could not move a hair's breadth. How monotonous—how ignominious! Affixed to one spot, a public spectacle. Labelled, "A once shining professor, but now a detected, dishonoured, doomed, deceiver." But oh! thought I, shall it be thus at last with all who have no true interest in Christ, professors or not professors? Most assuredly. The word of truth has gone forth from the lips of Him who cannot change. It stands recorded in the statute book of heaven.

And thus it runs, and may my reader mark it well. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." John iii. 26.

My mind now turned to a case in point—to one who made a great profession. I mean the man who had not on the wedding garment. (Matt. xxii.) It does not appear from the parable that any of the guests thought that he was different from themselves, so thoroughly had the reality been imitated. And so it is now. Immense numbers in the present day make a profession of religion, of whom, no man on earth could feel quite certain as to whether they were real, or merely formal Christians. Their lives are strictly moral, they regularly attend some place of worship, they give of their money for church, mission, and benevolent purposes; they sing psalms and hymns as sweetly as any one. They read the scriptures, pray and preach, it may be, in public, and yet when the unmistakable signs of divine life in the soul are looked for, the search is in vain. We have to leave such cases, thankful that we are not their judges, until the Lord come.

Such seems to have been the case in the parable. He may have occupied a high place amongst professors. But there was no cleaving of the heart to Christ, and trusting in Him alone.

Oh, no! for the full promise of God is sure to all who trust in Jesus. "Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." (Ps. ii. 12.) He was a stranger to the love and grace of God in Christ Jesus. He was a rejecter of grace and man is saved by grace alone, through faith, without works of law.

But though he had succeeded in deceiving the guests, he could not deceive the king. "And when the king came in to see the guests he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment; and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having on a wedding garment? and he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Alas, alas! what a close to a long life of high sounding profession! What an end for one who has had a high place in the church on earth. And, alas, for all who have not Christ. Bound hand and foot, and cast into the place of judgment. Now, he must lie where he falls. He must abide in the place wherein he is cast. There was a time when he was determined to have his own will, and to enjoy his own way, in spite of every warning. But now, he is nailed to the one spot. He can have his own will and his own way no longer. Wrapped in the vile and worthless rags of his own evil and hypocritical ways, he is cast

outside the presence chamber of the king, and has no means of resisting the righteous but fearful judgment that he has brought upon himself. Oh! that careless, thoughtless sinners, and mere nominal professors would think on these awful realities now, and take warning. The time is fast coming when it may be too late. Soon shall all who now dwell on the earth have to take their respective places, either in the bright and sunny regions of eternal glory, or in the dark and murky region of eternal woe.

The scriptures are plain and absolute. God is righteous, and He can approve of nothing less righteous than Himself. He is the only true God, and can accept of nothing less true than Himself. He has but one standard, and Christ alone is up to His measure. Nothing will pass as current at the judgment-seat that has not the name of Christ stamped upon it. The sinner can only be received, approved, and justified in the worthiness of Christ. He is the way, the truth, and the life. No man can come unto the Father but by Him. He is the door, the only way of entrance into the Father's house.

When the sinner draws near to God *now*, in the faith of his own worthlessness, and the worthiness of Christ, he is accepted. "Accepted in the beloved." And Christ is ready to receive all that come to Him. He casts out none. Oh! then, unpardoned, unsaved sinners, whether you have

made a profession or not, at once, with your whole heart, turn to Jesus, in the full assurance of His pardoning love. Be assured that He is waiting, ready to receive you. Oh! doubt Him not, believe Him, trust Him. He is able, He is willing, to save the chief of sinners. Oh! at once, without delay, flee to the arms of Jesus. Flee from your evil habits, and from the awful doom of outer darkness. As a lost sinner, take refuge in Him who was *nailed* to the cross for sinners, for you, and yet, as another has said,

“*Sins* they were, not *nails*, which held Him,
Sinner, there He died for thee.”

He wore a crown of thorns, emblem of the curse of sin, that you might wear a crown of glory—fruit of grace divine. His side was pierced with a soldier's spear, that you might find a resting-place in His heart for ever. He bore the judgment of God against sin, that you might enjoy an eternal weight of glory. Oh! then, be careless no longer, slight the Saviour of sinners no longer. Believe in Him, according to the word of God. But, oh! see that you believe *now*. Can you lie down to sleep another night, with all your sins upon your soul? Surely not. Look to Jesus, and your eyes shall be enlightened, your burden removed. “To him give all the prophets witness, that *through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.*” Acts x. 43.

“LOOK UNTO ME.”

WE have frequently had submitted to us, in substance, the following question and remarks, namely, “Why is it that so many sincere Christians never get rid of doubts, fears, and questionings, as to the full assurance of their salvation? Sometimes they seem sure, and are bright and happy, but in a little while they seem depressed, doubt their interest in Christ, and are most unhappy. We know of some who are every now and then on the borders of despair, and even when they do find something like peace, they are in constant terror that it will not last long; so that it can never be said of such that they have true peace or rest.”

Such a state of things we know to be very common, and believe it proceeds from different causes in different persons, and in most cases the real cause seems hidden from the person's own mind. In many cases, perhaps more than we suspect, a dark, fluctuating state of soul is the result of its faint and feeble desires after the knowledge of the Person of Christ. If the soul really desire the knowledge of Jesus, valuing Him above all other things, we may rest assured that He will reveal Himself to that soul. And, as a happy consequence, light, peace, joy, and stability would characterise its condition.

Is not the Holy Spirit grieved because we value so little, and breathe so faintly after, the knowledge and fellowship of the Lord Jesus? The grand object of His mission is to reveal Christ to the soul. "He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you." John xvi. 14.

How often, alas, are some almost entirely occupied with themselves, in one way or another, in place of Christ—their faith, their feelings, their clouds, or their gleams of sunshine. Still it is all and only self. The Person of the Lord Jesus, and His wondrous love, are but little dwelt upon, either in their thoughts or in conversation; and, consequently He is but little known, loved, and valued. Hence the Spirit is grieved, Christ is not revealed to the soul, and darkness and feebleness necessarily follow. Could self be only set aside as good for nothing, and Christ become all in all to the heart, the soul would rapidly grow and speedily manifest the features of the divine nature, and become more like unto Christ Himself. Oh! to prize more what He is in Himself, and in all His wondrous love to us; and to long after a fuller, deeper character of communion with Him, as our living Head in glory! Then would our souls enjoy the happy liberty of His love.

Again, there are others who, though they may not be occupied with self in that particular way,

and may even have an assurance that they are saved, still, know little of the true peace of the gospel, and less of communion with the Person of Christ. They are taken up with something that is lower than Him. Service pre-occupies the mind. What we may call the things of Christ, or rather the *things of Christianity*, occupy them; and though in themselves right and praiseworthy things, these are allowed to come between the heart and the Person of their Lord and Master. This will prove sad work for the soul, and must lead to dryness, leanness, and unfruitfulness in joy, and peace. Oh! for more of the spirit of him who said, “For me to live is Christ.” (Phil. i. 21, 22.) When Christ Himself is the object and centre of the heart, its peace and joy will abound, and thereby be strengthened for happy and abundant labours. The third of the Philippians is a practical chapter on this point. The servant need not labour less, but keep service in its own place, that Christ may have fully and entirely His.

But there is another class, and one to which we would more especially direct our attention. We refer to those who may, or may not, have been recently awakened, but who are earnestly seeking peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. This is now a numerous class, blessed be the name of the Lord. May it be increased a hundred-fold. Many are brought into peace, it

may be, the same evening that they are awakened, but their enjoyment of it, in some instances, is interrupted at a very early stage of their new course. Here the enemy will seek to persuade the young converts, that what was called conversion is all a delusion, and that they have neither part nor lot in the matter. Such fiery darts can only be quenched by the shield of faith ; not by reasoning, or even by referring to the date of conversion, but only by looking to Jesus, and trusting in Him. When the eye is kept fixed on Christ, Satan's darts fall powerless to the ground. Others, again, in place of being brought into peace at once, continue for some time in distress, and pass through deep exercise of soul. "But why is this?" our inquirer may ask. "Is this experience necessary to genuine conversion?" Certainly not. It may accompany it, but the scriptures teach us that a soul is converted when it is truly turned to God. The expression of the change may be very feeble, and connected with much that hinders it, but when it is real, conversion has taken place ; the soul has a new life and new desires." Acts xi. 21 ; xv. 19 ; 1 Thessalonians i. 9.

But surely it is no marvellous thing for a soul to be deeply agitated when first it sees its condition under sin, in the light of God's presence ; nor that it should be easily disturbed, until it be more deeply rooted in the truth of God, although

it has got a glimpse of the ground of peace. The main source, we believe, of all such distress and changeableness, is the soul looking at things which concern it from a wrong point of view. The constant tendency of an anxious soul is to judge of God, and what He is to it, from its own feelings. Hence, its conclusions are entirely wrong. In place of thinking of God according to the revelation which He has given us of Himself in Christ, it reasons about Him from what it feels within. This wrong way of looking at divine things must necessarily lead to great misapprehension, confusion, and perplexity. And while the soul continues so to look at things, its distress must remain. No relief can be found until it looks outside of itself. God in Christ, the Saviour-God, is the true object of faith. (Isaiah xlv.; John iv.) In place of reasoning from its own feelings up to God, it must learn to reason from God down to its feelings. This is the only right point of view for a soul at all times, whether it be in the condition of a babe, a young man, or a father.

The all important questions for an anxious soul are not what it feels and what it thinks, but such as the following:

1. What is God to me a guilty sinner?
2. What has God done to save me a lost sinner?
3. What will God do for me an awakened, seeking sinner?

4. What will God be to me a believing sinner?

To some of our readers, and especially our youthful readers, these questions may be subjects of interesting scriptural inquiry. And when the first is understood, the doubts and fears will be all gone, and the second, third, and fourth will be quite plain. So we will leave them, and give, in illustration of our subject, the substance of a recent conversation with a young man in deep concern about his soul.

"Do you really believe that God regards you as a great sinner?"

"Oh yes, indeed I do; I am sure of that."

"But now, tell me, how are you sure of that?"

"Because I know it—I feel it; I have been a very great sinner."

"But is there no other way that we may know it besides feeling it? Has not God told us in His word that we are all sinners?"

"Yes, I know He has, and I would give the world to know that I am pardoned."

"Oh, you need not speak about giving; God is not asking anything; neither is He seeking to condemn you because of your sins, but to turn your heart to Jesus. But now, take the ground of faith as a sinner. You can only have to do with God now by faith. Know and believe that you are a sinner, not because you feel it, but because God says it. And then comes the important question, What is God to me a sinner?"

Now, don't look within, look to Himself, hear His word. What does it say? 'But God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.' (Rom. v. 8.) Can you receive the truth here so plainly stated, namely, that God is love to you a sinner?"

"The word says it, and we should believe it; I know that."

"But should not *you* believe it now? Will it be truer to-morrow? Does not God say He loves the sinner? and you say that's what you are. Therefore He says plainly that He loves you."

"That's what I want to believe, but I can't feel that He loves me; my sins seem so great."

"Well, that's true, but in place of looking at your sins, as you know them in yourself, look at them in the light of this verse, and you will see that it is by means of these that you know how much God loves you. It was your sins that drew forth this wondrous love, in the gift of Jesus. God loved us, Christ died for us, 'while we were yet sinners'—while we were as black and vile as sin could make us. Righteousness judged the sins, and love saves the sinner, through the sufferings and death of the blessed Lord Jesus. Oh, wondrous, wondrous love! But mark, this is not all. Not only has God manifested His love in giving Jesus to die for you a sinner, but the same love has followed you in all your wander-

ings, and followed you to this room to-night, and now He has laid His hand of love upon you, and is drawing you to His beloved Son. Oh, yield your heart to the drawings of His love! Look up! only look to Jesus! Hear Him saying to you, 'Look unto me, . . . and be ye saved,' and 'Come unto me, . . . and I will give you rest.' Be done, then, with your feelings and reasonings about yourself. Dwell on the love of God as it has been manifested in the death of Christ for you, and let your whole soul rest on the truth of that word, 'The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin.' The moment you take your place among the '*us*' who believe, your sins are all cleansed away. The answer of Jesus to your every anxious look and earnest desire, is, Thy sins which were many are forgiven. Go in peace. 1 John i. 7; Luke vii. 36, 50."

"Well, I think I believe all that; I see it quite differently now. But I thought that I ought to feel it all in myself, before I could believe it was true to me. I now see I must not look to myself, but only to Jesus."

"Yes, my dear young man, the only sure way of keeping our eyes off ourselves, is to keep them fixed on Jesus."

Before closing this paper, we desire to say a plain word on the perplexing subject of "feeling." We meet with it everywhere. The mistake

into which so many fall, is that of confounding the enjoyment of truth, when believed, with the mere feelings or impressions of their own minds. When persons say, "I can't feel that God loves me, that Christ died for me, that my sins are forgiven," we believe that they simply mean, "I do not enjoy or feel the power of these blessed truths." But how can these or any other truths be enjoyed, or their power felt, until they are believed? Faith never refers to self, but always to the word of God. We meet with many who want to *feel* that they are believers, before they have believed the truth, and to *feel* that they are safe before they trust in Jesus.

Now, this is all confusion. The *truth* to be believed, mark, is *outside* of self—the *enjoyment* of it is *within*. "The Lord direct your hearts," says the apostle, "into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ." (2 Thess. iii. 5.) These blessed central truths are ever the same—unchangeable, outside, and independent of the believer; nevertheless, they are to be enjoyed in the heart. But if we at times fail to realise their power, and to enjoy them in our hearts, they remain unchangeably the same. The object of faith is ever *outside* of self—the enjoyment of it *within*. Our failing to enjoy the object, can never lessen its value, or change its character.

The truth as to pardon, peace, and acceptance must be received in faith before it can be enjoyed,

or its power felt. The same moment that the sinner is brought to Jesus in faith, the whole need of the soul is met—fully, perfectly, and for ever met. When this is believed, the soul has rest; not, observe, in its own feelings, but in the word of Christ believed. He never says to one who comes to Him, "I will forgive." No, blessed be His name; but, in plainest terms He says, "Son, daughter, thy sins *are* forgiven, thy faith *hath* saved thee; *go in peace.*" Mark ii. 5.

The only question now is, Can the troubled one receive it as the truth of God? If so, the voice of Jesus has spoken peace to that soul. And if the ear be kept open only for Him, its peace will be as complete and settled as the word of Christ can make it. Did Jesus ever send away a seeking soul from His presence in a state of uncertainty? No! never! and He never will. His word is pledged. "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." When He says, "Thy sins *are* forgiven," should the soul have another doubt as to the blessed fact? When He says, "Thy faith *hath* saved thee," should the slightest feeling of uncertainty remain? When He says, "Go in *peace*," should the soul go in trouble? Assuredly not! And assuredly it will not, if only it looks to Him, and not within—if only it hears His word, and listens not to the voice of its own feelings. Oh! that anxious, troubled souls would only cease from looking within, and

from judging of their state before God from their own feelings. The blessed consequences of faith in Christ are fully and plainly revealed in God's word. Let the eye of faith rest on it, and let the heart of faith count on it most surely, and then peace, like a river, will flow into your soul. The character of your own mind, the nature of your religious education, or your present opportunities, can in nowise affect the heart of God, or the word and work of Christ. Faith's blessed, and never-ending consequences, the Spirit of truth declares to be, 1. *Being justified.* 2. *Having peace.* 3. *Standing in grace.* 4. *Waiting for glory.* “Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” Romans v. 1, 2.

“O eyes that are weary, and hearts that are sore,
Look off unto Jesus, and sorrow no more:
The light of His countenance shineth so bright,
That on earth, as in heaven, there need be no night.”



WHAT HAS THE BLOOD OF CHRIST DONE FOR US?

From notes of a Discourse on Heb. ix. 7-14.

No pen can write, no tongue can tell, what the blood-shedding of Jesus has accomplished. The wondrous fruits of that one sacrifice, both God-ward and man-ward, are infinite in their variety. The intrinsic value of that blood has fully and fairly met all the claims of God, every demand of the law, and the whole need of man. It has laid a foundation, or rather, in itself forms *the* foundation for the full display, throughout eternity, of the glory of God, and the complete blessedness of His people. Its virtue is felt throughout the highest heights of heaven, and appreciated there in a way that we can have no conception of here. But in due time its power shall be manifested throughout the whole universe. The vernal bloom of every leaf, and flower, and blade of grass; the playful lambkin, and the harmless lion; the reign of peace and plenty throughout the whole creation in the day of His millennial glory, shall alike proclaim the redemption-power of the blood of the cross. And on the other hand, the awful consequences of sinners despising that precious blood, shall be endured for ever in the deepest depths of

unutterable woe. Its power must be felt everywhere.

But to the *believer*, the *truster* in that precious blood, it has opened the pearly gates of heaven, and shut for ever the gloomy gates of hell. It has quenched the flames of the burning lake, and opened up the everlasting springs of God's redeeming love. It has plucked him as a brand out of the fire, cleansed him from every stain of sin, and planted him in robes of unsullied brightness in the immediate presence of God. For none has the blood of Christ done so much as the hell-deserving sinner. And no order of beings in the bright world above, can ever know the value of that blood, or appreciate the heart that it flowed from, like the redeemed sinner. It was an *elder*, not an *angel*, as one has sweetly said, that told the weeping prophet of the One who had prevailed to open the seven-sealed book: "And one of the elders said unto me, Weep not; behold, the lion of the tribe of Juda, the root of David, hath *prevailed* to open the book and to loose the seven seals thereof." (Rev. v. 5.) There are depths in that blessed word *prevailed* which only a saved sinner can know.

But of all the precious, happy fruits of the blood-shedding of Jesus for us, there is one peculiarly sweet to my heart. Perhaps it is wrong to speak of choosing, where all are divinely perfect, and flowing from the same source; but

now, tell me, beloved friends, have you ever thought much of the wondrous blessedness of being brought back to God? I do not mean *into heaven* merely, but *unto God*, and that, too, in companionship with Jesus—as one with Him. Oh, is there not something that comes home to our hearts, in the knowledge that we are brought back from our wanderings in the far country, to the Father's house; the Father's home; the Father's heart; the fulness in blessing of the Father's presence? I have often thought that the prodigal would be so overcome with the Father's love that he would neither see, nor think about, anything else. Had his eye and his heart rested on the robe, the ring, and the feast, more than on his Father's love, would you not be ready to cry out, Unworthy, unworthy? Oh, what are jewels, however sparkling; robes, however fair; crowns, however bright; or feasts, however sumptuous, compared with the deep and changeless affections of the heart, yes! and of a Father's heart too? This will be our heaven, and the very consummation of heaven's blessedness. With Jesus, and like Jesus, at home in the Father's presence, and finding all our happiness there. The apostle has reached the climax when he says, "But we also joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. v. 11.) Higher than this he can never go, and better than this he can never find.

There are three things which the blood of

Christ has done to accomplish this deeply blessed end for us, namely, to bring us back to God.

I. The way into the presence of God was opened up for us by the blood of the cross (True, it was always open to the sinner by faith for salvation. Here, it is more a question of worship.) Up till that time the way into the holiest of all had not been made manifest, or laid open. (Ver. 8.) God dwelt behind the veil, and His people Israel worshipped Him outside. But the same stroke of judgment that slew the Lamb, and shed His blood, rent the veil from top to bottom, thus laying fully open the way into the immediate, unveiled presence of God. The blood of bulls and goats never could do this. We read in the 16th of Leviticus that on the great day of atonement Aaron sprinkled the blood of the young bullock on the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat seven times, thereby maintaining God's relations with the people, and the ground of their approach to Him for twelve months to come. But there was no rending of the veil, or liberty to draw near to God, save by the high priest alone, and that only once a year, and never without the blood of atonement.

But the blood of the Lamb which flowed on Calvary has accomplished all for us. The veil is rent. The mercy seat above, and the way up to it, are, as it were, sprinkled *seven* times. The number *seven* signifies perfection. All has been

perfectly accomplished by Jesus. From the cross to the throne we have a blood-sprinkled pathway. Oh, what a truth this is! Every step of the way is tracked with the Saviour's love. Oh, how this should strengthen our faith, and bind our hearts to Him! The way to God is now open at all times, for Jew and Gentile—for the chief of sinners. In the faith of this precious blood the guiltiest may come. Come! where to? Into the Holiest of all. He will find the blood there before him. God is satisfied. His character, as well as His claims, have been glorified in the work of His Son. He reposes with divine complacency on the blood-stained mercy seat. But how is the sinner met when he comes? In judgment for his sins? No; that was executed on the cross. Love alone remains to welcome the returning sinner. What! nothing about his sins? No; that question was settled on the cross. God will never raise it again with the poor sinner that trusts in Jesus. He both forgives and forgets. Did the father say anything about sin to the prodigal? Not a word. The prodigal confessed his sins, and that was a right thing for him to do. But God settled with Christ on the cross about his sins. Love, boundless love, flows out to meet the sinner and welcome him home. No barrier intercepts his way. It is perfectly clear. Christ Himself has laid it open. Oh! then, my fellow sinner, come. Come now. Return to the

Father's house. Thy return will make Him glad, and His arms around thy neck will banish fear, and fill thy soul with a new and heavenly joy. Better far to dwell in heaven than in hell for ever. Christ has opened the way. The blood of reconciliation is there. Fear not, only come. Come depending on that soul-saving, peace-speaking blood. Why delay? Only trust in the blood of Jesus and thou art safe for ever. All who honour the blood of Jesus with the confidence of their hearts, reach the highest, and the best place in heaven.

II. The blood of Christ has fitted the believer to enter the open way, and to stand with a "perfect conscience" in the presence of God. (Vers. 8-14; chap. x. 1, 2.) Blessed truth! No sin is left on the conscience. There is no more conscience of sins; although, of course, we shall have the *consciousness* of sin in us while we are here. But the blood of Christ cleanseth us from *all*, not *some* sin. As a young convert so simply but truly answered me the other day, when I was saying to her, "What a blessed thing to know that our sins are all forgiven," "Oh, yes," she replied, "why, if there was one left we could not get into heaven." Sin is as far away from the worshipper in God's presence, as from Christ who bore it. We shall never need to be ashamed of our robes in heaven, or seek to hide ourselves behind a myriad of radiant ones. Our clothing

is the righteousness of God. The highest angel will never have such a robe. Could envy enter the bosom of an angel, it would be because the saved sinner's robe is brighter than his. The blood-washed robes will be the whitest in heaven. They will be the same as Christ's, blessed be His name, and more than this we can never say.

But there is another thing, beloved friends, that I would notice about our being fitted to enter heaven, and that is, *we enter by the same title as Christ Himself*. He entered by His own blood. (Ver. 12.) In virtue of His own blood. So do we. He would enter, not now on the ground of His own intrinsic righteousness merely, but by the same title as His people. Blessed Jesus! what grace! Having been "numbered with transgressors," He enters heaven by the title which equally serves for them. Hence clearly, the same welcome, the same place of nearness to the throne, as Christ Himself, await all who come in the faith of that blood. The gates were lifted up, and the doors wide open flung, when the victorious Jesus returned. We have the same title, the same right of entrance, the same joyous welcome as Christ Himself. But where, beloved friends, does this precious blood set the believer? Not within the threshold of heaven merely, but in the Holiest of all—near as Christ is near. I was speaking the other day about the place of nearness, and dearness into

which we are brought in Christ, when a christian friend replied, "Oh, I do not aspire to that, I shall be satisfied if I be only a doorkeeper." But would Christ be satisfied? was my reply. What! a loving bridegroom allow his bride to be a doorkeeper! What would you think of such a thing? The bridegroom to keep his seat at the joyous table, and allow the loved one of his heart to stand behind the door to open it to every one that knocks! This is a false humility; such thoughts are not honouring to Christ. True, in this world, it would be better far to be a doorkeeper in the house of God, than to have the highest place in the tents of wickedness. But the bride of the Lamb must be where He is, and as He is, and that for ever.

How did the saved thief enter heaven? With Christ, and in all His perfectness. "To-day shalt thou be *with me* in paradise." He was not merely to be within the door, but with Christ, wherever that might be. Oh! these blessed words "with me!" they settle and define everything as to our heaven. "With me," "with Christ," "with the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." Oh, what a heaven ours will be! always with Christ, and as Christ. Heaven would be a dreary blank to us without Christ, and it would be a dreary blank to Him without us. We can never be separated throughout eternity. The members must be where the Head is, and the bride must be where the bride-

groom is. But, oh! the assurance of His love makes our hearts long to be with Him.

“Thy love, most gracious Lord,
My joy and strength shall be;
Till Thou shalt speak the gladdening word
That bids me rise to Thee.”

Are all here ready to meet Jesus, were He to come to-night? Oh! make friends with the Lamb now. His love is sweet, His blood is precious, His home is dear. With arms extended wide, He waits to embrace and welcome to His heart every soul that will trust Him. It seems to me a small thing merely to trust Him. I want you all to love Him—to love Him for His own sake. Happy, happy they who love the blessed Lord Jesus.

III. The blood of Christ has obtained for us “eternal redemption.” (Ver. 12.) Oh! beloved friends, what a word this is to an immortal soul! And, oh! to find it written in God’s book. There it is, read it for yourselves. “*Eternal redemption.*” It is enough! Jesus has obtained it. All the blessedness we have been speaking of is to be *eternal*. Not only has the blood of Christ opened up the way into heaven for us—fitted us to be there, and given us a right and title to all its blessedness; but it has engraven that divine word, “*eternal*” on all that it has made us, and on all that it has brought us into. Not only

is all perfect, but all is permanent. Oh! this just suits immortal souls—does it suit yours? It sweetly suits mine. “*Eternal redemption.*” That will do. It overflows the heart. My soul, as to the future, is eternal, God’s glory is eternal, heaven’s joys are eternal, the love of Jesus is eternal; yes, the sweet love of Jesus shall endure for ever, shall shine in my soul, and in yours who believe, throughout the countless ages of eternity. No wonder the redeemed in heaven sing so much about the blood of Christ. It seems to be the principal note in their song. “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.” This is a note which no angelic voice can ever reach. It is too far above the line for angel choirs. They will have a song, and a sweet song too, for they do love Jesus. But they must all sing a note below the ransomed hosts. Oh, how loud, and long, and rapturous will be our note of praise to Him who drained the cup of wrath for us, who washed all our sins away, who lifted us out of our low estate and set us in the highest place in heaven, who has chosen us to be the companions of His ways, and the sharers of His eternal glory.

Oh! now, my fellow sinners, tell me, is there a soul present that can yet refuse the Saviour’s love—that can slight this precious blood, despise all this coming glory, and neglect so great salvation? God forbid! His love is ready to receive you;

His blood is ready to cleanse you ; His salvation is ready to bless you. All things are ready on God's part. Are you ready ? ready now—ready to-night ? Ready to embrace the Saviour—ready to give Him your hearts ? Does it require time to consider whether Jesus and His love and glory, or the world and sin, and hell are to be your choice ? You must make a choice. And you have only to choose between the way to hell and the way to heaven. Can you hesitate ! Oh ! love the Lord Jesus, trust in the Lord Jesus, and choose the new and living way, which leads to glory, honour, immortality, eternal life.

This being done, a fourth thing will surely follow, "The conscience purged from dead works to serve the living God." This will be your happy service. The Lord grant in His mercy that it may be so, and to His name be all the praise and the glory.

"WHAT IS BELIEVING IN CHRIST?"

THIS is a vital question. All important. None more so. To believe in Christ is to be saved. To live and die in unbelief is to be lost for ever. Yet, notwithstanding its unspeakable importance, there are few questions that come before the

anxious inquirer, more undefined to his own mind than, "What is believing in Christ?" For such we write.

He thinks He has always believed in Christ; and has never doubted anything that the scriptures say about Him. And yet, he is sure that he is not saved by the belief which he has. Hence he gets occupied with faith itself, and soon comes to the conclusion that he has not the right sort. In this state of mind the young inquirer will be sure to attach a mysterious importance to faith, or believing, which does not belong to it. And in so far as this is the case, Christ Himself, the grand object of faith, will be lost sight of. This is one of the ways of Satan, to darken, confuse, and perplex the mind.

We have something like an explanation or definition of faith in John iii. 33. "He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true." The testimony, or word of God, is the ground of faith. When the sinner receives God's word as sure and certain truth, just because it is His word, he honours God with the confidence of His heart. "He sets to his seal that God is true." He has faith. He believes God. Repose fills the soul. He wants no higher authority. He now, as it were, countersigns the divine document, and the affairs of his soul are settled for ever. Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God: if the object be

right, the faith cannot be wrong. Divine faith is faith in the divine testimony. Thus, a link is formed, through faith, between the soul and God, that shall endure for ever; the word of God is His eternal bond.

Such must ever be the happy fruits of faith in God's word, whatever may be the character of the testimony believed. The standard of man's responsibility must depend on the nature of the revelation made to him. Noah, for example, believed one kind of testimony, and Abraham believed another. But whether it was about an approaching flood, or the promise to Abraham that his seed would be numerous as the stars of heaven, it mattered not as regards the result; both believed God, and both were justified. Through doubting God's goodness, and disbelieving God's word, the link of connection between the soul of man and God was broken in Eden; and now, through believing in God's goodness, and trusting in God's word, the soul is re-united to Him in Christ, to be separated no more for ever. Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord? (Rom. viii.) None! Heaven will not! Earth and hell cannot! Glory be to His name. And there will be no beguiling serpent in the paradise of God, and no tree of the knowledge of good and evil. We shall only know good there; and fully, perfectly, and eternally enjoy it.

These few brief hints as to faith in general may be useful to some. We will now look at the particular question before us, namely, "What is believing in Christ?" Were we to give a direct answer to this question, we should say, To believe in Christ, is to *look to Him, the Saviour-God, as the one object of the heart's confidence and affection.* He may be comparatively little known to the believer, and the expression of faith in Him may be very feeble, and sometimes assailed with doubts and fears; nevertheless he who has been taught of God to know Christ, once dead and risen for him, as the one object of his faith, will cling confidently and affectionately to Him, notwithstanding these things.

Comparatively little was known of Christ by either the woman that came to His feet, (Luke vii.) or the man that was cured of his blindness. (John ix.) (The great truth of His death and resurrection was not then fully revealed.) Yet one can easily see in them both, faith and affection. Neither the deep sense of guilt, nor the difficulties of the Pharisee's house, could hinder the woman from coming personally to Christ. And all the arguments and threatenings of the synagogue wholly failed to upset the confidence of him who aforesaid had been blind; or to withdraw the affections of his heart from Him who had opened his eyes. The former knew more of the *Person* of Christ than of His *work*,

the latter knew more of His *work* than of His *Person*. But with purpose of heart they did cleave unto the Lord, and He revealed Himself to both according to their need. No heart ever really desired to know the Person of the Lord to which He did not reveal Himself. And no soul ever really desired to know the work of the Lord, that will not stand in the full credit of that finished work, before the throne of God, for ever. Every desire of the heart towards Christ is of the Holy Spirit, and in due time shall be fully satisfied. The soul that has got a glimpse of Christ will ever after desire to know more of Him. Nothing will ever satisfy it but Himself.

How often one has seen this exemplified in persons who were passing through deep distress about their souls' salvation. Nothing we could say gave them relief, or brought peace to the heart. The more touchingly we spoke of the love of Jesus, and of His grace to sinners, the deeper was their distress, because they could not see that He was theirs. But only suggest, If it would not be better and happier for them to give up Christ altogether, and think no more about those things which only make them unhappy. And, oh! in a moment you would see what a place the Lord had in their hearts. A chord was touched that caused the whole heart to vibrate for Him, and the tears to flow. "Oh, no!" they would exclaim, "I can never give up

seeking after Him. If I perish, I will perish at His feet ; still seeking to know His love and His great salvation." The heart never really desires Christ until the grace of God is at work there. The desire must come from Him.

The consideration of the four following things may be helpful to some of the Lord's precious, though weak ones. He would have them to be rejoicing in Himself, and peacefully resting on His finished work.

I. To *believe in Christ* is to believe in His love and grace, as revealed to us in the scriptures. But individual faith will surely say, His *love to me* a sinner. To begin with the *love* of Christ, is to begin at the right place. The believing heart will always make a personal application of Christ to itself. The love of Christ was manifested in coming down from heaven to earth, to seek and to save the lost. His whole mission and work express the greatness of His wondrous love. If I want to know the love of Christ to me, I must not look to myself, but to His *manifested* love for me a sinner. His love brought Him down. True, His mission was the expression of God's love to the world. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John iii. 16.) Hence, if I want to know the heart of God the Father, I must not look into

my own, but to the gift of His Son. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (1 John iv. 10.) But the love of God, the love of Christ, and the love of the Holy Spirit, is all one and the same love. Only, in the work of redemption, God is represented as the fountain of love, Christ as the channel, and the Holy Spirit as the power that applies it to our hearts. Oh! wondrous, mysterious, marvellous love,—the love of God to sinners.

In so far as this divine love could be expressed or measured, Christ is the measure and expression of it; and individual faith, making a personal application of the Saviour's love, rejoices in it, as if it all centred on itself. Just as Paul did when he said, "He loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*." Here the apostle speaks as personally, as if he had been the only one that Christ loved and died for. And surely this must ever be the language of faith. It never deals in mere generalities. It delights in the Saviour's love specially to itself. Oh! troubled soul, think on this blessed truth! Let your mind dwell upon it, let your heart feed upon it. What more do you want? What more can you desire, than the love of Christ—this perfect love to you? Is there anything you need that is not to be found in His love? In all your meditations on the affairs of your soul, be sure that you make His love your starting-point, and lose

sight of yourself in its heights and depths. It is the first note in our song of faith on earth, and the first in our morning song of joy in heaven. "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen." Revelation i. 5, 6.

Some of the fairest choirs above,
Shall flock around my song,
With joy to hear the name they love
Sound from a mortal tongue.

His charms shall make my numbers flow,
And hold the falling floods,
While silence sits on every bough
And bends the listening woods.

I'll carve my passion on the bark,
Till every wounded tree
Shall drop and bear some mystic mark,
That Jesus died for me.

The swains shall wonder, as they read
Inscribed on all the grove,
That heaven itself came down and bled
To win a mortal's love.

II. To believe in Christ, is to believe that He died for sinners according to the scriptures. (1 Cor. xv. 1-4.) But true faith in Christ is not satisfied with the mere general belief of this blessed truth. Taking the ground of a sinner, it

says, "Yes, but Jesus died for me—He died for my sins, and through His death I am saved. He was delivered for my offences, and where are they? They are all put away. He was raised for my justification. Hence, if He be a risen Christ, I am a justified sinner. The only proof, or evidence, that I have of pardon, justification, and peace in the presence of God is a risen Christ." Faith's question is not, how, or what I feel, but is Christ risen? If He who died for my offences, be indeed risen from the dead, I am perfectly and for ever justified before God. (Rom. iv., v.) No sinner can have settled peace, save on the ground of the DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF CHRIST. He who is seated at God's right hand above the heavens, is the living, eternal witness of the believer's full and everlasting salvation.

There are many other passages that plainly teach the same blessed, soul-saving, peace-giving truth; indeed, all scripture does. The Holy Spirit never suggests a doubt as to the believer's perfect security. All doubts and fears flow from the wicked insinuations of Satan. Such as "*Yea, hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?*" (Gen. iii.) This vile insinuation from the serpent suggested a doubt in the mind of Eve, which led to the whole mischief. The tempter tried the same thing with our blessed Lord in the wilderness, when he said, "*If thou be the Son of God.*" But here he was met

and vanquished by scripture. "It is written." Nothing but the shield of faith will quench the fiery darts of unbelief. Souls must watch against and ever treat all such evil suggestions as coming from the arch-deceiver. Doubts and fears are the prolific offspring of the wicked insinuations of the beguiling serpent. Faith's stronghold is the word of God, in which it securely rests. But should the enemy seek to invade its peaceful repose, it can triumphantly reply, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. v. 8.) The love of God to me while in my sins, as manifested in the death and resurrection of Christ, satisfies my soul, and settles all for me a sinner. God says it, I believe it, who may question it? Listen to God only. Such is the character of true faith. It is most personal. At the same time, while maintaining its individual place and communion, it rejoices in the common joy of all believers, and glories in the words, "we" and "us."

III. To believe in Christ is to believe in the cleansing power of His blood, according to the testimony of scripture, and for *my own need as a guilty sinner*. Although this truth is implied in what has been said about His death for us, still, it gives great relief to the conscience to have the plain direct word of scripture on this special point. Such as "The blood of Jesus

Christ, his (God's) Son, cleanseth us from all sin." (1 John i. 7.) Faith takes its place amongst the "us," and knows for certain that all its sins are cleansed away. Hence the following strong language of unquestioning faith, "In whom we *have* redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." (Eph. i. 7.) A personal application of the blood of Christ is peace to the conscience in the presence of God. Had the Israelite neglected to apply the blood of the lamb to the lintel and door posts of his own house in the land of Egypt, he would not have been safe. (Ex. xii.) It was not enough that he had a lamb, or that he had killed it, and had the blood in the bason. No; it had to be *applied to his own individual door*, or the destroying angel would have entered and killed the firstborn. The blood alone on the lintel and door posts was the safeguard for all that were in the house. So is it now. Faith answers to the blood-sprinkled door-posts. There must be a personal application of the blood of Christ to our own souls to meet our own need. The mere general belief that Christ died for sinners, and that His blood cleanseth from sin, is not enough. There must be a definite, individual application of these blessed realities to our own souls. The language of faith is, "He loves *me*, He died for *me*, and His precious blood *hath* washed all *my* sins away." But though

this is the language of simple faith, it is not, alas, the language of all who believe in Jesus. Many, of whose faith in Christ we can have no doubt, would be afraid to say so much. Through looking to themselves this fearfulness has great power over them, and keeps them from rejoicing in the Lord, and from enjoying His word. Faith never looks to self, but always to the Saviour.

IV. To believe in Christ is to believe that He receives all who come to Him—and, further, true faith in Christ will say, "He *has* received *me*." Sometimes the young believer who is not well established in the truth, will get into bondage on this point. He thinks that he sees and believes the truth about the love of Jesus to sinners, His dying for them, and the efficacy of His precious blood; but he looks to himself and sees many things that are contrary to Christ, and he begins to doubt if he has been or can be received. He will say plainly, "I doubt nothing you say about Christ, what I doubt is myself." This is a delusion. It is a snare of Satan. For how can you know by looking to yourself whether you can be received or not? You must allow Christ to say whether He will receive you or not, and believe what He says without questioning. "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John vi. 37) are His words of gracious assurance to the coming one. The believing heart is satisfied with this assurance, and finds rest in Jesus. Now

its every need is met. All fulness dwells in Jesus. He has received me and fitted me for His presence. Thus faith rejoices in Christ Himself, and in all His wondrous love, His complete salvation, and His coming glory.

In conclusion, allow me to ask, in plain terms, is my reader a believer in Christ Jesus? Without faith in Christ there is no salvation. The soul that lives and dies in unbelief is lost for ever. Oh! if thou art yet a stranger to Jesus, and living in unbelief, how awfully dangerous thy state is. Eternal danger is treading on thy heels. Another step and all may be over—and all may be lost for ever. Oh! then, at once, as thou art, and without a moment's delay, flee to Jesus the Saviour of sinners. Believe in His love—His love for thee a sinner. Believe in His death—His death for thee a sinner. Trust in His precious blood to wash all thy sins away. Rest assured that He is ready and waiting to receive thee. Oh! then, believe in Jesus—receive the truth into thy heart. Come to Himself. Trust in Him. Oh! with what joy and delight He welcomes home the poor lost sinner whom He loves, the one for whom He bled and died, the one whom He has besought many times by His gospel to return, the one whom the Father's hand of love has guided to His everlasting embrace, that He might "breathe on him," quicken his dead soul, fill and overflow it with life and love divine.

"Come unto me," are His own words, "all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And "whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ," says Paul, "for it is the power of God unto salvation to EVERY ONE THAT BELIEVETH." Matthew xi. 28; Revelation xxii. 17; Romans i. 16.

THE STRAIT GATE.

LUKE XIII. 23-30.

THE question here raised is one of deep, personal importance to the sinner, namely, that of salvation. "Lord, are there few that be *saved*?" The Lord Jesus had spoken of the certainty of coming judgments on impenitent sinners, and on mere professors in the kingdom, however flourishing in appearance: "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." (Luke xiii. 1-10, 18, 19.) This is truly solemn as coming from the lips of their own Messiah. "Ye shall." If impenitency and mere formality be persisted in, there is no hope for the future: the soul must "perish." What a dreadful thought is conveyed by that dreadful word "perish." It means *all* is lost—for ever lost! the soul perished, hope perished, all for ever perished,

body, soul, and spirit, in the place of woe. Oh ! that careless sinners and mere professors would think on such things now, ere it be too late—ere the Master be risen up, and the door shut.

It is to such the gospel is preached, and preached by the same Jesus. “God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not *perish*, but have everlasting life.” (John iii. 16.) Here the mere worldling is represented as *perishing*, but not yet *perished*. Glorious gospel ! It perfectly meets the case ; only listen to its voice, and believe its message of love, to thee, O, perishing sinner. God loves the sinner ; Christ died for the sinner—*whosoever* believes it, shall not *perish*, but have everlasting *life*. “God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” (Rom. v. 8.) Thus saith the word of the Lord !

The question here put, “Lord, are there few that be saved ?” seems to be a merely curious or idle question, on the part of the one that asked it ; such as unconverted men will sometimes ask about the doctrine of election. But the Lord, in His usual way, so answered it as to turn it into a serious one. What a lesson for us ! He replied, so as to meet, not the question, but the real state of the man’s soul. As if the Lord said, Few or many, do *you* “strive to enter in at the strait gate.” That is your personal, all-important

matter. "For many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are; then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity."

Surely this is a solemn and searching reply, and well fitted to turn the *curious* into an *anxious* inquirer. The Lord, in His rich mercy, grant that it may do so in the case of all into whose hands this paper may fall. There are many who are still merely curious inquirers, whom we desire to see deeply anxious and earnest ones. Surely the salvation of the soul is of all others the most personal matter possible. The door is still open—the invitation is to all: "Come, for all things are now ready." Enter while there is room. The Master is patiently waiting; oh, delay not! "Strive to enter in at the strait gate."

The connection, and strict interpretation, of this passage refer to the Jews. Christ was speaking to Jews, and of their then present privileges and future miseries, because they were rejecting Him. He plainly shewed them, that

although their privileges had been great, such as eating and drinking in His presence, and hearing Him preach the gospel in their streets, still there was no salvation for them, and no entering the kingdom, while they refused to own Himself, to receive Him as the true Messiah, and the only Saviour of sinners. He would at last say, "I know you not whence ye are; depart from me all ye workers of iniquity." Observe, He does not deny that they enjoyed great privileges; but He repeats this awfully solemn truth, "I know you not whence ye are." They had never made themselves known to Him. They had never come to Himself, individually, as sinners to a Saviour. They knew their privileges, and boasted in them, but they refused Christ. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and *ye would not.*" Christ Himself was rejected. Israel would have none of Him. Therefore they were left desolate, like chickens without the sheltering wing, and the "fox" in the midst of them. Oh, what a picture of utter helplessness and certain destruction!

But although this portion of scripture, strictly speaking, refers to the Jews, it has, nevertheless, a most solemn voice to us. And, morally, it strikingly illustrates our own present position,

we can only enter in at the strait gate by faith in Him who died and rose again. It is too strait for self in any form.

Let us now look at the subject in its application to our own time.

When Christ had finished the great work of redemption on the cross, He ascended up on high, and sat down at the right hand of God in heaven. His work being finished, He sat down. "When he had by himself purged our sins, he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." (Heb. i. 3.) The sacrifice for sinners was offered and accepted, by which their need was fully met. God was glorified. The rights of His throne were vindicated by the blood of the sacrifice sprinkled on the mercy-seat. All the perfections of His character were displayed in their full glory, and the principles of His moral government maintained. All being done,—perfectly, and for ever done—the door of mercy is thrown wide open to the chief of sinners. The way into the holiest of all is made manifest. And the voice of gracious invitation goes forth into all the world—to every creature—whosoever will let him come and drink at the fountain of the water of life freely—*gratis*. God is free to receive to Himself, and pardon with overflowing love, all who come to Him by faith in the finished work of His dear Son. Thus we have, glory be to God, at the present moment,

A SEATED CHRIST,—AN OPEN DOOR.

And whosoever will may come to Him, in the full confidence of the Father's perfect love, and the Son's finished work *for them*. The everlasting gates that were thrown wide open for the King of glory, still stand open for the chief of sinners, and the blood by which He entered is their title to approach and the ground of their acceptance.

There need be no doubts, no fears, no trembling. To enter the open door in the faith of Christ,—simply trusting to the work which He has accomplished for us, is to enter heaven,—how? In what condition, think you? Oh, wondrous truth! It is to enter heaven in the full credit of Christ Himself. It is to cross the threshold, pass through the pearly gates, walk up the golden street, right to the throne of God; and stand in the pure light of that throne, in all the perfectness and acceptableness of Christ Himself. To find fault with the believing sinner there, would be to find fault with Him who sits upon the throne. He stands there, not in His own right or title, but in the rights and titles of Christ. "To-day," said the dying Jesus to the believing thief, "shalt thou be *with me* in paradise." Not only, observe, in paradise, but "with me." Oh, that precious, "with me!" I

defines, so sweetly, where the departed spirit is, where heaven is, and what heaven is. It is just to be *with Christ*. Now, we are by faith "in Christ Jesus;" by-and-by we shall be personally "with him." In our bodies of glory we shall be for ever *with the Lord*. 1 Thessalonians iv. 17.

But as to the immediate results, the present condition of all who believe in Jesus, the following passage is clear and decided: "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." (1 Peter iii. 18.) This is the full gospel of the grace of God. There is no missing link in this gospel. The believer, in virtue of the sufferings and death of Christ, is brought to God in Him. Not only to the cross, but to the throne. Not merely into a place, but unto a person. He can never get better—he can never get higher than this. Oh, wondrous truth! Brought to God, in the condition of Christ!—In the condition of His life, righteousness, peace, preciousness, perfectness, and glory! "Because *as he is, so are we in this world*." (1 John iv. 17.) This passage clearly expresses the believer's vital union—real oneness, with Christ, and that he stands, even now, at this present time, in all His completeness, in the presence of God. And is it, my reader may ask, to all this blessedness, that the open door leads? Yes, dear reader, to all this wondrous, present blessedness! And while

Christ is seated at God's right hand, the door stands wide open night and day. Entering in by the *strait gate*, simply means, coming in faith to Jesus—conversion, reconciliation to God, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh then, enter now! To-morrow may be too late—the Master may be risen up, and the door shut against you for ever.

Alas! that any should prefer present things to coming to Jesus!—that any should need to be entreated to come to Him. What can be more encouraging, more inviting than a seated Christ, an open door? The present *position* of Christ assures the sinner that the work is finished. There is no ground for perplexity. The work required by God, and needed by the sinner, is done—perfectly done, and accepted by God *for the sinner*. The divine proof of this, is, a seated Christ—an open door. There, the blessed Jesus waits in patient love to receive to Himself all who come by faith. And this glorious word, “Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out,” He has sent forth into all the ends of the earth, that every doubt may be dispelled. Oh, then, tell me, ye trembling, troubled, doubting, unhappy ones, where is there the smallest ground for all your fears, as to your acceptance? Certainly, it is not in the love of God, the work of Christ, the witness of the Holy Ghost, the open door, or, in the patient, waiting One. It can

only be in the *unbelief* of your own hearts. For, surely, the work of Christ is finished—God is satisfied, and well pleased in Him, sin has been put away, the power of Satan destroyed, death vanquished, the grave spoiled, and Christ, the mighty Victor, seated in triumph on the right hand of heaven's Majesty, waiting for sinners to be gathered to Him, that they may adorn His crown, and reflect His glory, throughout the countless ages of eternity. "Now, the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace *in believing*, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost." Romans xv. 13.

We will now glance, very briefly, at the second part of our subject, namely,

A RISEN CHRIST—A SHUT DOOR.

The Lord solemnly assures us, that the moment His position is changed, the door is shut; and that there would be no hope for those who were outside, who had refused to enter by the strait gate. The position of the door depends entirely upon the position of the Master. While He is seated, the door is open; but when He is risen up, the door is shut. "When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand *without*, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not

whence ye are." It was those who had enjoyed the greatest privileges, such as eating and drinking in the Lord's presence, and hearing Him teach, that were hopelessly shut out. They might *seek* to get in at the shut door, but there was no admittance for them. "For many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able." The *seeking* here, and the not being able to enter, do not refer to the *strait gate*, but entirely to the *shut door*. So it may have been in the days of Noah. Those who refused to enter the ark through the preaching of Noah, could not get in after the door was shut. They might seek, and seek earnestly, pleadingly, and touchingly, as they saw the waters rising on the earth, but it was too late, God had shut the door and none could open it. They had despised the day of His long-suffering grace, although He had waited a hundred and twenty years for them, but a day of solemn reckoning came at last, and there was no escaping. They might see the ark of God's salvation rising securely on the swelling deep, but there was no refuge for them. Some might flee from one summit to another, but the raging billows pursued after them, until the highest summit was reached, and every mountain swept by the dark waters of judgment.

Surely, dear reader, there is something peculiarly and especially solemn, in the truth here stated by the Lord. Does it not plainly teach

us, that the doom of all would be sealed for ever, who have refused to come to Him by the open door, were He, at this moment, to change His position? Assuredly it does. "When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door," &c. All depends upon this. How solemn! Were He to arise to-day, where would you be? on which side of the door? The question is not, 'I am young, in good health, and may live many years.' Oh, no! but in a moment when we think not, the Master may rise up, shut the door, and what then? If outside the door, amongst those who have deliberately refused to come in, all hope is lost. He is "the master of the house;" "he openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth."

And now, in conclusion, let me faithfully and affectionately warn my dear reader, not to rest in privileges. Privileges, however great, are not Christ. *These* can never save the soul. *He* only can. Have you—oh, have you, come to Himself! Have you ever spoken to Himself about your condition as a sinner, and His grace and love as the Saviour, in dying for you? Oh! let me again ask you, have you come to Himself? Have you had to do with Himself, in the secret of His own presence? Your precious opportunities may be near an end. Who can tell how soon the Master may rise up? Is He not now gathering souls in great numbers, and filling His house

rapidly? May it not be nearly full? Oh, delay not! While the door is open, enter in, and be at rest. "The master calleth thee" and every poor blinded sinner. Why refuse? "Come unto me," are His own words of gracious invitation, and His sure promise is, "I will give you rest." Do, then, oh do, come to Jesus. "Strive" to break away from everything that would hinder thee coming. "Strive to enter in by the strait gate." Oh, let nothing hinder thee. Come to Jesus. He is worth more to thy soul, than the whole world a thousand times over. Only think, then, of the precious Jesus. Oh! how precious He is—and at once come to Him. The companionship of Jesus, the fellowship of the holy, the bright glories of heaven, and the unutterable torments of hell are set before thee. Oh! which is it to be? Canst thou hesitate for a moment? Choose, oh! choose at once, as the portion of thy heart, that blessed One who has waited so long, and so patiently *for thee*. Rest on His finished work *for thee*. Let Him have thy whole heart, and be eternally happy in His changeless love.



THE GOSPEL OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT.

WHEN God gave His law from Mount Sinai, He addressed it to one nation only, and that a very small nation, "to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the promises." (Rom. ix. 4.) But these revelations were confined to Israel. They had a priesthood within, but no ministry going out. Doubtless the presence of God in Israel would be felt in some measure by the nations around, but the Jewish system was not a missionary one; rather, they were walled in. But we would not forget that the day is coming when they will be, in the truest sense, a missionary people. "For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." And of the spared remnant in the latter day, we read, "I will send those that escape of them unto the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, that draw the bow, to Tubal and Javan, to the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory, and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles." (Is. ii. 3; lxvi. 19.) But these happy days for the now despised Jew, we need not say, are still future. The church—the present vessel of testimony—must be off the scene, and

Israel restored, before the activities of God's love are thus displayed in His ancient people. "Blindness in part is happened to Israel, *until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.*" The church, the body of Christ—His *fulness*—must first be completed and caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Then shall the joyous prediction be fulfilled, "And so all Israel shall be saved." Romans xi. 25, 26; 1 Thessalonians iv. 13-18.

Lord, hasten these promised, and longed-for days, in thy good time, that a groaning creation may be relieved—that thy name may be excellent in all the earth, and thy glory set above the heavens!

In the proclamation of the gospel, which is our present theme, we have the perfect contrast to the giving of the law. God, in making known the full gospel of His grace, after the death and resurrection of Christ, commands that it be preached, not to one nation only, but to all the nations of the earth. "According to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith." (Rom. xvi. 26.) The middle wall of partition was broken down by the cross, and the barriers of the ancient economy swept away. The gospel of God's grace now flows on like the rising wave, and overflows all Jewish limits—all lands. "Where sin abounded grace did much more abound." Romans v. 20.

The good news of a full and free salvation,

through faith in Christ, is thus preached to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews. "Be it known therefore unto you," said Paul to his brethren the Jews, "that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it." (Acts xxviii. 28.) Nothing can be wider in its aspect than our Lord's commission to His disciples. "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Neither is it addressed to us in the form of a *promise*, but of a *proclamation*. It is no longer a covenant with its conditions and promises. This makes an immense difference. Salvation is preached as a present reality to all who own Christ by faith, and put their trust in Him. At the same time, it is also true that all the promises are ours in Christ, from the moment that we have faith in His name. As in the case of Rebekah; when she consented to marry Isaac, she became a joint heir with him of Abraham's riches. But had she refused Isaac, she must have remained penniless, so far as Abraham was concerned. All depended on her accepting Isaac—all depends on our receiving Christ. This is the point of all importance. The apostle presents it in the plainest manner possible. "Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." (Acts xiii. 38.) Forgiveness is not *promised*, observe, on certain conditions, but *preached*, or *proclaimed*, through Christ,

to all who hear its joyous sound. Those, of course, who believe the glad tidings *are* forgiven. They are plainly told so. And to make assurance, as it were, doubly sure, the apostle adds, "And by him, all that believe are *justified* from all things." If the word of God, thus distinctly and fully set before us, is believed, peace, as a matter of course, must be enjoyed.

"Kind hearts there are, yet would the tenderest one
Have limits to its mercy, *God has none*,
And man's forgiveness may be true and sweet,
And yet he stoops to give it; more complete
Is love that lays forgiveness at Thy feet,
And pleads with Thee to raise it: only heaven
Means *crowned*, not *vanquished*, when it says FORGIVEN."

The responsibility of hearing such a gospel is indeed great, and the results are beyond all conception important; they are eternal, either in a state of happiness or misery.

If the gospel of the grace of God be thus proclaimed to all, and the salvation which it brings free to all, it necessarily follows, that all who hear it must, in God's sight, be either receivers or rejecters of His love. There is no middle ground in scripture. The merely careless hearer may not think that he is either despising or rejecting the offer of salvation; but, surely, to be indifferent in a matter of such unspeakable interest to God, and of such unspeakable importance to man, is, in some respects, the most guilty

treatment of the message. To hear plainly set forth the pressing invitations of redeeming love, the great work of Christ for us, the value of the immortal soul, the ineffable blessedness of heaven, the unutterable torments of hell, and, after all, to go away in a state of careless indifference, is, in the strongest sense, to despise what has been said.

Many, we are aware, go to hear the gospel or a sermon, as a religious duty, and when they have done so, think themselves all the better for doing it. They are satisfied with having been present on such an occasion ; but the thought of being responsible for either accepting or refusing the message, never enters the mind. This, alas ! is the lamentable condition of thousands. But we must not forget to add, that the fault may not be *altogether* in the hearers. That which they have been listening to, may be little calculated either to arrest the attention, or touch the heart and conscience. All that has been said may be true, but unsuitable for the unconverted, and unfitted to awaken the soul that is asleep in sin. Hence the solemn responsibility of the preacher ! Lord, grant to all Thy workmen, the needed love, zeal, earnestness for this great work, that they may be “ pure from the blood of all men.”

We would now make a few remarks as to the gospel itself ; and in the first place we would refer to—

THE SOURCE OF THE GOSPEL.

It is called "the gospel of God" (Rom. i. 1), which means that it has its source in God. It is also called "the gospel of Christ," because it reveals Him; He is its great subject; but here the apostle is speaking of the *Author* of the gospel. This is a great and blessed truth, and one of much power in the work of evangelization. He who is the object of man's natural fear and dread, reveals Himself as the fountain of all His blessing. It is the first thought in the first epistle. And this epistle, too, more than any other, is addressed to both Jew and Gentile—to man as such. Its solemn address is to "the whole world." But before God's judgment is given on man's condition, His love to man himself is fully revealed. The lost sinner is assured that the spring of his salvation is the heart of God—that the One whom he so fears, so seeks in every way to avoid, is the Author of all his mercies, and the One who meets him in the gospel, with all the blessings of His grace. What a thought! What a truth! What a gospel! The God of all grace goes out in His own goodness—in the activities of His own nature, with the joyous message of salvation to the chief of sinners. But still He holds to the *one way*—"through this man." This is the *only way*. No blessing can come to any sinner but through

Christ—in Christ—with Christ. “What think ye of Christ?” is the Father’s one question. His grand object in the gospel, is the honour and glory of His Son. “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” This is the test. God will never yield this point to the sinner.

Hence it is that many quickened souls go without peace for years, and, in many cases, all their earthly days. The scriptures say, plainly enough, “Through this man”—“By him.” Own Christ, honour Christ, look to Christ, confide in Christ, give Him your thoughts, your affections, your worship, and what then? Why, every blessing that is in the Father’s heart to give is yours. He will bless you with Christ’s own portion—with that which is due to Him; He will make you—what? “An heir of God, a joint-heir with Christ.” But, of course, the truth must be believed before it can be enjoyed. And herein lies the point at issue between God and the soul.

The doubting, unhappy soul says, “If I could *feel* that these blessings were mine—O, if I could only realise that I am interested in them, I should be the happiest soul on earth.” Such a case has been so often stated, and so often answered, that it is not a little humbling to have to face it again and again; nay, daily and hourly. And still there is no answer but the old one—“Look to Jesus, and believe God’s word.”

But so long as the soul keeps looking to its



feelings, both Christ and the word of God, in a practical point of view, go for nothing. All that God reveals to us of His love, all that Christ has done and suffered for us, all that the Spirit bears witness to, are practically set aside, that the *feelings* may have undisputed authority over the poor, distressed, unhappy soul. What a fearful state of things this is, and yet it is the most common in Christendom ! But God cannot alter His word. There it is written, "Kiss the Son"—be reconciled to the Son ; be friends with the Son, make everything of the Son, and what then ? Let the word of God answer : "Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." And, surely, when God says, "Blessed," *blessed* it shall indeed be ! "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." (Eph. i. 3.) And, surely, O doubting heart, Christ is fit to be trusted, whatever our feelings may be—nay, in spite of our feelings ; ought we not to be ashamed of our ourselves, when we cannot trust the One that loves us, and died for us, and lives again in power and glory. And if we do but simply trust Him, the feelings will come all right. Let every doubt and fear then *perish*—yes, perish for ever, in the presence of a love which nothing could turn aside from its object—in the presence of a work that is finished—in the presence of a Saviour who has all power in

heaven and on earth ; and whose love knows no change.

But there may be some who do trust in Jesus, and who are yet far from being happy. Why is this ? The heart may be really trusting Christ, as every believer does, however feebly ; but the full truth of God is not believed. In place of looking to Jesus, and then to the word of God, they look to Jesus, and then to themselves. They think that if their prayers were answered, they must have the feelings of peace, assurance, or whatever it may be that they are waiting for. But if these feelings are not experienced, they conclude that the answer has not come—that God is not regarding them, and that peace is further off than ever. This is a snare of Satan.

An interesting circumstance was reported by a missionary years ago, of an old African chief, which illustrates this point. He was converted in his old age, after a life such as heathen chiefs usually live. His desire to learn to read was very great, that he might read for himself about Jesus—the Jesus who loved Africans and died for them. He was shewn the way, he persevered, and, so far, he succeeded. One day as the missionary was passing along, he saw the aged chief sitting under a palm tree. He paused ; he observed a book lying open on his knees. After looking on the book a little, he raised his head, clasped his hands, and looked up, as if

conversing with some one in heaven. After a few moments he turned his eyes again to the book. The scene was too sacred for the missionary to intrude ; so he passed on without disturbing him. Some time after, when he had an opportunity, he reminded him of what he had witnessed, and asked him what he was doing ? “ O, Massa,” he replied, “ when me look down on de book and read, den God talk to me ; and when me stop and look up, me talk to God.” May both reader and writer profit by the old chief’s example.

This is what we want every anxious soul to do. Look up—look on—never within. In place of looking *within*, after looking up to Jesus, look on the book, read God’s answer in His own book ; His word is definite and never changes. Faith’s object is never within, but *always* outside of self. And what does the book say to every soul that looks to Jesus ?—“ *saved.*” “ Look unto me and be ye *saved.*” And what does it say to those who come to Jesus with a deep sense of their sin and unworthiness, and can only cast themselves on His mercy ? The answer is ready, listen, and, O, believe. “ Thy sins are forgiven, thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace.” (Luke vii. 36–50.) And so for every case there is the ready answer in God’s book. An awakened soul, in the depths of heathen darkness, and in a state of despair, through conscious guilt, may cry out, “ Sirs, what must I do to be saved ?” Can there be an

answer in God's book for such an one? Most assuredly there is! "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." But what could the Philippian jailor know of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of faith in Him? Scarcely anything, we may be sure. Nevertheless the salvation of his soul did not depend on his knowledge, but on Christ. At such a moment there was no time to lose or to explain. Hence, the apostle, with a readiness and an energy suited to the moment, exclaims, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." As if he had said, "Cast thyself on the Saviour of sinners—throw thyself this moment—as thou art, where thou art, on the Lord Jesus Christ, and believe that thou art safe, trusting in Him." He believed the apostle's word, was saved, then instructed, then rejoiced, and brought forth abundantly the fruits of faith. His noble example was blest to the saving of his house. Another may come as a prodigal, who has sinned against knowledge, love, and every form of kindness; the answer perfectly suits the condition. He is welcomed with open arms, and with the kiss of perfect reconciliation. Thus every prodigal is welcomed. To say "No," would be to contradict the word of God; and, worse still; it would be, in effect, to say, that it misleads. But, in "the gospel of God," He acts for Himself, and of Himself, and for His own glory. The Father goes out to meet

the prodigal son. His heart overflows with compassion while the son is yet a great way off, and He must run to meet him. A father's heart is a father's heart after all. "God is love;" and will act worthy of Himself in spite of our unbelief.

The prevailing thought in almost all minds that are not at rest about their salvation, is as to *what they ought to be for God*, in place of *what God is for them*. This is one of Satan's most subtle snares. But supposing the Philippian jailor had begun to reason with Paul about what he had been, and how he then felt, in place of simply believing his word, and at once trusting all to Christ; what would have been the result? Only misery in place of joy. And so it must be in every case. This is the grand mistake of multitudes, and one that is the fruitful source of endless troubles, and in a thousand different ways. The former is the principle of law, the latter of grace. The spirit of law in the nature of things, throws the soul back on itself, to look for something there, that will suit the requirement; so long therefore, as the exercised soul keeps looking within for this something, the principle of law is at work. On the other hand, grace reveals Christ to the soul as its proper object, and not only so, but *the believer's place in Him*.

Christ having met all the requirements of God, and all the necessities of the sinner, faith finds per-

fect rest in His finished work. When Christ is thus known by the believer, He becomes the object of His supreme delight, his refuge in all troubles, and his answer to all questions. He very naturally says, "The One who so loves me as to die for me, is worthy of all my trust!" But in the proportion that a soul is taken up with what it ought to be for God, grace is lost sight of, which, in plain terms, is to lose sight of the work of Christ, our acceptance in Him, and the testimony of God's word to us as *one with Him*.

But it may be urged, that God has His claims on man, and although Israel only, as a nation, was formally and definitely put under the law at Sinai, yet it surely is of universal application. Most true, as to human conduct, but the covenant of Sinai is not the gospel of the grace of God. The former required a righteousness from man, the latter brings a divine righteousness to the sinner; and from the moment he bows to Jesus as his Saviour, he stands before God in all its dignity and blessedness. And further, we must bear in mind, that the believer, however young in the faith, is not on the ground where law applies. His standing is neither that of Jew nor Gentile. "But ye are not in the flesh," says the apostle, "but in the spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." (Rom. viii. 9.) The Christian's standing is in a risen Christ. The law applies to man in the flesh, or in the first Adam.

But the Christian is in the second Adam. The law was made for the unrighteous, but the believer was made the righteousness of God in Christ. Therefore it cannot apply "to them which are in Christ Jesus." The apostle plainly says, "We are not under the law, but under grace." Romans vi. 15.

When God made known His claims on man, through the law, it was then fully manifested that no one could meet them; and, consequently, all fell under the curse of a broken law. What then was to be done with man—a sinner, a law-breaker? Either he must be hopelessly condemned, or God must find a way, consistently with Himself, to shew mercy. This He has done, blessed be His name. Let the cross be witness. He gave His Son. In due time Christ came. He met God's claims on man, bore the curse, blotted out sin, died for the sinner, and opened up the way in righteousness for God's love and mercy to flow forth. This is the solid foundation of "the gospel of God"—the revelation of His boundless grace to the chief of sinners.

When man's utterly lost condition is thus seen, nothing good will be expected in the thoughts and feelings any more than in the actions. The thought of what *I* ought to be for God will be given up; Christ will be all in all. "For I know that in me, (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing." (Rom. vii. 18.) What a relief,

what a deliverance, to be done with self, to know it, and to treat it, as a good-for-nothing thing! "I am crucified with Christ," says Paul, "nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." (Gal. ii. 20.) Again, he says, "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him." (Rom. vi. 6-8.) Surely these passages, and many others that might be quoted, should teach the anxious, restless soul, to be completely done with self in every form. Why look for anything good in that which God has set aside as utterly bad? Not even *one right feeling* towards God can ever spring from our first Adam nature. In God's sight, and according to the whole bearing of the Epistles, it is treated as a crucified, dead, buried, and forgotten thing. Strange that we should still own it as alive, and think it capable of producing some good thing for God! But so long as we do so, we increase our troubles, and get further away from rest and peace. The believer, as a child of the first Adam, came to His end on the cross. Christ is his new, eternal life; he is risen from the dead in Christ, and now before God in Him. "Ye in me, and I in you." This is grace; and, by-and-by, it will be wondrous glory.

And, now, in the view of such scriptures, what

ought to be the thoughts, feelings, and language of every believer in Christ? So far as we can answer from the word of God, and from long experience, we should say—Rejoicing in the full liberty and blessing of the gospel before God. The soul is near to God as Christ is near, being in Him, and adorned with His comeliness. Can more be needed? Can more be desired? It is thus as far removed from sin and judgment as Christ Himself. “They are not of the world,” as He says, “even as I am not of the world.” Such truths have only to be received, in order to fill the heart with heavenly joy. “And these things,” says the apostle, “write we unto you, that your joy may be *full*.” (1 John i. 4.) Not merely, observe, that they might have joy, but that they might have *fulness of joy*. And why not? To know that Christ once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, is surely enough, we need nothing more to satisfy the heart.

For a sinner to be brought to God, is to be brought to Him through death and resurrection, in union with Christ who died and rose again. This is the great foundation-truth of the soul’s peace in the presence of God. All that belonged to the first Adam is left behind, and the believer stands before God in all the blessedness of the risen, exalted, and glorified Man. He is now addressed in scripture as an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ. His citizenship is in heaven, he

belongs to the new creation—to God's new world. There, "old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." And to crown the blessedness of the new creation, it is added, "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ." (2 Cor. v.) These scriptures, I need not say, do not apply to the believer's experience, as many, unhappily, have taught, and many believed. The old nature in the most advanced Christian, is the same as it ever was, it has not "passed away." The passage refers to the *new creation*—to our association with Christ in resurrection; and of which He is the centre, life, and glory. And there, as we read, "*All things are of God.*" It is God's new world. On everything in the old creation we find written, "passeth away." But everything in the new creation is stamped with God's own perfectness and unchangeableness. Happy thought! Blessed truth! All is perfect and unchangeable. "I know that whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever; nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it." Ecclesiastes iii. 14.

We will now look at—

THE GOSPEL OF GOD, AS PROMISED BY THE PROPHETS.

But first, it may be profitable to notice the difference between the expressions, "the *Gospel of*

God,” and “the *church of God.*” The distinction, though important, is too frequently lost sight of. While they are closely connected, they are yet perfectly distinct. The church of God, as we learn from the New Testament, was not the subject of revelation or promise in the Old; whereas, the gospel has been the subject of revelation from the beginning, though the fullness of God’s grace was not proclaimed, until after the work of Christ was accomplished. The church as a matter of fact, had its commencement on the day of Pentecost: the truth concerning it, was given to the apostle Paul; the other apostles scarcely allude to it. It is often spoken of by the apostle as “the mystery.” (Eph. iii.) But the word, “mystery,” in the New Testament, does not mean something that is difficult to understand, or that cannot be understood, but something that was not revealed—kept secret. “Which in other ages,” as the apostle says, “was not made known unto the sons of men.” But the gospel never was a *mystery*—a hidden secret. It was revealed, we may say, in the garden of Eden, the grace of God and the ruin of man being the foundation of it. In the promise about the woman’s seed, we may say, the gospel was preached unto Adam. He believed it; the Lord God justified his faith, and covered him with a robe of His own making. In the offerings, too, the gospel was preached, especially in the burnt-

offering and its accompanying meat-offering. The dignity and glory of the Person and work of Christ were set forth in these sacrifices; and in the leper's two birds we may see His death and resurrection.

But when we come down to the prophets, we find the great truth of the gospel, the subject of promise, in a variety of forms, and announced as not very distant. It had not come in their day—the glorious truth was not revealed, but it was spoken of as near at hand. “I bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off; and my salvation shall not tarry; and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory.” (Is. xlv. 13.) Again, “Thus saith the Lord, Keep ye judgment, and do justice; for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed.” Isaiah lvi. 1.

Thus we see, that in Old Testament times, the gospel, in its fulness was *promised*; but not what is called in the New Testament *preached*. The apostle was “separated unto the gospel of God, which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures.” (Rom. i. 1, 2.) In this we have the great difference between the Old and New Testament times as to the gospel. Then, it was promised as God's great blessing to come; now, it is preached as come in all its fulness and freeness to the whole world. At the same time we are fully assured that God has

never left Himself without a witness—a testimony to His mercy, and that all who then believed God according to the revelation which He gave of Himself were saved. “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved,” is a quotation from the prophet Joel. And no statement of the gospel can be more free than this; but the *greatness* of the salvation was not made known until Christ came. “The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” John i. 17.

A deeply interesting view of the gospel now opens up to us. The righteousness of God promised of old, is introduced, and the full salvation of God is preached. A new order of things has commenced. “Grace reigns, through righteousness, unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.” The believer is now assured, on the authority of the word of God, that He has eternal life, and divine righteousness. Old Testament saints, no doubt, had eternal life, but it does not appear that they knew it. How sad to think that many New Testament saints, as to their experience, are just where the saints were in olden times. The grace that now shines under the title, “The gospel of God,” meets the believer with heaven’s richest blessings. *Not one is lacking.* And here, too, we have comfort in seeing that it always was in the purpose of God thus to bless. Eternal life was promised in Christ Jesus, before the

world began; and the righteousness of God was witnessed both by law and prophets. Grace always dwelt in the heart of God, as in its native fountain. "God is love," and grace is the joyous giving forth of that love in blessing. Its streams may be many, and its application a thousand-fold, but the fountain is one.

As the time drew nigh when the way would be completely opened up by the death and resurrection of Christ, for the full overflow of blessing to man, we find grace anticipating the day in such words as these, "I bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off; and my salvation shall not tarry." And now that Christ has come, and finished the work given Him to do, God's righteousness is revealed, and His salvation fully come. By the cross every barrier was broken down, and all hindrances were removed. Heaven's highest claims were fully met, sin was put away, death abolished, and the veil of the temple rent from top to bottom. The cross is also the declaration of the righteousness of God, in forgiving the sins of believers before Christ came. It becomes the grand centre of all the ways of God. Romans iii. 19-20.

Under the law it was a question of righteousness on man's part; under the gospel, divine righteousness is revealed on God's part; it is "unto all, and upon all them that believe." Under the law man was acting—doing. "Do

this and live." Then God was behind the veil, giving out His laws, and dwelling in the thick darkness. "And the people stood afar off: and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was." (Ex. xx. 21.) But under the gospel, God is acting—doing; and man has simply to believe. But having received eternal life, and divine righteousness through faith, he is not only delivered from dead works, but he is to serve the living God.

It is often most perplexing to awakened souls, when assured that the question of sin, in the case of those who return to God, trusting in Christ, is never raised. What has been already said, shews the foundation of this marvellous grace. The question of sin having been settled between God and Christ on the cross, it could not again be raised between God and the sinner when he believes in Jesus.

But let us take an example. Supposing the very worst of sinners becomes convinced of his sins, and draws near to God under a sense of their greatness and number; it may be with fear and trembling, and little wonder. Still, he comes in faith, believing that Christ died for sinners, and that His blood is all sufficient to wash his sins away. He might not be able to state these things just as they are now written, but substantially, they are in his mind. Well, and how is he met—how is he received? So far as we

understand God's ways in grace with the sinner, we should say, that he is met, received, owned, honoured, and blessed, according to that which is due to Christ as the Saviour of sinners. Nay, more, he is received as Christ Himself—"accepted in the beloved." The word *sin* is never mentioned. Were God to raise this question with the sinner, he could not answer Him for one of a thousand, he would be utterly condemned. But, blessed be the God of all grace, the Father of our Lord, the prodigal is welcomed with open arms, and embraced with the kiss of perfect peace. Evidently, the work of Christ is the ground, and the riches of divine grace the standard of his blessings. "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." (Eph. i. 7.) Were he to receive what is due to himself, it would be immediate, unmitigated judgment. God would be just in condemning the sinner, but on the ground of the work of Christ, "He is just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Romans iii. 19-26.

Now, under grace, *man believes and God acts*. This is what we understand by the expression, "The gospel of God;" and the similar one, "The righteousness of God." It is the revelation of God Himself, in His gracious actings towards man, according to the greatness of His own goodness and the claims of Christ—the risen Man in glory.

It is this testimony to the grace of God, which makes the results of hearing it so awfully and solemnly important. What must be the guilt of those who neglect or despise such a gospel! And what! oh, what must be the bitter anguish of a soul, when it finds the fearful results of its self-chosen ways, in the depths of unutterable woe! All hope gone, the day of mercy past, the door of mercy closed, and no ear of pity to listen to thy doleful cry! But memory! oh, how vivid! Every day—every hour of the past—sternly mirrored before thy mind! All delusion, unbelief, and indifference, gone! These things, so common on earth, have no place in hell. The past, the present, and the future, have put on their deep, unutterable realities! All sleep, and rest, and repose have for ever fled away, and anguish, remorse, and despair, now prey upon the undying soul. Tears of blood would not be too much to shed over a soul laid in such ruins; and especially the soul of a gospel hearer.

Oh! sinner, sinner,—hear, believe! Thy days are few—thy last opportunity will soon come—delay not! Turn now, even now, to thy God and Saviour! Where sin abounds, grace much more abounds. In this, the day of God's wondrous grace, thy sins, however many, are all forgiven the moment thou hast faith in Jesus. Many prodigals, when feeling the bitterness of

sin, after the pleasure is gone, would gladly return to their fathers' house on earth, but they are afraid of what would be said of them, and of the shame that would hang over them, and they cannot return. The assurance of a happy welcome and the past forgotten, would make them fly as on eagles' wings. But, oh! the thought of that disdainful look—that outside place, where the first was once enjoyed, wrings the heart, and seals its alienation. I would rather, it exclaims, die in my wretchedness, than submit to such humiliation! But now, my fellow sinner, listen—do listen to the pleadings of one who knows the bitterness of sin, and the sweetness of pardoning mercy. Things are not so with thy heavenly Father, nor with thy Father's house on high. Not only wouldst thou be welcomed, but thy Father in heaven would run to meet thee, and not one word would be said as to the past. The past, with every believer, is not only forgiven but forgotten. What a mercy! What a comfort to know it! The joy that fills the Father's heart on the return of the prodigal, fills all other hearts around Him. No disdainful looks would ever meet thee there—no outside place would ever be thine. Near and loved as Christ Himself—shining in His glory and beauty, and welcomed as a son of the Father, with all the dignities and honours which that love can bestow. But time, would fail, and paper and ink would be exhausted

before they could write the glories of a child of God—of a sinner saved by sovereign grace.

And yet, most strange to tell, we find many now, like Esau of old, who sold his title to the land of Canaan for a mess of pottage. He preferred a present—a momentary gratification to a future inheritance. And this is what thousands and tens of thousands are doing still. A present gratification has more power over their hearts, than the surest title to a heavenly inheritance. My reader—is this thy condition? If so, is it wise? Hast thou no concern for thy precious soul? Only think—an immortal soul, happy or miserable for ever: and that thine own soul. How long will it be before it is either in heaven or in hell? Is this a matter of little or no moment to thee? It is thy soul—thine own soul, my dear reader—ruin it not, I beseech thee. It is capable of enjoying God and glory, degrade it not to the depths of hell—sink it not in the bottomless pit. It is thy soul—thine own soul; and ought to be thy darling—thy dearest object on earth. Would not the thought be dreadful—the lamentation bitter? “I have brought all this ruin and misery on myself—my own hand has done it—but, oh! is it for ever? Is there no hope?” No hope—falls heavily and surely on thy sinking, despairing heart; and thou wilt be far away from those who once deeply felt for thee, earnestly prayed for thee, affec-

tionately warned thee, and were ever ready to weep with thee or for thee. No sympathising heart can ever be found there. And then there will be time to think, and memory will do her awful work ; but self-reproach will be unavailing—how many have now to say, in bitterest anguish, “Oh ! the opportunities I refused, the warnings I despised, the light I quenched, the convictions I stifled !”

But why should I dwell on such awful scenes ? Not, certainly, because I love the theme, but because I love those that are in danger of heedlessly falling into them. Hast thou, my fellow-sinner, turned in heart to the Lord ? If so, I close the subject, and joyously turn with thee to Him, and write the boundless blessedness—the ineffable happiness, and the eternal glories of thy new—thy divine position in Christ Jesus, our ever blessed Lord. Happy soul ! Hallelujah !

’Tis heaven on earth to know Thy love,
To feel Thy quickening grace :
And all the heaven I hope above
Is but to see Thy face.

Then keep me in Thy love, O Lord,
And teach me of Thy ways,
Till Thou shalt come to take me home,
And see Thee face to face.”

We will now briefly consider—

THE GOSPEL OF GOD, AS PREACHED BY
THE APOSTLES.

It is most interesting to observe how exactly the Apostle Paul takes up the gospel as it was promised by the prophets. The passages already quoted from the latter, are sufficient for our present purpose ; such as, " My righteousness is near. My salvation is near to come : and my righteousness to be revealed." Nothing can be clearer than that these, and all such passages, do not refer to the covenant of Sinai. They are full of the spirit of grace—the grace that announces the righteousness of God in the salvation of the sinner through faith. Both the righteousness and the salvation are directly from God Himself. But we have not now to suppose what may be their true meaning. The apostle tells us that he is not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, " for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth ; to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith : as it is written, The just shall live by faith." Here we have salvation and righteousness revealed, as spoken of in the Jewish scriptures. The same line of truth, which has for its foundation the death and resurrection of Christ, frequently occurs

throughout the writings of Paul, but especially in his Epistle to the Romans.

The expression "from faith to faith" means, on *the principle of faith*, in contrast with *the principle of law*. This, we may say, characterised the apostle's mission. "By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name." (Ver. 5.) Obedience to the faith, evidently, is in contrast with obedience to the law, as the way of blessing. The *name* of Christ is now the grand object of faith, and the rule of the believer's life. The power, value, and authority of the Name of Jesus, have also great prominence in the preaching of Peter in the early chapters of the Acts of the Apostles. There, too, the burden of the preacher, is the death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus. All who had faith then, and since, and who have it now, are associated with the *risen Christ*, and are partakers of the blessings of the gospel of God. But on the other hand, it is said, that the wrath of God is revealed against all who *refuse* obedience to the name of Jesus, whether they be ungodly Gentiles or unrighteous Jews. All is now seen to be "*of God*," whether it be the gospel, salvation, righteousness, or wrath. We are said to be justified *by* God, not merely *before* Him. And, "who shall lay anything to the charge of *God's elect*?" And again, "If *God* be for us, who can be against us?" This is a

great feature of the Epistle to the Romans. God is seen in the foreground, and everything is spoken of as coming from Him.

Man is thus brought, by faith, into the possession of salvation, without adding anything to it. It remains wholly and entirely the salvation of God. And what a mercy it is so! We are saved according to the thoughts of God. All is of God. "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith." (Rom. iii. 27.) How perfectly simple the demands—how eternally glorious the results, of the gospel of the grace of God!

Let us dwell on this thought for a moment. It is worthy of our closest study. The sin-stricken heart bows at the feet of Jesus. The truth of the gospel has been acting upon his heart in the power of the Holy Ghost. He is convinced of sin, and fears its consequences; he flees for refuge to the blood of Jesus. What can be more simple, or, in a certain sense, more natural? It is simply fleeing from imminent danger. But there God meets the sinner—meets him in His own goodness. And now, what must the results be? Who can speak of the blessing he receives? God's heart in its depths of goodness is its measure. *That which is due to Christ is made over to the believer, by God Himself, and sealed with the Holy Ghost.* "It is God that justifieth." He acts from Himself, and worthy of Himself. The blood of Christ is

on the mercy-seat, and He is free to bless the child of faith according to His infinite grace. Every soul that honours that blood, is blessed according to its value in God's sight. Therefore, the blessing is infinite; and we can only think of it, and speak of it, as nothing short of that which is due to Him, who shed His blood for God's glory, and man's redemption.

This, dear reader, is the gospel of God—the righteousness of God. Christ so revealed and magnified God by His great work on the cross, and in the whole path of His perfect, blessed obedience up to the cross, that He made Him, as it were, His debtor. Hence the fulness, freeness, and delight of the Father's heart, to bless all who honour His Son. This is His grand purpose in the gospel—the honour of His Son. (Ps. lxxxix.; Matt. xxii. 1–14.) He knows not, we may say, how much to make of those who honour His Son. This is His love. But God also speaks of this as His righteousness, or His faithfulness to Christ.

What a light, we may exclaim, this great truth sheds on the work of Christ! What a glory it unfolds, as due to the risen Christ, and to all who are associated with Him. What perfect blessedness—what perfect happiness! Who would not love, trust, and worship the name of Jesus! The heart is filled with a peace that passeth all understanding. It is perfect rest. Numberless passages

in the New Testament, and in the Old, too, are made plain in the light of this precious truth. The Bible becomes a new book. Take the following as an example of what we mean. "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth." "Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference." 1 Corinthians i. 30; 2 Corinthians v. 21; Romans x. 4; iii. 22.

Truly, we may say, this is a glorious gospel—the good news of the glory, and of the righteousness of God! What a privilege to be called of God to preach it! Surely, anything but great plainness of speech, singleness of purpose, and earnestness of heart, in preaching such a gospel, must be wrong—must be a mockery of the sinner's condition, and an injury to the grace and truth of God. But, alas! preachers are sometimes tempted to think of themselves. There is the temptation to try how nicely the discourse can be arranged, how well delivered, how successful in arresting the attention of the audience, as with power; but all the while, the poor outside sinner, standing on the slippery brink of hell, is

not singled out, or a word spoken directly to himself. He goes away as ignorant of the way of salvation as he came. It has been all too high, or unsuited for his state of mind. Oh, what must the responsibility of the preacher be! Who can estimate the results of even one occasion of preaching the gospel! It is always a question of life or death, of heaven or hell. "For we are unto God," says the apostle, "a sweet savour of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that perish. To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life." 2 Corinthians ii. 15, 16.

We all know how deeply a congregation may be moved by an earnest heart, and how each one may be reached, even when comparatively little truth is unfolded. Its power must be felt. In illustration of this fact, we may refer to a scene which took place last winter, though it does not, strictly speaking, touch the province of preaching.

A very rough-living mechanic was obliged to drop work, and take to his bed. His constitution gave way under his course of life, though a young man. The Lord blessed the continued visits of christian friends. He became a completely changed man, and thoroughly happy in the Lord. Shortly before he died, he began to feel a great desire to speak to *all* his old shopmates, and associates in sin. It was not expected that he would live out the day, and as he was so weak,

he was advised not to think of it. But no, he felt as if he could not die in peace until he had warned them of their danger. His desire was sent to the shop, and several came. But what a scene—what emotion, now that they are face to face! The dying man was partly raised up from his pillow. His own pallid cheek, sunken eyes, and want of breath, greatly affected the men. Fixing his eyes on an old familiar face, and with wonderful energy he said, in something like the following words, "Harry, you are to meet me in heaven—I am going to heaven—but, if you are to meet me in heaven, Harry, you must believe on Jesus now. Jesus died for us. We must believe in Him." This was about the extent of his address; but, with a little rest between, he appealed to each of the men by name, praying and beseeching them, with great fervour and agony of spirit, to give up their sinful ways, believe on Jesus now, and meet him in heaven at last. Soon after this exertion he fell asleep in Jesus, an example of sovereign grace; ere long to arise and shine on the plains of glory, as an eternal monument of plain speaking to a plain man.

We forget how ignorant the natural man is of spiritual things, and how difficult it is to make him understand the plainest facts, or feel concerned in view of the most fearful results. Though all alive to that which is earthly, he is dead to that which is heavenly. Who has not felt

the difficulty—the heart-breaking difficulty—of getting the heart of man to believe in the all-sufficiency of the work of Christ. Nevertheless, it is worth all pains and labour to win a soul for Him—to become a fool for Christ, if the great end can be gained. But whichever way it ends, such is the plainness and fulness of the testimony to God's grace, that all who hear it must be left without excuse. They are responsible. They can no longer occupy a middle place. Henceforth, each one must stand before God, either as

A RECEIVER, OR A REJECTER, OF CHRIST.

This is a solemn consideration for both preachers and hearers. How needful for the preacher to be plain and faithful, that he may be clear from the blood of all men; and how needful for the hearer to see that he neglects not God's great salvation. For, as the apostle says, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" Escape, rest assured, O thoughtless soul, is impossible! This is a strong way of insisting on the certainty of divine judgment overtaking all who neglect this salvation. And in proportion to the greatness of the salvation neglected, must be the greatness of the condemnation that falls on those who neglect it. The very thought of having slighted by indifference, or despised with contempt, so great and glorious a deliverance,

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must be gall and wormwood to the soul. The following lines are said to have been penned by one in this condition shortly before he died. But, alas ! it was the end of a godless life.

“ My days are in the yellow leaf,
The flower, the fruit of life is gone ;
The worm, the canker, and the grief
Are mine alone.”

How melancholy ! What forcible words these are ! But what a difference between the death-bed of the poor mechanic, and the death-bed of this highly-gifted nobleman ! The one had Christ ; the other had the world in its fulness and glory. The one fell asleep in Jesus amidst the shouts of victory, the other died amidst the terrors of an awful eternity.

But now, why, oh why, my fellow sinner, be indifferent another moment ? This nobleman was cut down suddenly in the prime of life. He caught cold, I believe, which brought on inflammation ; but nothing could arrest its progress. Oh, why wilt thou die—die the second death ? There is eternal life for thee in Christ. Why not accept this choice gift of Heaven ? Why delay this great business ? It ought to be the one business of thy earthly days. Why not now accept, from the hands of love, this priceless treasure—the salvation of thy soul ? Jesus died for sinners, and His love is the same to-day as

it was the day He died on Calvary. Still He waits, and still He says, "Come unto me . . . I will give you rest." And still He affirms, "Him that cometh to me I will in nowise cast out." Oh! that He may have thy immediate, deep, heartfelt response, "Lord Jesus, I come." Be assured that all scripture is clear and strong as to the result of gospel hearing; and that all who do not believe in Jesus, and trust in Him, are classed with the despisers of salvation. There can only be but two great results as to the final issue. Neutral ground is unknown in scripture. It must either be the blessed home above, or the fearful hell beneath—the bright glories on high, or the lake of fire below.

But the word of God decides the solemn question now, as to every gospel hearer. We have not to wait until we reach the judgment-seat. "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." John iii. 18, 19.

And the great apostle, too, when preaching the gospel, applies the solemn warning of the prophet to the unbelieving Jews then before him. "Beware, therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the prophets. Behold, ye de-

spisers and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you." Acts xiii. 40, 41.

Here, then, we have this solemn truth, in the words of holy scripture. Each one that crosses the threshold as he leaves the place of preaching, is seen by God, either as a *receiver*, or a *despiser* of Christ. There can only be two classes. Most solemn, searching thought! Would to God, cries my soul, that gospel-hearers would lay this to heart! To which class, let me ask, does my dear reader belong? Ask thyself, I pray thee, this plain question. Compared with this one, all others to thee are unimportant. Stay not till another opportunity of preaching comes round. It may never come to thee. Stay not till thou hast laid down this paper, or come to its close. Look to Jesus now, believe in Jesus now, flee to Jesus now, lean all thy weight on the Person of Jesus now; and a full Christ shall be thine—a whole Christ shall be thine. Yes, my dear reader, the Christ of God—the salvation of God, the righteousness of God, the peace of God, the glory of God, thine, thine now, thine through all thy pilgrim days, and thine throughout the countless ages of eternity.

"FAREWELL, vain world! I've had enough of thee:
I long a brighter, better world to see,

I long the happy saints above to join,
I long with them to sing, with them to shine;
I long my Saviour's blessed face to see,
I long to be from sin for ever free;
I long to reach my bright, my blest abode,
I long for the embraces of my God;
I long Thy promised rest, O Lord, to share,
I long for glory,—when shall I be there?"

HUMAN RELIGION, OR DIVINE; WHICH IS IT?

A SHORT time since, I was asked to go and see a poor dying woman, who was concerned about her soul, but evidently very ignorant as to the true ground of a sinner's peace with God.

On entering the cottage, I was struck with the neatness and arrangement of everything. Nothing seemed out of its proper place. A young woman shewed us up a small narrow staircase to the attic, where the sick one lay. The same air of cleanliness and comfort was visible in the sick chamber as in the room below.

Immediately my eyes rested on the sick woman, I felt convinced she was passing through deep exercise of mind, and that her time here would be very short. There was much that was interesting in her countenance. Her face had assumed that clay-like appearance which takes place after life is gone. Her eyes were large,

black, and piercing—most expressive of great concern within. Pale death sat on the cheek, while something like the full energy of life sparkled in the eye. Such was the contrast.

On taking her hand and observing that she seemed very weak, she replied, "Yes, sir ; I am very weak ; but I am very glad to see you. Miss —— has been speaking to me about you."

"Do you think that the Lord will soon remove you to another world ?"

"Oh yes, sir ; I cannot long be here."

"Dying is always a solemn thing, is it not ?"

"Oh yes, very—very !"

"Are you happy in the prospect of appearing before God after death ?"

"Not always."

"Are you sometimes ?"

"At times I am."

"Why are you not always happy ?"

"Oh, I am far from being what I ought to be !"

"Is not that changeableness, think you, owing rather to the foundation on which you are resting ?"

"I suppose so—I am not sure. I am not sure I am saved."

"Will you tell me what is the ground of your hope before God ?"

Now she seemed to summon up all her strength, and with an air of confidence and self-com-

placency, she repeated, without faltering, the following lines—

“ 'Tis religion that can give
Sweetest pleasures while we live;
'Tis religion can supply
Solid comfort when we die.”

“ Yes indeed, dear woman,” I replied, “ that is quite true, provided your religion be divine ; but there is such a thing as human religion, as well as divine.” She was evidently a little troubled at this saying, and looked at me very keenly. “ The Pharisees, you know, were very religious, and yet they rejected Christ. Their religion was not divine surely. They despised the very One in whom God delighted.”

“ Yes, I know—that is quite true about them ; but they were hypocrites.”

“ Well, I admit that ; but who knew they were hypocrites ? Jesus only could take off the mask, and shew what they really were. The common people thought them very good. And no doubt many of them were sincere, though blinded. Paul himself was both sincere and zealous when he was a Pharisee, though he hated the very name of Christ. So that a person may be as religious as a Pharisee, and not be saved.”

“ Well, then,” she exclaimed, “ what is the difference ? ”

“ DIVINE RELIGION, the Bible says, is ‘ pure

and undefiled ;' so that it must come from heaven. To be religious, then, in God's sense, is to be like Christ—to be possessed of His life, filled with His Spirit, and walking in His steps. HUMAN RELIGION is attending to the forms of Christianity, without divine life in the soul—form without power—profession without reality. You know as well as I do, that a person may be very sincere, and attend church or chapel regularly ; sing psalms and hymns ; hear sermons ; say prayers, and yet have no saving interest in Christ ; no divine life in the soul. Human forms, however sincerely attended to, will never meet God's righteous demands, or wash away our many sins. And these are the things which concern you most, are they not ?”

“ Oh yes—oh yes. What am I to do ?”

“ Well, there is one thing I want to ask you—Is the solemn question about sin settled between God and your own conscience ?”

“ Oh, tell me !” she cried, with the deepest earnestness, “ am I saved ?—am I saved ?”

“ If you are a true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are.”

“ Oh, I believe ; but are my sins washed away ?”

“ ‘ The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin. ’ ‘ Without shedding of blood there is no remission. ’ Can you depend entirely on the blood ?”

By this time, the poor woman seemed to feel that her former foundation was crumbling beneath her feet, and all her hopes were perishing. She cried most bitterly, "Oh, I am not saved!—I am not fit to die!—what am I to do?"—her head rolling from one end of the pillow to the other, and her large, dark eyes gazing on me in the most pitiful manner. It was enough to rend one's heart. I was silent for a little, and lifted up my heart for direction. I was afraid she would expire. Many thoughts passed through my mind. She became a little calmer. I felt encouraged to say a little more, and quietly repeated some passages of scripture. But she very soon got excited again about her sins. Nearly the whole of our conversation after this was about the value of the blood of Jesus, as meeting the case of every sinner that believeth in Him. She spoke a great deal about her many sins, and asked if the blood of Christ could put all these away. I shewed her from the scriptures, that there were many in heaven now, who had been guilty of far greater sins than hers. This she was slow to believe, and still spoke about her sinfulness. Not a word now about—

"'Tis religion that can give."

She had lost all hope in her former religiousness, but did not see how she could be saved by only believing in Jesus. Her sins were her great

trouble, and how she was to be pardoned. I assured her that the blood of Jesus was a perfect remedy for all sins—great sins and little sins; and that while it was needed for the very least sin, it was all-sufficient for the greatest. I tried to make this precious truth plain to her in the following way:—

“Suppose,” I said, “that you were guilty of every sin that you have known or heard of, and saw them all written against you there, on the wall before your eyes—the sin of swearing, lying, stealing, drinking, and murder: well, suppose you were really guilty of all these, and many more, the blood of Jesus Christ could wash them all away, just as easily as the sin of a little child in saying ‘No’ to her mother. The child that naughtily said ‘No’ to her mother needs the blood of Jesus to cleanse away her sin, as really as the person who is guilty of all these. Not a particle of sin can ever be put away from God’s sight but by the blood of His own Son.”

She was evidently greatly interested in all this—her eyes constantly turning to the wall, as if she saw her sins written there. It seemed reality to her. But she could find no relief. The scene was most touching. I again sought to direct her attention to the blessed Jesus. “The moment you believe in Him,” I said, “and trust in His precious blood, you will be cleansed and saved

from all your sins. Do think on what God's word says, 'The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin.' Now, if you believe that word to be true, and place all your trust and confidence in the shed blood of His dear Son, you will not only be pardoned, cleansed and saved, but you will be quite happy. Your peace will be made with God. The very instant you trust Jesus you are saved. 'Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.'"

She began to be more calm, but was evidently under deep conviction, and asked a great many questions. After a little prayer, I proposed to leave, when she again began to speak about her sins, and about being saved, and got into such an agony of spirit, that she cried, "You must let me know that I am saved—I must be saved;" looking as if she would catch hold of me.

It was difficult to answer her, and most desirable to soothe her. "How sweet," I said, "are the words of the blessed Jesus to the weary and heavy laden: 'Come unto me—I will give you rest.' 'Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.' Here, and here alone, the burdened heart finds relief, and the weary soul quiet eternal rest. Only rest here, lay your weary soul on Jesus, leave it there, and be at rest. He will put your *sins* far away, but keep *you* near to Himself. Oh do! cast all on Him, trust all to Him, confide only in Him. Do venture

your all on Him—He will never fail you, nor forsake you. Only trust Him and all shall be well—for ever well.”

Seeing her tolerably quiet, I left. But I can never forget the speaking expression of her eye, as I withdrew from her bedside.

Oh ! what a solemn lesson to all who are either living carelessly or trusting to mere empty forms. They will be found worse than useless on a death-bed. Human religiousness and divine Christianity are very different things when we come to die. Nothing short of living connection with Christ, and resting on the sure foundation of His finished work, will save a soul. Dear reader, are you on this Rock ? Has death no sting for you ? Are you ready—waiting for the Lord’s coming ?

Next day—Wednesday—I sent her some suitable tracts of a large type, but my friend found her no better—still restless, and speaking about the two kinds of religion and the blood of Jesus. On Thursday, when the same kind friend called, she found her even more unhappy, and still talking only of the same things. Friday morning came, and the usual call was made ; but, oh, what a change had taken place ! The moment she saw her countenance, she felt sure there was a happy change. She looked so calm and peaceful. The fierce eye was softened, and every feature was at rest. When the question was asked,

how she felt this morning, she instantly replied, "Quite happy now!"

"I am thankful to hear that. What is it makes you so happy now?"

"RESTING IN THE BLOOD. All that Mr. — said to me about the blood of Jesus came to me during the night—so clear. It is all true; I am happy now, resting in the blood."

At this moment, she took from under her pillow the tracts I had sent her, and laid them down on a small table at the bedside, signifying by the act, as it was understood, "I am done with these now, I have found Jesus, I am at rest in Him." She was evidently sinking fast, but all was peace.

On being asked, "Would you like to see Mr. — again?" "Yes, very much," she replied; "but tell him I shall soon be with Jesus. I will meet him in heaven."

She fell asleep the same day about four p.m.

A few days after this, I called to see the young woman already mentioned. I found she was sister to the departed, and had given up her place as a domestic servant to take care of her sister and the children. (The husband, being a labouring man, was out all day.) This accounted for the house being so orderly. Although she was not a Christian, I was desirous to hear what she had to say of her sister, and, at the same time, to speak plainly to herself. One part of

our conversation may be profitable to mention, as revealing the fearful ignorance which prevails in the minds of many as to the way of salvation.

“Ever after the Tuesday,” she said, “my sister was more restless, and more difficult to please; but on Thursday she was quite irritable. I was wishing you had never called. I could not lay the pillow aright, or do anything to please her. ‘Dear me,’ I said, ‘what is the matter?’ ‘Oh, if I knew that my sins were pardoned,’ she exclaimed. ‘Well,’ said I to her, ‘if you pray to God, I am sure he will forgive you your sins.’ ‘*Are yours forgiven?*’ she sharply replied. ‘No; I know mine are not forgiven, because I have never asked.’ ‘Oh, no! that is not the way, Mr. — says we can only be pardoned through faith in the blood of Jesus.’”

Night came on, and it was arranged that the young woman should go to bed, and the husband sit up. He stretched himself on two chairs by his wife’s bedside, so that she could wake him if she wanted anything; but to the great surprise of both husband and sister, they were allowed to sleep undisturbed until the morning. The God of all grace had visited her during the lonely hours of midnight with the light, peace, and joy of His salvation.

When they looked at her in the morning, she was lying perfectly quiet, and told them she did not want anything. She was quite happy. She

saw it all now. The Lord had done it by the teaching of His own blessed Spirit, and by means of His own written word. This is conversion—true conversion. Many are religious, as this woman was, but are they converted? This is the solemn question. Without true conversion—being born again, no amount of religiousness, however sincere, however constant, can save the immortal soul. “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” May the Lord bless the above narrative to the awakening of many souls from the fatal slumbers of a false profession, and to His name be all the praise and the glory. Amen.

PERFECT AND PERMANENT.

WERE we to judge of the comparative value of the soul and the body from what we see around us, we should surely come to the conclusion that the body is much more valuable than the soul; so little attention is paid to the one and so much to the other. We see, on every hand, far more thought, care, labour, and money, spent on the body than on the soul. It is perfectly right, of course, to care for the body: it is our duty to do so. But the danger of neglecting the soul is all the greater on that account. Our greatest snares are

daily duties. Just because they are lawful and right in themselves, we seek thereby to keep the conscience quiet under the plea that duty must be attended to. Surely it is right to do our duty ; but it is wrong, always wrong, to neglect the soul. If it be neglected, all is wrong, however prosperous we may be in the world. Has the soul no claims ? Do we owe no duty to it ? Many satisfy themselves by attending for a few hours, on the first day of the week, to what is called their *spiritual* interests, and then devote the remaining six days to their *temporal* interests. Thus the soul comes in for a very small share of their time and consideration.

But we shall neither rightly understand the worth of the soul nor appreciate its claims, until we have learnt its value from the word of Christ. "For what shall it profit a man," He says, "if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul ? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul ?" (Mark viii. 36, 37.) Here we are plainly taught that one human soul is of more value than the whole world—that if a man were to gain the world and lose his soul, he would be an infinite loser.

The soul is spiritual and must exist for ever, either in a state of perfect happiness or the most awful misery. The world is material and must pass away ; but the soul will never pass away. It is immortal, it will never die. No, never—

never die! It may, alas! be eternally separated from the living God, which is called "the second death;" but it can never cease to exist. Either the Father's house of many mansions or the burning lake must be the everlasting abode of every immortal soul, and of the body, too, after the resurrection. It is this consideration that makes the soul so precious, that gives it such a value to the compassionate heart of Jesus. No one could tell the worth of a soul as He could. He had counted the cost and paid the ransom price of its redemption.

And now, observe, the soul being spiritual and immortal, nothing will meet its need that is not both *perfect* in its nature, and *permanent* in its duration. Besides, the soul has to do with God, and nothing will suit Him that is not as perfect as He is Himself. The soul, being immortal, must have an everlasting portion. But where, you may ask, are we to find this character of blessing for the soul? Certainly not in this world. Vanity, decay, and death, are written on everything down here. There is nothing PERFECT—there is nothing PERMANENT. Nothing can be found "under the sun" that will meet the need or satisfy the desires of one human soul.

In the Book of Ecclesiastes, we have the record of human experience, with reference to this world, on a large and magnificent scale; and the result proved that all is vanity and vexation of spirit.

“Vanity of vanities,” saith the preacher, “vanity of vanities; ALL is vanity. What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?” (Chap. i. 2, 3.) So long as we seek happiness UNDER THE SUN, we shall not find it. Solomon was a wise man and a great king. He tried and proved everything that “could be supposed capable of rendering man happy.” (See chap. ii.) He tried mirth and pleasure, wisdom and folly. He made great works, builded houses, planted vineyards, gardens, orchards, and trees of all kinds of fruit. He got singing men and singing women, silver and gold in abundance, and the peculiar treasure of kings. “So I was great,” he says, “and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem; also my wisdom remained with me. And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them; I withheld not my heart from any joy: for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour. Then I looked on all the works that my hand had wrought and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit *under the sun*.” Verses 9–11.

So long as the heart of any one is seeking rest, satisfaction, or happiness in this world, it will surely be disappointed. The result in every case must be bitter disappointment, for it can only reap from such a soil, “vanity and vexation of

spirit." The heart of man is too large for this world to fill. Its capabilities are too vast for all that is *under* the heavens to satisfy. And yet how eagerly many are chasing after the fleeting phantoms of time, to the entire neglect of the solemn realities of eternity! But supposing that every desired object were reached, and all possessed, what would be gained? Only a deeper sense that all is vanity—that it is not in the power of earthly good to fill up the aching void within. All worldly pleasures, amusements, indulgences, and gratifications, leave the soul more thirsty than ever: they cannot satisfy. Excitement is the right name for worldly pleasures—take that away, and they would prove a most burdensome task. They only increase the painful sense of want, with an intensified desire, which makes the poor neglected soul thoroughly miserable. There is a worm at the root of every gourd, and a thorn in earth's fairest flower.

The portion, dear reader, which thy soul needs is not to be found within the wide range of nature. Solomon could not find it *under the sun*, and "what can the man do that cometh after the king?" There is nothing *perfect*, there is nothing *permanent*, that has its spring in this sin-stricken world. Oh! what a poor, hollow, worthless thing the world appears in the light of this plain truth! It only excites the feverish

thirst of the soul, but cannot quench it. A greater than Solomon found it to be "a dry and thirsty land where no water is." O reader! think of this! This is a true testimony. There are no living waters in this world. There is no life, no food, no rest, no joy, for the soul, beneath the throne of God, where Christ is now seated. Husks you may have, if you can buy them, but the price is your soul.

But where, you may again ask, are we to find the needed, suited portion for the soul? Let the Spirit of Truth answer. "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." And again, "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto ME and drink." (Isaiah lv. 1-3; John vii. 37.) Nothing can be plainer than these passages. Christ Himself is the life and food of the soul. "And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." (John vi. 35.) Here, and here alone, the soul of man will find eternal rest. He is the only *perfect* and *permanent* good of the soul. But He is *above the sun*. He has gone up on high. We must believe in Him, and through believing, come to Him where He is. We must rise in spirit—in heart, above the sun,

to find the spiritual blessings which our souls need. "He that *hath* the Son hath life." We must possess Himself as our wealthy portion. Oh, have you found your way to Him? Are you occupied with Him? Can you now say—just now—"Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee"? Christ not only fills, but overflows the soul which is occupied with Him alone.

The contrast between a person who is seeking happiness in the world, and one who has found it in Christ, is strikingly presented in the book of Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon. (See Song i. 1-7.) In the latter, the believing soul is with Christ Himself, and that is everything. In His presence there is fulness of joy. It is not as in Ecclesiastes, an endless variety of things, but a living Person, the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. The heart not only believes truth, but it loves a Person. The blood of the cross having met all the need of the conscience, the Person of Christ meets all the need of the heart. This is the summing up of the Christian's creed—the blood of Christ for the conscience, and the Person of Christ for the heart. And oh! what confidence, rest and joy the believer has in Him, speaking of the bride in the Canticles, simply as a believer in Jesus. "Thy love," she can now say, "is better than wine." Wine is the symbol of human joy, the joys of earth, but all

that the heart now desires is to know and enjoy more of the love of Jesus. For it has found that the blessed realities of His faithful love are sweeter and better far than all it ever found here below. This is the only source of true happiness to the soul, the only spring of real joy.

But observe, further, there is not a word here about sin, forgiveness, or justification; neither was there anything said about these things by the father to the prodigal. Why is this? Is God indifferent to sin? Oh, no! Far from it. It is intolerable to His being. But these questions were perfectly settled, for every believer, in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. So that when the prodigal returns he is not blamed, or charged with anything, but met by all the affections of the father's heart. Surely, if sinners believed this, they would not be so unwilling to return to their heavenly Father. Judgment was spent on the cross: the wrath of God was poured out there, and sin was dealt with and put away, according to the glory of God. He had something to say to Christ about the prodigal's sins, but nothing to the prodigal himself. When the sinner returns to God, in the name of Jesus, he comes before Him in all the value of His work, and that so fully answers for all his sins, that God the Father says nothing about them. True, the sinner himself may be deeply exercised about his sins, and fully confess them, and very right that he

should do so, but the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin, and fits us to be "in the light, as he is in the light."

And now, the poor heart is free in the presence of God, and occupied with Jesus there. It can now say, "The king hath brought me into his chambers." (Ver. 3.) It has learnt his wondrous love. It has tasted its sweetness. It is at home with the King in his chamber. Oh! what joy can be compared with this? Every other attraction loses its power when I am here. What are all the varieties spoken of in the book of Ecclesiastes compared with this place of perfect and everlasting joy? They all dwindle into utter insignificance, now that I have found the *perfect* and *permanent* good, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." (Heb. xiii. 8.) When the heart is occupied with Christ Himself it can relish nothing else. In Ecclesiastes the heart was too large for its portion; in the Song of Solomon the portion is too large for the heart—its cup runneth over. To know that the presence-chamber of the King is my eternal happy home, is joy unspeakable and full of glory.

But oh! a strange feeling passes over my spirit, and whispers, "Is there any other place for souls besides this?" Oh, yes! The truth must be told. There is another, and *only* another; and that is, the burning lake of fire. "Oh, solemn thought!" And know thou, that every child of Adam must

be in one of these two places for ever and ever. Oh, reader! reader! which is to be thine, the chamber of the King or the lake of fire? The highest place in heaven or the lowest place in hell? If Christ be the desired object of thy heart, thou art with Him already, in His chamber. Rejoice, then, in thy portion. "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, rejoice." But, oh! if the world be thy portion here, the lake of fire must be thy place for ever. Oh, be warned of thy danger ere it be too late! Hast thou no thought, no concern, no care, for thy precious soul? Jesus says it is of more value than the whole world; and wilt thou sell it to Satan for the pleasures of sin, which are but for a moment? Wilt thou barter away the ineffable bliss of heaven for the gratifications of earth? Oh! ponder the bent of thy heart and the ways of thy feet. If thy foot be lifted in the direction of the world, stay! put it not down. Oh, stay! turn round! Let thy back be on the world, and thy face to Jesus. Oh! let the uplifting of thy heart be unto Himself. Believe in Him; trust in His finished work as the ground of acceptance in God's sight. His precious love has long kept the door of mercy open for thee—yes, for thee! Why linger outside? He still says "COME;" "yet there is room." ENTER, this is the "door" that leads to the chamber of the King—to His presence, to His heart, to the Paradise of God, to the eternal blessedness of heaven.

“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” Revelation xxii. 17.

“Ho ! ye thirsty, parched, and fainting,
Here are waters, turn and see ;
To the thirstiest, poorest, vilest—
Without money, all is free.
Thirsty sinner,
Drink, and stay not, 'tis for thee.”

THE PROMISE FULFILLED.

(2 CHRON. XXII. 10 ; XXIII.)

ATHALIAH was a daughter of the wicked king Ahab, and daughter-in-law of the good king Jehoshaphat. This was a connection entirely opposed to the mind of God, and He marked it, in His righteous judgment, with His sore displeasure. One disaster after another befel Jehoshaphat and his house, because he “joined affinity with Ahab.”

When he commenced his reign, it is said that he “strengthened himself against Israel, and placed forces in all the fenced cities of Judah. . . . And the Lord was with Jehoshaphat.” But afterwards he greatly erred in forming an alliance with Ahab to recover Ramoth-gilead, which all

ended in disaster and confusion. 2 Chron. xvii., xviii.

Jehoram, the son of Jehoshaphat, who reigned in his father's stead, had Athaliah "the daughter of Ahab to wife." She was filled with the cruel and persecuting spirit of her father's house, and lent herself to Satan to do his work. She was an instrument of cruelty in his hands. For, although her immediate object, in killing all the seed royal, was to take possession of the throne herself, the object of Satan was very different. From the days of Abel, his aim had been to cut off, by means of death, the line of the promised seed, and thereby frustrate the purpose of God, destroy the faith of His people, and break them off from trusting in His word.

God had promised to David that He would establish his seed for ever, and build up his throne to all generations. (2 Samuel vii.; Psalm lxxxix.) Hence, Satan's great object now was to prevent the accomplishment of this promise by destroying all the seed royal. "But when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the seed royal of the house of Judah." Having thus, as she thought, got completely rid of the true heir, she took possession of the throne herself, and "reigned over the land."

This was indeed a sad sight in Judah, and most trying to the faith of the faithful. God

had promised the throne, in solemn covenant, to David and to his sons for ever, and now a wicked usurper of the apostate house of Ahab occupies it. But faith endures as seeing Him who is invisible. The enemy may appear for a time to triumph, but it is only in appearance, and for a short duration. "The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, and the thoughts of his heart to all generations." (Psalm xxxiii. 11.) God is over all, and above all. His word can never fail. Let us "only believe," and trust in Him. Faith, in due time, will be answered, the promise fulfilled, and every enemy utterly confounded.

Satan had now done his utmost: he could do no more. Death is the last act of his power; but God is the God of resurrection. Where Satan ends, God begins. He quickens the dead. At this very moment, when the hopes of the house of Judah seemed lost, He was watching over, in His faithful love, the true heir of the throne of David. Accordingly, we read, "But Jehoshabeath, the daughter of the king, took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him *from among the king's sons that were slain*, and put him and his nurse in a bedchamber. So Jehoshabeath, the daughter of Jehoram, the wife of Jehoiada the priest, (for she was the sister of Ahaziah,) hid him from Athaliah, so that she slew him not. And he was with them hid in the house of God six years." Thus Joash, the true heir, was preserved by the inter-

vention of God. "He was rescued from among the king's sons that were slain." He was like one that had been raised up "from among" the dead. It was a resurrection "from among" the slain ones. The power and instrumentality of Satan end when he has brought in death, but the power and instrumentality of God come into operation just where his end. All his malignant efforts, and the cruelty of his instruments, only prove, more fully, the unchangeableness of God's purpose, and the eternal stability of His word.

There are several points of special interest to the Christian in this instructive narrative which I desire to notice in order.

1. In the wonderful deliverance of the infant Joash from the hand of Athaliah, we have a striking illustration of the resurrection of Jesus, by the mighty power of God. Joash was stolen "from among the king's sons that were slain." Jesus was raised up from among the dead. The former was hidden in the house of God—the latter is hidden in His Father's house on high.

2. In Athaliah, on the throne of David, we have an equally clear illustration of the present position and guilt of the world, with reference to the crucifixion of Christ, the heir of every promise. The world, led on by Satan, crucified Christ. God holds it guilty of the deed. It "is condemned already." When the Jewish "husbandmen saw the Son, they said among themselves,

This is the heir ; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance." (Matt. xxi. 38.) The religious Jew and the godless Gentile joined hands to shed the blood of Jesus. They, together, crucified the "heir of all things," the Lord of life and glory. "The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together." (Acts iv. 26, 27.) Here we find gathered around the cross of Jesus, the representatives of every class ; namely, Jew and Gentile, king and subject, priest and people. The whole world was, representatively, at the cross, and took part in the crowning act of man's sin. Christ refers to this when He says, "Now is the judgment of this world ; now shall the prince of this world be cast out." (John xii. 31.) The world was judged in the death of Christ, and its prince cast out. They go together. God will hold every man to his colours. Those that fight under the banner of the Prince of life will at last enter into the joy of their Lord ; but those that fight under the banner of the prince of this world must be cast out with him.

The whole power of Satan was concentrated at the cross. He brought up all his forces to this point. He staked everything—the power of the

world, and the power of darkness. (Luke xxii. 53.) He had ever watched, with most malignant jealousy, God's chosen vessel of wondrous grace to man. He missed Him when he slew the babes in Bethlehem. He was overcome in the temptation in the wilderness, and bound by a stronger than he. But he returned to Him again. "The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me." He had no power of death over God's unblemished Lamb. He laid down His life of His "own voluntary will." "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself." (John x. 17, 18.) His death, then, was not the result of the power of man or Satan over Him; but of His own perfect subjection to His Father's will. At the same time it clearly proved the extent of Satan's power in the world. As the obedient One He lays down His life. In appearance the enemy triumphs. But it was not so. "Through death he destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." (Heb. ii. 14.) This was absolute victory. He bore the judgment of God against sin in His death, and thereby completely annihilated all the rights and power of the enemy for ever. Morally, judicially, and absolutely, the true seed royal triumphed over the great enemy of God and man. True, "He was crucified through weakness." But He

entered the regions of the dead as "the Son of God with power." His presence was felt throughout the deep caverns of the grave. He burst its bars asunder, and carried off in triumph the spoils of the enemy. "He ascended up on high, leading captivity captive." A risen Christ is LORD OF ALL.

But my reader may be disposed to ask, On whom, at this period of the world's history, does the guilt of the death of Christ rest? Most assuredly, we answer, on all those who side with the world. God has not yet publicly vindicated the honour of His beloved Son, or judged the world for its awful guilt in murdering Him. If the blood of Abel cried to God for vengeance on Cain, surely the blood of the holy, spotless Jesus cries for vengeance on those who not only shed it, but despise it. If we are not justified by faith in the shed blood of Jesus, we are condemned by it. We are either by faith on the side of Christ, or in unbelief with the world, and, as it were, approving of what the world did, though we may not say so in words. In the sight of God, we are on the world's ground, and under the world's guilt and condemnation.

In vain did the chief priests remonstrate with Peter and John on this point. They said, "Behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and *intend to bring this man's blood upon us.*" (Acts v. 28.) It is quite plain, from this and

other passages, that these divinely-qualified preachers brought home, to the consciences of their hearers, the truly solemn charge of blood-guiltiness. But the same precious blood speaks of the love of God, as well as of the sin of man. Both found their highest expression in the cross. All who have faith in the blood of Christ are cleansed from all their sins, justified in the presence of God, and "accepted in the Beloved."

3. If Athaliah illustrates the present position of the world, Jehoshabeath illustrates the present position of the church. She was hidden in the house of God with Joash, the rejected and unknown king, whom the world thought to be dead, but whom she knew to be alive. Of all Christians it is said, "Your life is hid with Christ in God." (Col. iii.) The eye of Jehoshabeath rested in the fulness of hope on the true and living heir. "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour." (Heb. ii. 9.) "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, *then* shall ye also appear with him in glory." Colossians iii. 4.

And now, let me ask, what sympathy could there be between Jehoshabeath and Athaliah? Surely, none whatever! Could the former take any part in the schemes, plans, or principles of the latter? Could she assist her, in any way, in the administration of her affairs, or conform

to the fashion of her court? Oh, no! There was not a particle of fellowship between them. Athaliah was a murderer and a usurper, her garments were deeply stained with the blood of the sons of David. Besides, Jehoshabeath knew that the moment Joash was revealed, the usurper would be hurled from her throne—that his appearance would be the death-blow to her reign; therefore, she was content to wait until then. The “six years” would soon run their rapid course: it was but “A LITTLE WHILE,” and God would place the true heir upon the throne of David.

The application of all this to the church is very easy. Whole-hearted separation from the world is her true place; and holy, happy, living association with Christ, her divine Lord and Bridegroom. If the believer is indeed enjoying communion with Christ, he can have no fellowship with the world, either in its spirit, principles, or ways. “For I am jealous over you,” says the apostle, “with godly jealousy, for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin [an unearthly virgin] to Christ.” (2 Cor. xi. 2.) And again, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” May we have no sympathy with either the world or its lovers. The first blast of the trumpet will be the death-knell to them all.

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4. If, in Jehoshabeath, we see *heart* for Joash, in Jehoiada, her husband, we see *faith* in activity for him. The *affections* of the former were gathered around the person of the prince; the *faith* of the latter was energetic, in making every necessary arrangement for the glory and stability of his throne. He was a man of faith, energy, and devotedness. In leading so many to make a covenant with Joash, while yet unseen, he illustrates the present energy of the Holy Spirit, in connection with the preaching of the gospel, in leading souls to trust an unseen Jesus, and to rejoice in hope of His coming kingdom and glory.

“And in the seventh year Jehoiada strengthened himself, and took the captains of hundreds. . . . And they went about in Judah, and gathered all the Levites out of all the cities of Judah, and the chief of the fathers of Israel, and they came to Jerusalem. *And all the congregation made a covenant with the king in the house of God.* And he said unto them, Behold, the king’s son shall reign, as the Lord hath said of the sons of David.”

At this point of our narrative, I would most affectionately ask—Have you, my dear reader, embraced, by faith, the unseen, but risen, living Christ, as your Prince and Saviour? This is a personal question of eternal importance. All that believe in Jesus are within the sure limits

of the everlasting covenant. "The God of peace brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant." (Heb. xiii. 20.) Have you, dear reader, for yourself, before God, faith in this precious blood? The blood that was shed on Calvary is the foundation of every blessing. There is nothing but judgment, overwhelming judgment, before the sinner, that has not been washed from his sins in the blood of Jesus. Oh! can you say to Jesus, with all your heart, "I am Thine, and on Thy side: I cleave to Thee, and trust to Thee alone. The world is guilty. I am guilty, being of it. But Thou art righteous, O holy, spotless, blessed Jesus. Yet Thou sayest, Come! '*Come unto me.*' By faith I come, I come to Thee, and bid an eternal farewell to this doomed world of ours. Thy word is plain and sure—'Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.'" Through grace, I rest in Thy word, rejoice in Thy work, confide in Thyself, and wait for Thy coming, as Thou hast said, "SURELY I COME QUICKLY; AMEN. EVEN SO COME, LORD JESUS."

5. In the position of the Levites we may see the future position of the church in glory, with reference to its place of nearness to the Person of Christ. They were, typically, a dead and risen people; and also, typical of the church in its priestly character as "a royal priesthood."

“And the Levites shall compass the king round about but be ye with the king when he cometh in, and when he goeth out.”

The bride of the Lamb, the beloved Eve of the second Adam, will have her own special place of blessed nearness to the Person of Christ in millennial and everlasting glory. She has the temporary title of “bride,” but also the permanent one of “wife.” The affections of the bride will be as lasting as the relationship of wife.

Oh, wondrous grace! wondrous glory! What a “BLESSED HOPE” the Christian’s is! To be chosen by a greater than Jehoiada—“to compass the king round about to be with the king when he cometh in, and when he goeth out.” Is the heart of my reader established in this most precious, soul-elevating truth? Is he looking, not for an *advent* merely, but for a *Person*? The Christian’s true place and proper hope is, “To serve the living God, and to wait for his Son from heaven.” “We know that when he shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” We shall see His glory, hear His wisdom, and enjoy His love, “for we shall be like him;” shining in His grace, and reflecting His glory.

6. Every needful step having been taken by the active and faithful Jehoiada, *all things were ready*. The seventh, or millennial, year was

come, and now, Joash, the rightful heir to the throne of David, is brought forth from his secret hiding-place. He comes in the glory of his father's house. He is surrounded with the "spears, and bucklers, and shields, that had been king David's"—the bright memorials of the victories of David. "Then they brought out the king's son, and put upon him the crown, and gave him the testimony, and made him king; and Jehoiada anointed him, and said, God save the king. . . . The king stood at his pillar at the entering in, the princes, and the trumpets by the king; and all the people of the land rejoiced and sounded with trumpets, also the singers with instruments of music, and such as taught to sing praise."

This was a day of great joy and gladness of heart to Joash, to Jerusalem, and to all who waited for his appearing. Faith was now answered, patience rewarded, and *the promise fulfilled*. "Behold, the king's son shall reign, as the Lord hath said of the sons of David." But if it was a day of light and joy and rejoicing to Joash, and to all who had sided with him during his rejection, it was a day of darkness, and gloom, and terrible despair to Athaliah, and to all who had sided with her during her reign. The day of vengeance was come, and oh, what a day to the despisers of the true heir! "Now when Athaliah heard the noise of the people

running and praising the king, she came to the people into the house of the Lord. And she looked, and, behold, the king stood at his pillar." The pillar of immovable promise. This was enough; the first glimpse of Joash filled her whole soul with the terrors of judgment. . . . Then Athaliah rent her clothes, and said, Treason! treason! But Jehoiada answered her vain cry with, Judgment! judgment! "Have her forth of the ranges," was the imperative word of command, "and whoso followeth her let him be slain with the sword, . . . and they slew her there."

Thus, Judgment, unmitigated judgment, closed the six years' reign of the guilty Athaliah and all her deluded followers. Solemn, awfully solemn, foreshadowing of the final doom of this guilty world and all its deluded followers, who are willingly ignorant that the true heir is alive in the house of God on high, and justly claims our allegiance!

The scene being now completely cleared of the usurper and her followers, the king is peacefully, gloriously, and triumphantly placed on the throne of his father David. The nobles, governors, and people of the land "set the king upon the throne of the kingdom. And all the people of the land rejoiced; and the city was quiet, after that they had slain Athaliah with the sword."

What a solemn lesson we learn from these concluding words! "The people rejoiced, and

the city was quiet." When? AFTER that they had slain Athaliah with the sword. When, oh! when will this groaning creation rejoice? When will the city of the whole earth be quiet? AFTER the judgment already passed has been executed. AFTER the vials of God's wrath have been poured out. But not until then. Could Joash have reigned in fellowship with Athaliah? Impossible! The scene must be cleared of the enemies of the king before he sits upon his throne.

Christ's "hand will take hold on judgment" before He takes hold of the sceptre of righteousness. "Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with THEE?" (Ps. xciv. 20.) The whole scene must be cleared of His enemies, and Satan bound. Then "the prince of the kings of the earth" will ascend His throne of righteousness, and sway His sceptre of peace over a restored and delivered creation. Then UNTO HIM, "whose right it is" to reign, shall all its tribes and tongues roll their loud, and long, and rapturous Hosanna, around a peaceful, happy, and rejoicing millennial earth. "BEHOLD, a king shall reign in righteousness . . . and the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places." Isaiah xxxii.

O blessed hour ! when all the earth
Its rightful Heir shall yet receive ;
When every tongue shall own His worth,
And all creation cease to grieve.

Thou, dearest Saviour ! thou alone
Canst give Thy weary people rest ;
And, Lord, till Thou art on the throne,
This groaning earth can ne'er be blest.



REFLECTIONS ON THE WORK OF THE GOSPEL.

It is safer far to speak of the results of a brief gospel mission, a year after, than just at the time. So much interest is awakened, it may be in a quiet country town, by such occasional visits, that nearly the whole place is aroused. Like the bursting forth of spring after a long, hard winter, all seem to have new life. But how much of the bloom will form and ripen into fruit is quite another question. Nothing could be more disappointing than to count the blossoms. A sanguine temperament, if also inexperienced, is prone to do so.

Many are greatly moved by the scenes and atmosphere of a meeting where the Holy Spirit is working, without any divine work in their own souls ; and these for the moment, have the

most hopeful appearance ; there is no sense of guilt to discourage ; no sense of danger to alarm ; and little hesitancy in saying that they do believe. Neither are such dishonest or deceiving ; they feel all they say at the time. But there is a missing link. Sin has not been felt ; Christ has not been seen ; the heart has not been turned to Himself under a sense of helpless ruin. They are attracted, interested, and it may be, delighted, but when the extra meetings are over, and things return to what is called "dull and dry," those who have been carried along by the general current soon cool down and return to their former habits. Who has found Christ—who is now looking to Him ? is the one grand question. Christ Himself before the soul is its only power against adverse currents, against the attractions of the world and the assaults of the enemy. His presence is what keeps us holding fast "the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end." "Two lads who professed to be converted last year, have gone back to the world," said one who had watched over them ; "the others have gone on well ; some are at the table, and one young man is now preaching the gospel." A round year is a fair test as to the varied results of the work.

Take another example. From one family, under the same roof, four of the household professed to be converted. A son and daughter

are selected to illustrate our subject. All seemed equally happy, all confessing faith in Christ, all rejoicing in their new light and heavenly hope, The parents being Christians, there were great rejoicings in the family. For a short time, the four seemed to go on as they had commenced ; but by-and-by, in rather less than a week, the impressions began to fade away from the mind of the son, and he soon slipped back into his former habits. When reminded of what he had so recently professed, and asked why he had so soon given it up, he could not tell ; the feeling, he said, had gone quite away, and he had nothing before his mind : neither himself as a sinner, nor Christ as a Saviour. The name of Jesus was mentioned to him, and the blessedness of trusting in Him was earnestly pressed upon him, but there seemed no vital link between them. There was no proper sense of sin, no exercise about it, no appreciation of the Person and work of Christ. Being naturally amiable, there was no opposition, but, like the morning cloud and the early dew, that which at first seemed a happy conversion, passed away. But its lessons remain ; it teaches the need of dealing with the conscience, watching the direction of the eye, and ascertaining if some portion of the word of God is ruling in the heart. We see the happy contrast and the divine reality in the daughter.

About the same time that the son fell away,

the daughter was allowed to be severely tested by Satan ; but he found in her more than mere natural feeling, or the outward effects of the Spirit's work in others. In the middle of the night, when all around was perfectly still and dark, she awoke. A strange feeling came over her as if some evil spirit were in her room ; then the attack, as if a voice had distinctly said, "It's all a delusion." The preaching, the word of the Lord, the blood of Christ, her assurance of His love, the pardon of her sins and such-like thoughts, rushed through her mind. "No," she was enabled to say to herself, "it's no delusion." And though, no doubt, greatly agitated by the presence of evil, she was strengthened by the presence of her Lord to meet and vanquish the enemy ; not by reasoning, not by attempting to prove that she was really converted at such a time and by such a preaching, but by the word of God. She resisted his fiery darts with the shield of faith. Had she attempted to reason with the enemy, she would have lost the victory. Midnight though it was—Satan's favourite hour—and terrible as the atmosphere must have been, she arose ;—what holy courage !—struck a light, opened her New Testament, and her eye caught and rested on these words, "*Ye are complete in him*" (Col. ii. 10) ; her soul was revived, she felt perfectly calm : God says I am complete in Him ; *complete*, God says it ! Her mind was composed ; the atmosphere was

cleared, and Satan vanquished by the word of God and faith. She extinguished the light, and retired to rest. More than one year has passed away since these events occurred, but time has only proved their reality.

“Could I be sure,” said a troubled soul to the preacher one evening, “of the very time, circumstances, and means of my conversion, I should be quite happy.” Happiness resting on such a foundation, she was told, would not last long. Satan would soon beat her in argument and plunge her soul in deeper troubles than ever. Then how can I be sure, many will be ready to inquire, that I am converted? If you are now really caring to be assured that you are converted, most likely you are. Both the desire and that which satisfies it must come from God. But the word of God alone can give assurance. “Look unto me and be ye saved,” are the Lord’s own words. From the first moment that the eye looks to Christ as the Saviour, the soul is beyond all question saved. It may not believe it; it may be judging of its state by its feelings; it may be miserable, even on the brink of despair; but the word of God must ever be true notwithstanding. “Look unto me and be ye saved.” Our unbelief cannot make the word of God untrue, but it hinders our enjoyment of Christ and salvation.

The finest lesson that the newly awakened,

or the long troubled soul can learn, is to preface all it says on spiritual subjects by affirming that "God says it." For example: God says, When we look to Jesus we are saved; God says, All that believe are justified from all things; God says, He that believeth hath everlasting life; God says, The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin: the word of God says to every penitent one at the feet of Jesus, Thy sins are forgiven, thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace. And Jesus Himself says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And "him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." See Isaiah xlv. 22; Acts xiii. 38, 39; John v. 24; 1 John i. 7; Luke vii. 37-50; Matthew xi. 28; John vi. 37.

By using such terms as, 'God says,' 'the word of God says,' 'Jesus says,' an impassable barrier is placed between the soul and the enemy. Satan will tremble and flee from the weakest saint who thus uses the word of God. It is the soul's impregnable fortress; no enemy can reach it there. But should the soul have recourse to such weapons as the supposed date and means of conversion; and condescend to reason with the enemy, it could only be vanquished for the time and sorely wounded. He who said, "It is written," and again and again said, "It is written," hath left us an example in this, as in all things, that we should walk in His steps.

But alas! there are many now-a-days, who seem to have no concern or trouble of any kind about their souls, and yet they are not unwilling to attend the preaching. But after listening to the most solemn warnings, the most affectionate entreaties, and the most earnest appeals—both as to the blessedness of heaven, and the awfulness of hell—they seem perfectly unmoved, as to their own interest in these things. So unaccountable, so heart-rending are such cases of cold indifference, that the preacher is ready to believe that the strong delusion has already set in. The Spirit of God, we know, will not leave this world, while the church is here; but He may cease to work in certain places. The very thought of such a thing makes one tremble, and should lead to the most earnest prayer to God.

But what, oh what, is my reader? A careless, a troubled, or a happy soul? If happy, pray for others; if troubled, look to Jesus, He Himself is our peace; if careless, what then? How long? Time is short: the end is near; the coming of the Lord draweth nigh; and the first thing He does when He rises up is to “shut to the door.” (Luke xiii. 25.) Solemn announcement that all is hopeless for those who have refused to enter in while the door stood wide open. The agony of mind, even in this life, before they are cast into hell, will be great, at least for a time. They are represented as “standing without and knock-

ing at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us. But he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are ; depart from me all ye workers of iniquity." Figurative this language no doubt is ; but it reveals the utter hopelessness of all who have rejected Christ and refused to enter in before the coming of the Lord for His saints, when the door is shut. They are given up to strong delusion to believe a lie ; " because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved." Now, they fall into the hands of Satan, and are hurried down the deep descent into the burning lake.

Oh, my dear reader ! is there yet a corner of thy heart that may be impressed with these solemn realities ? Lay not down this paper, I beseech thee, without serious thought as to the awful future. How canst thou bear the *thought* of hell now ? How could thou bear its torments for ever ? Oh, that word *for ever* ! " Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire ? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings ?" must be thy deep and bitter wail. But when the Judge of all pronounces the sentence, " Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire," obey it thou must. Flee from it thou canst not ; struggle against it thou mayest, but in vain. A wild shriek of agony thou mayest utter, as the awful sentence " Depart from me." falls upon thine ear ; but it is too late. A sigh,

a groan, a penitential tear, would have moved the Father's heart, the Saviour's love, the Spirit's power—all heaven—in thy favour, when thou wast in the body ; but now thy most piercing cry finds no answer. The ear of mercy is closed, the door of heaven is shut, the arm of mercy is withdrawn ; the command to "depart" has been given, the gates of hell open, and the mighty angels execute the awful sentence. And, oh, forget not, that the gloomy gates, once closed behind thy lost soul, will never be opened for its escape.

Delay not then another moment, my yet unsaved reader. The door of heaven stands wide open for thee now, and whosoever will may enter in. To-morrow may be too late. The greater the sinner, the clearer the title to the Saviour ; to the realms of glory ; the home—the eternal happy home—of all who believe in Jesus. Once more ; standing as thou still art on this earth, take another glance at the interior of hell ; and another at the interior of heaven ; and calmly ask thyself, Can I hesitate ? No, no ; Saviour and Lord ; I fall at Thy feet, have mercy upon me the chief of sinners. The answer to thy cry thou wilt find in the word : "Thy sins which are many are forgiven . . . him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." See passages above ; and may the Lord add His rich blessing, and to Him alone be all the praise and glory.

O Christ, what burdens bowed Thy head !
 Our load was laid on Thee ;
 Thou stoodest in the sinner's stead—
 To bear all ill for me.
 A victim led, Thy blood was shed ;
 Now there's no load for me.

For me, Lord Jesus, Thou hast died,
 And I have died in Thee ;
 Thou'rt risen : my bands are all untied ;
 And now Thou livest in me.
 The Father's face of radiant grace
 Shines now in light on me.



" BUT I KNOW SOMETHING BETTER THAN THAT."

THE simplest incident will sometimes awaken the deepest reflection and lead the thoughts into the most blessed paths of profitable meditation ; especially if a name which has a ready answer in the heart is mentioned.

" You know," said a christian lady to a girl whom she found one day ill in bed, " that Jesus died for *us*." " Yes," replied the feeble voice, " but I know something better than that ; *I know He died for me*." A chord was struck in the visitor's heart which instantly vibrated to the touch of these telling words. They were friends in a moment and for ever. The dear uniting

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name was precious to both. They were *one* in Christ Jesus. Conversation led them to speak of the time, the means of the girl's conversion, and other circumstances familiar to the mind of the christian friend. It was a moment of real joy. Up till then the sick one was unknown as having received blessing through the preaching.

In musing on the triumphs of God's grace—on a soul sealed for eternal blessedness—we feel constrained to refer to an anecdote which we have sometimes related when preaching the gospel, and which we know the Lord has blessed to many souls. But it surely deserves a wider circulation than the sphere of our own personal service. For the circumstances of the case we are indebted to the trustworthy pen of Dr. Winslow, and so accept the narrative as well authenticated.

During the late disastrous war between the Northern and Southern States of America, a traveller, when visiting those scenes of desolation, entered what may be called a soldiers' cemetery—the place where the slain had been buried after the battle of Chickamauga. The visitor's attention was arrested by a man planting flowers on one of its lonely and humble graves. He softly drew near, feeling that the scene was hallowed by such memorials of tender love.

"Is it a son that lies buried here?" kindly inquired the stranger. "No," was the reply. "A son-in-law?" "No." "A brother?" "No."

"A relation?" "No," was still the brief reply. "Whose memory, then, may I venture to ask, do you so sacredly cherish?" Pausing a moment to give vent to his emotion, he gave the following account of the young volunteer whose memory and remains were so dear to him:—

"When the war broke out, I was drafted to go and join the army. No draft money was given me, and I was unable to procure a substitute, and made up my mind to go. Just as I was leaving home to report myself for duty at the conscript camp, a young man whom I had known called on me and offered to go in my stead. 'You have a large family,' he said, 'which your wife cannot support when you are gone. I am a single man, I have no one depending upon me, I will go for you.' He went. In the battle which was fought here, the dear generous young man fell dangerously wounded. He died in the hospital, and was buried here. Ever since his death it has been my desire to visit the place of his interment, and having saved sufficient money for that purpose, I arrived yesterday, and to-day found his grave." Having concluded his touching story, he again bent over the grave, planted another flower, and, we doubt not, watered it with his tears.

The inquirer passed on, but his heart was too deeply affected with a sight, such as he had never seen before, and such as he is not likely ever to see

again, to go far away. He returned to look once more on that sacred spot. But, oh! what now met his eyes! A sight that Heaven itself would look down well pleased to see. Not only was the volunteer's grave now garlanded with flowers, but a rough board was placed at the end of the turf, on which were simply carved these few, but touching, weighty words—

"HE DIED FOR ME."

Nothing more. Nothing could be added without marring its perfectness. We know not which to admire most—the grateful love, the refined taste, or the sublime sentiment, of this remarkable, poor man. It stands alone, we hesitate not to say, in its great idea, amongst all the epitaphs in the world. Surely he must have known Him who died the sinner's substitute; and the confession of faith, which has been long on record, "*Who loved me, and gave himself for me.*" There is only one great original. But, oh! what a lesson, what an example, what a rebuke, to me, to thee, my reader, to all mankind!

The volunteer died in generously taking his poor neighbour's place and saving him from the consequences of joining the Southern army; but the blessed Lord Jesus Christ died to save us from the consequences of sin—eternal misery. Not merely from poverty and suffering in this life, but from the torments of hell for ever; where

the worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched. "If one died for all," as the scriptures plainly teach—though all will not be saved, for all men have not faith (2 Cor. v. 14; 1 Tim. ii. 5, 6; 2 Thess. iii. 2)—who then can be guiltless if grateful honours are not shewn to His name? We are not asked to garland His tomb, or to inscribe our faith on His cross; but we are asked to believe in His love, and in His dying for us of His own voluntary will. And faith will always make His love and His death as personal as Paul did; "who loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*." Not merely, He died for *us*, or *them*, but "He died for *me*."

The dying girl had, as it were, raised her board; gladly would she have placed it in the window, or fastened it on the housetop, that she might tell all who passed by, "Jesus died for *me*;" but better far, these precious words were written on the imperishable tablets of her heart, and the offerings of her love were not a few flowers that bloom only for a day, but in songs of praise for ever. The simple yet strong faith that delights in these words, is sweet to the heart and brings us near to Himself. "Jesus died for *me*." He *me*; He *me*. There is no truth more plain in scripture, and none more assuring or comforting to the heart. The cross is the fullest expression of His love, and

the foundation of all our blessing. Though now in glory the Lord puts nothing between our hearts and Himself, and neither does faith.

"Ascended now in glory bright,
Life-giving Head Thou art;
Nor life, nor death, nor depth, nor height,
Thy saints and Thee can part."

But alas, alas, are there not many for whom Jesus died, who cherish no gratitude for His love, no memorial of His death? yet He died willingly, voluntarily, that they might be saved from endless woe. What can the Lord Himself think, what can Heaven think, what can all enlightened minds think, of such unaccountable ingratitude? How unmitigated must the remorse of the ungrateful be in the hopeless depths of hell for ever! Not one alleviating circumstance; not one drop of water to cool the burning tongue. The darkest, the deepest, the most ignominious place in the regions of the lost must be their portion for ever.

Some little time ago a young man was introduced to a preacher after having listened to his discourse; and on being asked if he was a believer in Christ, he replied, in rather an off-hand way, "Of course I am, I have always believed in Him, we have no one else to believe in, He died on the cross for us." Without contradicting him, the preacher said, "May I ask how old you are?" "I am seventeen," he said.

"Well now, my dear young man, will you answer me another question? If you believe that Jesus died on the cross to save you from the pains of hell, have you ever really, when alone, knelt down and thanked Him for it?" "No," was his honest reply. "Then you must be a stranger to Him: He will at last say, to all such, 'I never knew you; depart from me, ye workers of iniquity.' Sleep not, young man, for your soul's sake, for Jesus' sake, for heaven's sake, for hell's sake, sleep not until you have considered your ways and turned to the Lord. Only think, you have reached the age of seventeen and never thanked the Lord Jesus for all He has done that you might be pardoned and saved for ever." But are there not many, who are more than seventeen, and who are chargeable with the same neglect of the Lord Jesus? Will not the gratitude of the Southerner, his flowers, his tears, his board, his inscription, rise in judgment against all such, cover them with everlasting shame, and aggravate their everlasting condemnation?

Let the love of Jesus then, my dear reader, who died for the chief of sinners—and more thou canst not be—move thy heart to grateful love and admiration of that blessed One. If this great fact move not thy heart, what will? He finished the work of man's redemption on the cross; He now rests on the throne in glory, waiting for thee. He will hear thy prayers, see thy tears, rejoice

in thy faith, and listen to thy praise and thanksgiving; unlike the young volunteer who heard not the sighs, saw not the tears of him for whom he died. The most melting expressions of his love were all unheeded by the lifeless volunteer. He knew not that flowers bloomed on his lonely grave, or that his neighbourly love was now made known in artless eloquence to the universe.

And wilt thou, my dear reader, allow a devotion of heart around that silent grave, to excel thine to a risen, living Saviour, who bids thee come to Him and dwell with Him for ever? God forbid! Awake, awake, from thy long sleep of sin; arise, arise, to the consciousness that Jesus died that thou mightest live—live for ever. Let thy gratitude be proportionate to the greatness of the sacrifice, thy faith proportionate to the dignity of Him who died, thy zeal to the deliverance accomplished and the salvation secured. "Could I grave these blessed words, 'He died for me,'" said one in great ecstasy one evening, "on every tree that grows, on every leaf that quivers, on the face of all rocks; and could I herald them forth on the wings of the wind, I would tell the vast universe of God that 'Jesus died for me'—that I live through His death, and shall reign with Him in glory for ever." This was faith, love, gratitude, and zeal for the Lord's glory. Go thou, my dear friend, learn of Jesus and do likewise.

THE DIVINE ANATHEMA.

1 COR. XVI. 22.

It is difficult to speak or write without deep feeling when dwelling on that awful word, and with so many on every side who are utterly careless as to its dread reality. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha"—accursed of the Lord at His coming. But is this, some may ask, its plain and true meaning? Most assuredly it is. Nothing could be plainer, more definite or absolute. The curse of God is the eternal doom of all who love not the Saviour of mankind—His well-beloved Son. "*If any man*" is surely most comprehensive; any man, no matter who he is, what he is, where he is, how he reasons, what excuses he may offer: the word of God is positive, it has gone forth from His throne, it is unalterable, it is fixed as the foundation of that throne, changeless as His own being—"If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha,"—anathematized when the Lord shall come.

Do you think, dear reader, this judgment severe? It may appear so at first sight, or to a thoughtless reader; but a moment's reflection will convince you that it is not only just, but necessary in the righteous government of God. He loves His Son, knows what He has done and suffered for mankind,

and fairly estimates His claims on their grateful love. All this He has revealed to us ; we know His mind. And how sweetly He has pressed His love upon us ! with every blessing that love can give, and the bearer to us of all these blessings is the Son of His own bosom whom He spared not, “ but delivered him up for us all.” But, surely, if we are careless about all these things, and despise the bearer of Heaven’s richest favours, what will the throne of judgment say ? Is there no crime in despising both the love and the authority of God ; in disregarding His demands for the honour of His Son ? Are His rights not to be vindicated, or the claims of His Son maintained ? Rest assured my fellow-sinner, that so just, so holy, so righteous, will the judgment of God be, that the vast universe will resound with a solemn Amen, as the curse of God is pronounced on those who have hated, in place of having loved the Lord Jesus. Heaven will willingly own it ; the faithful on earth will re-echo heaven’s universal Amen ; the condemned must own it, and hell too must groan out reluctantly its Amen, and acknowledge that God is holy and just and good, and that the man who is accursed has only lost what he despised, and is now in the place which he chose for himself.

But, pray, my dear reader, ere it be too late, and ere this year also close upon thy unsaved soul, come a little nearer, and let us examine

more closely, the claims of Him whom God would have thee love. Is He fairly entitled to the homage of thy heart and the willing, happy obedience of thy life? Surely, oh most surely He is, and He only!

To love the Lord is to believe in Him; and the more we meditate on His love to us, and what He has gone through for us, the more will our faith expand, and rise into the most admiring, adoring, grateful love. But we must know Him to believe in Him, and know Him in the fullest expression of His love to us. Blessed Lord! He invites us to come to Him, to be drawn to Him by the attractions of His cross, and the glory of His Person. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This He said, signifying what death He should die." (John xii. 32, 33.) Never was God's love to thee a sinner, and God's hatred of thy sin, so fully manifested as in the cross of His dear Son; and never did His love to the lost and helpless soul shine so brightly. Here thou wilt do well to pause for a moment and dwell on this wondrous sight, this twofold aspect of the cross. When or how could God's hatred of sin be so manifested as when He judged it in the Person of His own beloved Son? The thought is overwhelming! But it must for ever justify God in punishing sin in the person of the impenitent sinner himself. The cross will stand for ever as the declaration of God's righteous-

ness in the judgment of sin, and in pardoning the chief of sinners, who believes in Jesus. But also, look at the greatness of God's love to the sinner in the sufferings and death of Jesus. Every drop of that precious blood which was shed on Calvary, proclaims to heaven, earth and hell, God's love to the lost and ruined sinner.

But sin must be put away according to the claims of God's glory, that His love may flow forth freely, and the full blessing come to us. Without the shedding of blood is no remission. Jesus, the sinless One, in the greatness of His love, bore the judgment due to sin. He was nailed to the accursed tree, that the anathemas of God might never fall on us and sink our souls in hell for ever. In love, He endured the cross, and there was nothing that His love did not willingly endure that God might be glorified and the sinner saved. But who can speak of the judgment of God against sin ! That which man is disposed to make light of ; that which thou hast made light of these many years. The waves and billows of divine wrath rolled over His sinless, spotless soul ; His brow was wreathed with a crown of thorns, emblem of the curse of sin ; He was forsaken of God ; He tasted the bitterness of death. God hid His face from Him, when bearing our sin ; but at length the cup was drained, and the shout of victory was heard, "*It is finished.*" All was now done ; every claim of heaven, and

every need of the sinner fully met ; sin and guilt were put away ; the word of God maintained inviolate, and His name glorified. But again we say ; again we press upon thy attention the awful thought—the judgment due to sin. And as the Lord Himself says, “ If they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry ? ” What will become of the dry, lifeless, rotten branch, when exposed to the fury of the burning flame ?

But tell me, O my friend, tell me, before I close, Hast thou been in any measure drawn to Jesus by His wondrous love in dying on the cross, in dying for thee ?—In dying that thou mightest be drawn to Him in faith and love, and delivered from the awful judgment due to thy sins ? But is His love less to-day than it was the day on which He died ? Surely not ! His love is the same ; the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. He waits to be gracious now, He loves to bless now, He delights to save now, He rejoices over every returning sinner now, He is ready to receive every repenting, returning prodigal now. Flee then, my friend, oh flee to His open, His outstretched arms. No anathemas are there. All is love ; and such love ! The folded arms, the fond embrace, the robe, the ring, the fatted calf, the joyous welcome of heaven’s myriad hosts ; all await thy coming. Thou knowest the invitation and the promise, “ Come unto me, all ye that

labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Believe His word—His loving word to worn and weary hearts—Come ! Believe His promise true, Come ! The love that suffered for sinners ready to perish, bids thee, Come !

What so fitted to melt thy heart, to win thy confidence, as a Saviour's love ! Despise not this love, I entreat thee, or, what must the end be ? Thou wilt surely find that thou hast not been frightened with vain fears ; the anathemas of indignant justice will far exceed in their terrible thunders the most vivid description of either preacher or writer. And thou shalt also find in that awful day of retribution that this sore judgment is not for thy common sins merely, but for the great—the aggravated sin, of rejecting a Saviour's love. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha," are the just and unalterable words of Heaven.

Once more, my friend, for I tremble to leave thee, lest thou art still preferring the favour of the world to the love of Christ. Pharaoh hardened his heart against the judgment of God, but what must be the guilt of him who hardens his heart against the love of Jesus ! Bow, then, O lost one, bow, bow at Jesus' feet. Salvation, full, free, and everlasting is there ; peace with God is there, the eternal glories of heaven are there : delay not then, I beseech thee ; years roll on ; the end draws

near; divine love has sent forth another and another messenger of peace to thee; but the last will soon be here; the dreadful day of recompense lingers not; the gathering storm of divine wrath can only be averted by the sheltering blood of the slain Lamb. Flee then, to that refuge, flee; it is thy only covert from the storm, thy only hiding-place from the sweeping tempest of coming wrath. But flee now—just now—lest thou shouldst be overtaken suddenly and swept into the lake of fire. Before turning thy thoughts to anything else, turn to the Lord; speak to Him; confess thy sins to Him; have faith in His love, and in His precious blood which cleanseth from all sin. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.



MAN'S HISTORY AND GOD'S "DUE TIME."

ROMANS v. 6-11.

IN these few verses we have not only the great truth of the death of Christ, but also of the love of God for the sinner. The connection of verse 5 with verse 6 is evident. "For" indicates that we are the objects of God's love, *for* Christ died for us. "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Here, the reasoning of the apostle, the way he links

these precious truths together, is beautiful and assuring. He proves that the Christian's hope can never be disappointed, because the love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost which is given to him. The love of God, the work of Christ, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, give abundant assurance of the believer's blessing, whatever may be the troubles of the way. The wheels of his soul have been set in motion by tribulation, patience, experience, and hope; but that which sustains the believer in the midst of the trials of this life can never fail. The love of God, as resulting in the cross of Christ and the gift of the Spirit, is the ground of his confidence, the full assurance of his hope. "And hope maketh not ashamed," says the apostle, "because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."

"To God our weakness clings through tribulation sore,
And seeks the covert of His wings till all be o'er.
And when we've run the race, and fought the faithful fight
We hope to see Him face to face with saints in light."

Thus we have in verse 5 the love of God *in us*—His love shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost; and in verse 6 we have the love of God *for us*; for when destitute of all strength, "Christ died for us." What a picture for faith to contemplate! What a treasure for the heart to cherish! What a stronghold in the day of trial!

—the love of God as come into our hearts through the presence of the Holy Ghost there, and also publicly manifested in the gift, the work, the resurrection, and the glory of the Saviour. And notice also that this is the first passage which speaks of the love of God being shed abroad in our hearts, or of the Holy Spirit being given to us. But God's due time was come for the full revelation of His love, both subjectively and objectively.

Although God knew from the beginning what man was, and what man would be, He allowed him to be fairly tested under every possible circumstance in which he could be placed. In the patience of God he was under a state of probation for four thousand years. Surely this was trial enough! But what was the result? That there was nothing good in man; that he was essentially ungodly; that he was unable to do anything towards his own deliverance from divine wrath, even with ordinances and ceremonies of divine appointment, as under the law; that he was like the man at the pool of Bethesda, who had no strength to take advantage of the troubling of the waters. But it may be interesting to trace for a moment the whole history of man, from the garden of Eden to the cross of Christ, *where it ends*, morally viewed, and which was God's due time for the outflow of His love, and for the accomplishing of His purposes, especially as to the church.

THE HISTORY OF MAN.

In the garden man was innocent; he was made in the image of God, after His own likeness; surrounded with every favour and blessing, and enjoying the kindness of God, without knowing good or evil, righteousness or holiness. He had no conscience till after he sinned; before that he could not have understood what good and evil meant. Righteousness discriminates between right and wrong; holiness loves purity, and abhors evil; but Adam knew nothing of such distinctions, he was formed to understand and obey God. "And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it, for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." This was the command of God, and a test for Adam. He gave him but one command, and one of easy observance, and both Adam and Eve knew that the Lord who so loved them had a right to their obedience. Had he been told that it would be a *moral* evil to eat of the fruit of that tree, he might have said, "What does that mean?" But he knew that God had forbidden it, and that all depended on that command. We know what happened. Man listened to the tempter, believed his lie, forfeited the favour of God in eating the forbidden fruit, and in the

presumptuous hope of being as gods, knowing good and evil. Thus man disobeyed, sinned, fell, and was driven from the garden of Eden, and the fair creation was laid under the withering curse of sin.

Man, alas! fallen and guilty, had now a conscience, but it was a bad one. He knew good and evil, but it was to be under the power of evil, and to know that he had lost the happiness which he once enjoyed with God and with all around him. His innocence was gone, and all the sweet enjoyments of that state gone—gone for ever; though God, in mercy, had something infinitely sweeter and better in store for him, through the Second man, the last Adam, head of God's new creation, which can never be laid in ruins.

Thus we see that *conscience* was acquired by the fall. That which has been such an important element in the whole history of man, which has so affected his responsibility in all the relationships of this life, and in his responsibility to God, came in by sin. But in place of man being humbled thereby, we find the sceptic deifying himself because of his conscience; he professes to believe in no other law, to own no higher authority, to bow 'to no other tribunal, than conscience. Nevertheless, the place which conscience occupies in the ways of God in grace with the sinner is unspeakably important, and will be noticed by-and-by.

MAN AN OUTCAST.

Adam is now outside of Eden as lost and ruined, but not without hope. The Seed of the woman was announced as the bruiser of the serpent's head, the destroyer of his power, and the deliverer of the fallen pair. We doubt not that, through grace, they laid hold on the blessed hope thus set before them by their merciful Creator. But though the subjects of God's saving grace, the helpless objects of His compassion, they had now, in addition to body, soul, and spirit, what scripture calls "the flesh"—a perverse will—the carnal mind which is enmity against God, which is not subject to His law, neither indeed can be. This is the dreadful evil which was infused into man's nature when he took of the forbidden fruit in obedience to Satan. It was then that the enemy dropped this deadly poison of unbelief into the heart of his victim, and which, in process of time, and with the increase of the human family, filled the whole earth with corruption and violence, and brought in the flood on the world of the ungodly.

This is the sin, the sin of universal man—the sin of Jew and Gentile, of believer and unbeliever—the root-sin of all others. And yet how little the most enlightened Christian may sometimes think of it. But what is it? It is the principle of distrust in God, and results in every form of self-

will; that I like my own way, and not God's; that I am determined to have my own will and my own way, whether God wills it or not. Whenever there is this strong desire to have what we wish, the voice of the tempter is listened to. He suggests many reasons to prove that this something which we so crave after is right in itself, and so blinds the mind as to God's will on the subject. This is the very essence of sin, and the root of all other sins, because it proceeds from the unbelieving thought, that we can do better for ourselves than God is disposed to do for us, therefore we reckon not on Him, wait not for Him, but take things into our own hand, and pursue our own way. "Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me" is the language of self-will—the worst sin of the prodigal son. His wish was to get away from his father's house, his father's will, his father's ways, and revel in his own.

This is "the flesh," that evil thing which Adam knew nothing of before the Fall, but the moment sin entered it displayed itself. "And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden." Guilt on the conscience causes man to tremble at the sound of God's voice. Self-convicted of departure from Him, they sought to veil their nakedness from their own eyes, and then to hide themselves

from Him. This dread, this distrust, of God is the sad inheritance which the primeval pair have bequeathed to all their posterity, but from which, thank God, every believer is delivered through the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, the last Adam. There, on the cross, as a man and a sinner—a child of the first Adam—he comes to his end. He dies to sin in Christ's death, and is raised to newness of life in His resurrection.

GOVERNMENT IN THE HAND OF MAN.

After the deluge which closed the scene of man's wickedness on the earth, and the first period of his history, the dispensational ways of God begin. The principle of government in the hand of man is now introduced. It does not appear that there was either law or government in the antediluvian world; man was left to himself, and this brought out his lawlessness. But God remembered mercy, and gave many testimonies to His grace in such individual cases as Abel, Enoch, and Noah, besides the wonderful type of deliverance through Christ in the ark which Noah was so long in preparing.

God now makes a covenant with the earth. When Noah went forth from the ark, he built an altar unto the Lord, and offered burnt-offerings thereon. From this beautiful figure of the sacrifice of Christ, Jehovah smelled a sweet savour, and assures mankind that the earth

would never again be visited with a universal deluge. "While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease. . . . And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you, and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth."

These principles, now established on sacrifice, will be infallibly maintained throughout the different ages, until Jesus, after having glorified God in government for a thousand years, "shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father: when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority, and power." 1 Corinthians xv. 24.

But, alas! scarcely had the sword of human government been entrusted to Noah, than it fell dishonoured from his hand. His humiliating failure proved that he could not govern himself. This fresh trial of man only shews what is always true—that in all things man utterly fails, and comes short of the glory of God. The Noahic dispensation closes with a new form of evil—the worship of false gods; and the God of glory calls out one man into the place of separation, makes him the depositary of promise, and the root of the olive-tree.

In tracing the sad history of man so far, we

have seen his trial and failure in the garden of Eden, with the revelation of divine mercy through Christ the woman's Seed. But man's perverse will, not corrected by conscience, not restrained by government, nor bowed in gratitude for the promised Deliverer, only sinned more and more, until, as we read, "the earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence." All flesh had corrupted his way, and the deluge destroyed the world of the ungodly. But grace again shines. The ark rests on Ararat, God's new ground after the execution of judgment. Hence we have in type the Holy Spirit and worship, founded on the sacrifice of Christ; the heart of God finds perfect rest, He sets His bow in the cloud, which embraces both the sea and the dry land, and millennial blessing is shadowed forth.

But, alas! the failure of Noah resulted in the boldest sin of man—idolatry. Corruption and violence characterised the first period, idolatry the second period, of the history of man. The aim of this sin is to dethrone the living God, set up a dumb idol, and then fall down and worship it.

THE PERIOD OF PROMISE.

It is very evident from scripture that before God called out Abram the great sin of idolatry was prevalent among men, even among the descendants of Shem, the line of the chosen family.

Joshua, in his final charge to the tribes and elders of Israel, tells them that their fathers who dwelt on the other side of the flood—that is, the river Euphrates—were idolaters. “And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abram, and the father of Nachor; and they served other gods.” (Josh. xxiv. 2.) This was the craft of Satan, and the most daring act of man’s rebellion against the authority of God. From other scriptures we learn that these gods were demons. “They sacrificed unto devils, not to God—to gods whom they knew not—to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared.” The apostle referring to this passage, observes, “But I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God; and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.” (Deut. xxxii. 17; 1 Cor. x. 20.) No language can describe the moral degradation to which man, through the subtlety of Satan, had now fallen. That which he calls his religion is his greatest folly, and his deepest sin. Demons have taken the place of the true God in his mind, and have the ascendancy over him. He bows down to a dumb idol, but Satan is behind it to receive his homage. What dreadful wickedness! we may well exclaim; and how can God bear with it? But have we not many idolaters around us even



in Christendom, so-called? Many who will bow down to a piece of rotten wood, alleged to be part of the true cross, who never bowed the knee in faith to Him who died for sinners there? And may there not be an element of it nearer ourselves than we are aware of? Any object taking the place of Christ in the heart of the Christian, though unintentional, becomes his idol. Hence the needed word of warning: "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." 1 John v. 21.

In Genesis xii. we are introduced to an entirely new order of things in the history of man. God's link with the old world, with mankind as hitherto, through the worship of false gods, is completely broken. It is no longer man as such, but a man called of God to the place of separation, without disturbing the world's arrangements, and to know His thoughts and purposes of blessing, even to all the families of the earth. This is infinitely more precious than all that man had lost, as the full accomplishment of these purposes depended solely on the faithfulness of God.

Stephen, in his noble address to the Jewish council, refers to the call of God as the basis and glory of their existence as a distinct people. "The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran. And said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee." Having

thus called Abram, and led him out from Ur of the Chaldees, and brought him to Himself—to the place of separation from the idolatrous world, He makes him the depositary of promise. It is a definite promise to Abram alone, who now becomes a new root, the father of the faithful, and the channel of universal blessing.

The period of promise now begins. "And I will make of thee," said Jehovah, "a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curseth thee; and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." This marks a great change in the ways of God with mankind. It is not merely the revelation of a deliverer, or of conscience judging between good and evil, or of government in the hand of man; but it is God Himself interfering, and revealing His purposes of blessing, and that, just because He is pleased to bless, and to express His love in blessing to fallen man. The promise is positive, absolute, and unconditional: the sphere of its application embraces all the families of the earth, and its full accomplishment is dependent only on the faithfulness of God. It has been delayed, we know, through the failure of man, but God will yet prove His faithfulness in the face of the whole world, by a stream of blessing which will overflow all Jewish limits and cover all lands, according

to the promise which in grace He made to Abram.

It may be well to notice here the order in which the promises were given, and the special occasions chosen of God for the revelation of His purposes.

1. The promise of blessing to the Gentiles is given to Abram alone in Genesis xii., not to Abraham and his seed when numbers are expressed. "*In thee* shall all families of the earth be blessed."

2. This promise was confirmed to the seed—to Isaac, type of Christ ; see Genesis xxii. 18. The apostle, referring to this passage, says, "He saith not, And to seeds, as of many ; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." The distinction between the "many" and the "one" is clearly defined after the offering of Isaac. There can be no real blessing to the soul, or separation to God, but through death—the death of the true Isaac. There is no deliverance from sin and the world but by the solemn article of death. This chosen type of God's own love, not only in the gift, but in the death, of His beloved Son, throws fresh light on the dealings of God with lost man at this period of his history. Compared with this, all other types but feebly express the Father's love in not sparing His Son, and His perfect grace in meeting the whole need of man. It is the grand central truth of our faith, and the basis of divine

reasoning. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" The lesser is included in the greater, and all is secured to faith in the gift of His Son. "He that hath the Son hath life." Nothing can be lacking when the Son is possessed. Romans viii. 32; 1 John v. 12.

The death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus are fully carried out in figure by the offering of Isaac as a sacrifice, and the substitution of the ram as a burnt-offering in his stead. Abraham receives back his son, his only son, from the dead in a figure, which shadows forth the risen Christ after the accomplishment of His sacrifice. The promises immediately follow. "And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, and said, By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son; that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice." Genesis xxii. 15-18.

Here it is not difficult to distinguish between Jewish and Christian blessing, especially if we consider the use which the apostle makes of this

passage in the Epistle to the Galatians. The numerous seed possessing the gate of their enemies refers to the Jews, as the descendants of Abraham, and in the place of exaltation in the earth, and of supremacy over their enemies. When the seed is spoken of without allusion to numbers, Christ is meant, as typified by Isaac, offered up in sacrifice, and risen again, and there we have the blessing of the Gentiles. The promise is twofold. Exaltation and supremacy in the earth is never promised to the Gentiles—only to the Jews. In the millennial age, all the glowing descriptions with which both the Old and the New Testament abound, as to the Israel of the future day, shall be fully accomplished. Thus will the Jews be blessed in the coming age in their own land, and under the sceptre of their own Messiah. But the Christian is blessed *in* and *with* a risen Christ. He will reign *with* Him, not *under* Him, and shine in the same glory for ever and for ever.

Such will be the glorious results of the unconditional promises of God to Abraham and to his seed. But it must all be in connection with Him who died and rose again. Death is the only principle and power of separation from the world to God, and the only foundation of blessing. before Jesus died we hear Him saying to the woman of Canaan, "I am not sent save to the lost sheep of the house of Israel;" but this He

will say no more. In resurrection He is free to bless all who come unto Him, all who believe in Him, even according to the fullest purpose of the God of all grace. Every covenant condition has been fulfilled by Him, every covenant promise has been secured by Him; God has been glorified, sin has been blotted out, redemption has been accomplished, and righteousness established. Both Jew and Gentile have now only to believe, and become fellow-heirs with Him of all the promises of God. Nothing is withheld from faith. Blessed for ever are all they who put their trust in Jesus. "Now I say that Jesus Christ was the minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers: and that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy." Romans xv. 8-9.

Before speaking of the period of law, it may be profitable to notice two or three circumstances in connection with the response of Abraham to the call of God. It would have disturbed the thread of our narrative to have introduced them before, but we are unwilling to pass them by altogether. They have a loud voice for us, and are full of wholesome and solemn warning.

REFLECTIONS ON THE CALL OF ABRAHAM.

Abraham, like the unbeliever now, was living in the midst of the evil of the old world, and his family worshipping idols, when God called him.

What light may have been communicated to Abraham as to the state of things in Ur of the Chaldees, when the God of glory appeared unto him, we are not told, but now all was plain: "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee." Here he is called to separate himself from all that connected him with his natural position on the earth, and to obey the call of God, on the ground of faith in His word.

Nothing could be more simple. But did Abraham obey in simplicity? Far from it. His first step was a false one. He left his country, but not his kindred; or perhaps they did not, or would not, leave him. Abraham was soon involved in family difficulties and family trials. How constantly we find this same kind of hindrance in the case of young converts now! Sometimes it may be in the way of manifested opposition, and sometimes from their concealment of God's call, or, in other words, of their own conversion, and decision of heart for Christ, lest they should displease those who are opposed to the truth. But things could not thus go on happily. Conscience accuses, they are ill at ease; the truth, sooner or later, must come out; or, as in the case of Abram, death may be sent to close the scene of perplexities, if not of unfaithfulness. Thus we read, "And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran, his son's son, and Sarai

his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan: and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there. And the days of Terah were two hundred and five years; and Terah died in Haran." Genesis xi. 31, 32.

Surely this was failure at the very outset. Terah takes the lead, Abram is a mere follower; but God had said to Abram—not to Terah, "Get thee out." This was nature, not faith in the promise and word of Jehovah. It may seem amiable for a son so to yield to his father, but it was an influence counter to the call of God. Obedience to God, not subjection to his father's will, was Abram's duty at that moment. So long as Terah lived, no progress was made; they dwelt at Haran, but this was not the land of promise. At length, however, God interfered. The natural hindrance is removed by the father's death. Government takes its course, though its steps may appear slow. Grace also appears, and triumphs. The pilgrim pursues his journey, and enters the land of Canaan. Lot goes with him, though he had not been called, but he proved a great encumbrance to Abram, only, being his nephew, he was subject to him, and God allowed it.

SEPARATION TO GOD THE PATH OF BLESSING.

From the days of Adam to Abraham it does not appear that men of piety, such as Enoch, who

walked with God, were called to break with nature and the world—their country and their kindred; but from the days of Abraham, even until now, the principle of separation from the world to God is the only recognised path of blessing. As for the Christian now, his place is defined; his Saviour and Lord, as dead, risen, and ascended, is the measure, character and power of his separation from the world, and of his nearness to God. Speaking of His disciples, He says, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." And again He says, "If any man serve me;" what is he to do? Seek to be an attractive public speaker? a great worker? a useful Christian? No; however good these aspects of service may be—and in many cases they are happily combined with the most faithful discipleship—such is not the way the Master describes the service which he most appreciates: "If any man serve me, let him *follow me*"—follow Me in My path of rejection as to this world, and in My path of obedience as to the will of God. Follow Me through the dark hour, the uplifted cross, and the execration of the world—follow Me, through death and resurrection, into the new creation of God. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die." To keep the eye on the Master, to mark His footsteps, and only do the things which we believe He has given us to

do, is our most acceptable service, and will be rewarded with double honour. "And where I am, there shall also my servant be ; if any man serve me, him will my Father honour." John xii., xvii.

This is the grace and goodness of the heavenly Master. How many true and faithful followers He has whose names are never heard of here, but who will have their own place and their own reward in the coming kingdom. The true Philadelphian, who has but "little strength" now, will be made a pillar in the temple of God ere long ; and of those who have not denied *His* name—where human names are thought so much of—He says, "And I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God : and I will write upon him my new name." These exceeding great and precious promises are made to those whom He describes as having "little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name." The call of Abraham was to separate him from his father's house and his native country, that he might belong to God, and walk in communion with Him in the promised land. But the Christian is called to fellowship with Christ in heavenly places, and this necessarily separates him in heart and soul from all that is earthly or worldly in his surroundings, even though it may assume the fascinating form of natural affection or relative

duties. Everything must be judged in the light of his heavenly calling, and of his heavenly relations to Christ. Faithfulness to Him as one that is espoused is the first and all-commanding consideration of every Christian. This relationship seems to have been in the mind of the great apostle when writing to the Corinthians, where he says, "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy; for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." 2 Corinthians xi. 2, 3.

Need we say how few there are who ever think of such a relationship, of such thorough separation? and how many there are who allow family or mere natural influence to hinder them from obeying implicitly the call of God, or from following His word after their conversion? Thousands of young converts are ruled by what their friends say, without ever consulting the word of God. The conversion may be genuine, and friends may mean well, but God is robbed of His glory, and the young believer of his blessing. Haran, not Canaan, becomes the dwelling-place. But there is no advancement in spiritual things, divine ground has not been taken, and the full blessing of salvation is unknown. Substance is increased, and souls are born in Terah's family at Haran,

but there is neither tent nor altar. Until we see the call of God to be paramount there can be no true separation of heart to Him, nor looking into His word as our only sure guide in all divine things. Every truly converted soul has been as really called of God as Abram was, and has to do as directly with Him, only in a much more blessed way, so that our answer to His call ought to be all the more complete and unhesitating. We are brought near to God in Christ, nearer than ever Abraham was.

With the prophet of old we are ready to exclaim, "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!" For God, we know, can never lower His standard to that of man's shortcomings; He cannot alter *His* word, and unless we are content to come to the place which He has shewn to us, we must go without the full blessing of His call. Eighteen hundred years ago the apostle, in writing to the Ephesians, earnestly prays to God that they may know what the hope of His calling is, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints. The Lord grant that this prayer may be answered in the experience of many in our own day. We know of nothing so essential to the peace, joy, and happiness of the believer as the knowledge of what God has separated us from, and what He

has called us to, through the power of the Holy Spirit. May we not, then, be unduly influenced by our families and our friends, but give good heed to the word, to the voice of God, which calls us to arise, to leave our position in nature on the earth, and follow the Lord fully, according to His own revealed will; it is the very opposite of fanaticism so to do, as we own no guide in spiritual things but the written word of God.

THE CANAANITE AND FAMINE IN THE LAND.

After the death of Terah, Abram was free to pursue his journey. Now he acts according to the word of the Lord. "And Abram departed, as *the Lord had spoken unto him.*" He reached the land of Canaan, but he did not find it a place of rest, according to the full purpose of the God of glory: "The Canaanite was then in the land." But God reveals Himself to the true heir, and points out the inheritance which his seed would enjoy when there should be no Canaanite in the land. And Abram, now in his heavenly position, erects an altar in the presence of his enemies, worships God in faith, and enjoys communion with Him in these revelations of His grace. "And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land. And the Lord appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he

an altar unto the Lord who appeared unto him." Genesis xii. 6, 7.

Abram is now in his right place, and, as a consequence, God reveals Himself unto him. "There he builded an altar unto the Lord who appeared unto him." This is the place, and this is the power, of true worship. We must be on divine ground as worshippers before the Holy Spirit is free to reveal the glories of Christ to our souls. Canaan is the type of the heavenly places where we are now in Christ Jesus; and our worship ought to be characterised by these two things—I am on the ground which God has called me to, and in the conscious enjoyment of His presence as the spring and power of heavenly worship.

In verse 8 we have the other grand feature of the man of faith—the *tent*. This was the symbol of his pilgrim character. But, notwithstanding these exalted privileges and blessings, he is overcome, and fails sadly, from the pressure of circumstances. "And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there." Alas, how many have failed under the pressure of circumstances! But this is just the kind of trial to test the genuineness of faith, especially as to its object. If the living God be the object of our faith, He can never fail us, whether the famine rages in our social or in our ecclesiastical circumstances! But it does

not appear that Abram even sought divine guidance on this occasion, or spread out his circumstances before the Lord, but goes of his own will into the place of danger; "for the famine was grievous in the land." This is the only reason given for his going to the world for help instead of the living God. But such, alas! is man, man all through, man in every position, man under every possible circumstance; he is ever found to be utterly wanting before God, and to fail in the very grace in which he was called to excel.

We have now clearly seen, from God's dealings with Abraham and his seed, that the blessing of both Jew and Gentile is secured by promises, and that, too, without the question of man's condition as a sinner being raised. Abraham knew nothing of law, or of conditions on his part, as the ground of the promise being fulfilled. It was by unconditional promise that God gave to him the inheritance. "To Abraham and to his seed were the promises made." It was purely of grace on the part of God, and His faithfulness will perform in due time all He has promised.

But man utterly failed to understand, to appreciate, grace as the ground of God's dealings towards him, and being naturally self-righteous, terms were proposed which raised the question of law-righteousness, and claimed it on the part of God.

THE PERIOD OF LAW.

Four hundred and thirty years after the date of promise the law was given. Redemption having been prefigured by the slain lamb in Egypt, and the passage of the Red Sea, the children of Israel journeyed to the wilderness of Sinai. Then, alas! insensible of their mercies, they gave up the ground of grace, and entered into covenant with God, on the ground of their own competency, to keep the law. Thus it happened.

"In the third month, when the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they into the wilderness of Sinai. For they were departed from Rephidim, and were come to the desert of Sinai, and had pitched in the wilderness; and there Israel camped before the mount. And Moses went up unto God, and the Lord called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now, therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine. And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou

shalt speak unto the children of Israel. And Moses came, and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the Lord commanded him. And all the people answered together, and said, *All that the Lord hath spoken we will do.*" Exodus xix. 1-8.

Up till this time all was grace. Redemption was accomplished; God had brought them to Himself. The murmurs and the unbelief of the people only served to shew the riches of God's grace, and His tender mercy towards His poor failing people. But here the course of grace formally terminates, and obedience to the law is made the condition of blessing. This was a great change, a most important epoch in man's history. How fully all this proves what man's state of mind really was as to the things of God! 1. It proves that the preciousness of grace—so priceless to every Christian that knows it—had never truly entered the heart of the Jew. In place of leaving the promised blessing to rest simply on the infallibility of the Promiser, they vainly preferred to rest it on condition of their own obedience to the law. Never was man's self-righteousness—the legality of the human heart—more fatally manifested than here, for the law worked wrath, and brought men under the curse, because of their utter failure. Had that unspeakably, inconceivably precious thing, *grace*,

been appreciated, they would all have cried out as with the heart of one man, "May we have no such terms proposed to us, O Lord; no such responsibility laid upon us. We dare not place ourselves under such conditions, we should certainly lose our blessing. Thy grace, O Lord, is our only hope as sinners." But no, they undertook to do all that the Lord had spoken.

2. Their conduct at Sinai also proves that they had no just sense of their own weakness in the sight of God, and no proper knowledge of His righteousness and holiness. Grace, grace without rebuke, is the only ground on which the sinner can stand, the only plea he can urge, and the only refuge in which he can find a shelter.

"Grace is a mine of wealth
Laid open to the poor;
Grace is the sovereign spring of health;
'TIS LIFE FOR EVERMORE."

WHY THE LAW WAS GIVEN.

But why, it may be asked, were such terms proposed to Israel, when they had no strength to keep them? God saw that it would be good and wholesome for man to know the truth about himself, and the nature and extent of God's claims upon him; and for this end He gave the law. It was the perfect standard of what God required of man, of what man ought to be, and the prohibition of that to which he was strongly

inclined. The ten commandments, for the most part, are like an interdict on the human will. "Thou shalt *not*." . . . "Thou shalt *not*," is the stern, prohibitory voice of the moral law.

It will now be seen that the office of the law was to detect and register man's deeds, and put in evidence his character as a transgressor. "Wherefore then serveth the law?" says the apostle; "it was added because of transgression." From the fall, down to the promulgation of the law at Sinai, man had been left to prove what his fallen nature is without the restraints of law: after that period we see what he becomes when subjected to an authority which forbids and opposes the desires of the flesh and of the mind. Without law men were lawless, under law they are law-breakers; and when Christ came, full of grace and truth, Him they rejected and crucified.

But to return to the question. "Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgression." Not because of *sin*, observe, but because of *transgression*. It is important to mark the difference. Again, the apostle says, "Moreover the law entered that the *offence* might abound." Not, of course, that *sin* might abound. God could never sanction anything that would cause sin to abound. But what is the difference? some may inquire. Sin is the lawlessness of the flesh, a much deeper and wider thing than transgression. Sin was in man from the fall, but

transgression is the violation of a known and positive law. Who filled the world with corruption and violence? And who afterwards filled it with idolatry? Sinners, most assuredly. But this was before the law entered, and they are not called transgressors. "For where no law is there is no transgression."—The apostle does not say, observe, "Where no law is there is no *sin*." This he could not say, for sin was as much in man before the law was given as after. At the same time let us not forget that all transgression is sin, though sin in its root and principle is never called transgression; it is not necessarily the violation of a given law.

Through the subtilty of Satan, some have endeavoured to mystify the apostle's reasoning, and affirm that where there is no law there is no sin. This is a most ruinous doctrine, entirely opposed to all scripture, and intended by the enemy to encourage men in doing their own will. We know that the natural tendency of the human heart is to do its own will, in spite of God, if it can. Thus Cain went and built a city, and established himself and his family, outside the presence of God. This was sin—the lawlessness of the flesh—and long before anything was heard of law as given by Moses. "Whosoever committeth sin," according to the literal reading of 1 John iii. 4, "committeth lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness." Thus it was that God

saw it to be necessary and important to introduce a law that would put man thoroughly to the test, place in evidence his real condition as a sinner, and raise the question of righteousness on the part of God. It never was intended that the law should bring man into blessing; that was infallibly secured by promise through the seed of Abraham; for man, being already a sinner, and loving sin, the holy law of God could only prove him guilty, and condemn him to its penal sanction. "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." Galatians iii. 10.

THE OBJECT OF THE LAW MISUNDERSTOOD.

Many excellent Christians, we are sorry to add, through the blinding power of Satan completely mistake the real object of the law. Hence they look to it as the rule of life. This is a subtle snare of the enemy to draw away the heart from Christ, and back into the world. For the law has its place in this life, not in heaven. We cannot take the law as the rule of life without being on the world's, or Satan's, ground; and there he has blinding power. The blessed Lord Jesus, now in heaven, is the only rule of life for the Christian. The law, because of man's sinful condition, must be to him the rule of death.

"For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." The apostle first experienced in his soul death *by* the law, *then* death *to* the law, and then *in* grace beyond it, life in a risen Christ—alive unto God. Communion with a heavenly Christ, through the power of the Holy Ghost, is the rule of a Christian's life. "For me to live is Christ," says the apostle. We may often come short of our divine standard, but to be content with a lower one is fatal to our practical Christianity. "He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk even as he walked." Thus we have the two apostles in perfect harmony on this grand practical subject. Need we wonder, then, that so many Christians are harassed with doubts and fears, when we know that the law—which never fails to curse the sinner—is their object, in place of Christ, who never fails to bless, and to bless abundantly; all who put their trust in Him?

The law looked on to Christ. "It was added because of transgression, till the seed [Christ] should come, to whom the promise was made." This explains the character and limits of the legal period in the history of God's dealings with man. It was the wholesome discovery to man himself of his real condition, that his conscience might be exercised, and that he might be well assured that there was no hope for him as a lost

sinner but through faith in Christ, the heir of all the promises. For "the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." Galatians iii. ; Romans iv. ; 2 Corinthians iii.

For man "under sin" there cannot be one ray of hope apart from Christ as the crucified One. He is the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by Him. He died, the just One in the room of the unjust, that He might bring us unto God. He magnified God's law which man had broken, and endured its awful sanction, which man had incurred. Having fully met every claim of heaven, the accomplishment of all the promises is established in His Person. It is only by His precious blood that guilt can be removed from the conscience, so that the believer can say in holy triumph, "*no more conscience of sins.*" There is no such thing on the face of the whole earth as a good conscience, a peaceful mind, a happy heart, a holy path, apart from that blessed One. As the stars disappear before the rising sun, so all thoughts, all schemes, all doings, all epochs, all dispensations, as shadows flee away before the bright, effulgent, transcendent glories of the once lowly, but now exalted, Christ of God. He is the perfect covering for the eyes, the filling up, the overflowing of the human heart. All, all is gone for man save Himself. His death shuts the door on all

the previous positions proposed to man. It writes death, absolute death, on the first man. His whole history is summed up and closed in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, the second Man, the Lord from heaven.

Forget not, then, O my reader, that where thou now art, as thou now art, without waiting to do something, or to be something, look to Jesus.

"There is life in a look to the crucified One,
There is life at this moment for thee."

Every other door of hope is closed against thee, and closed for ever. There is no salvation for any soul of man but through faith in Him. Oh, momentous truth! Thy soul may be quivering in the balance, a mighty struggle may be going on; who is to gain the victory? Christ or Satan? It must be the one or the other. There is no middle path or place; it must either be Christ and the full salvation of God, or Satan and the endless torments of hell. Oh, suffer not the enemy to deceive thee, to thy eternal ruin, by the attractions of the world; there is no time to lose; look to Jesus at once, believe on Jesus at once, give thy heart to Jesus at once, surrender thy whole self to Jesus at once, take up thy cross, which is death to the world, and follow Jesus at once; then shall thy soul be saved, thy heaven secured, and thy eternal, unmingled,

happiness far, far, beyond the reach of every foe. "But *now* in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ." Ephesians ii. 13.

The history of man, from Adam to Christ, may also be viewed as the history of God's grace and goodness in His dealings towards him. Condemned, indeed, we know rebellious man to be, but still, in patience infinite, God's grace lingers over him. The sentence, long pronounced, is not yet executed. But every day that sentence is suspended must be owned as another day's grace to the world. There was no such lingering love shewn to the rebel angels; their punishment was immediate and irremediable. But man! oh, living, abiding miracle of grace! is still borne with, and still allowed to prosper in this life, though he continues to despise the grace, and rebel against the majesty, of heaven; but the awful consequences of his unbelief will surely come, though the day of reckoning may be delayed. Thus the history of man is twofold: unbelief and apostasy on his part from the beginning, and patient grace and unwearied goodness on the part of God. We will now consider

MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY UNDER LAW.

Without attempting to trace or estimate the conduct of man, the Jew, as under law, from Sinai to the cross, we will briefly consider it as

set forth by the Lord Himself in His parable of the householder.

"Hear another parable: There was a certain householder which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country. And when the time of fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another." Here the Lord draws a picture of the love that has been shewn, and the care that has been taken, in Jehovah's dealings with Israel. But, alas! man utterly fails; God is dishonoured in every way—in His law, His authority, and His grace. It is Adam and Eve over again; the same old story of human responsibility ending in total ruin. The parable of our Lord answers perfectly to the song of the prophet in Isaiah v., where he sings of the goodness of God, and the transgressions of His people. Moses also, in his magnificent song (Deut. xxxii.), celebrates the riches of God's sovereign grace in blessing to His people Israel, and their sins and ingratitude, for which they would be sorely punished, but afterwards restored to their own land, and all the nations rejoicing with them. We turn for a moment to the lovely song of Isaiah.

"Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song

of my beloved touching his vineyard. My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: and he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes." This was God's tender care of Israel. He had blessed them with all temporal blessings in a pleasant land, the Lord separated them to Himself, surrounded them with His favours, gave them His law, or, as the apostle says, "To them pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises." Nothing was lacking on God's part; but the nation, as a whole, had departed from Him, transgressed the covenant, and wholly corrupted their ways. And now the appeal of Jehovah to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the men of Judah is full of the most melting grace and tenderness. "Judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes." But there was no fruit meet for God under the law; with man on the ground of responsibility there is nothing but failure, and as law must take its course, judgment follows. "And now go to; I

will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down; and I will lay it waste." The sad song, or lamentation, of all the prophets is man's sin and God's judgment.

But dark though the picture of the prophet be, and unrelieved by one ray of grateful love, there are deeper and darker lines in the one drawn by the blessed Lord. He has to portray His own death as man's answer to God for all the favours and blessings He had lavished upon him since the day he fell in Eden. He has to refer to one servant after another being sent in the patience of God, and all meeting with the same treatment from the husbandmen. Every possible means had been tried to obtain fruit from the vineyard, but all in vain. Only one solitary hope remained. "They will reverence my son." All know what happened, and what followed. "But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him."

This was more than withholding the fruit of the vineyard—more than robbing God of His dues—more than resisting Moses, or stoning the prophets; it was "the fullest outbreak of rebellious hatred, when tested by the presence of the Son of God

in their midst. *Probation* is over ; the question of man's state, and of God's efforts to get fruit from His vineyard is at an end. . . . Thus the death of Christ is viewed in this parable, not as the groundwork of the counsels of God, but as the climax of man's sin, and the closing scene of his responsibility."

Such was man, man under law, the holy law of God. Provoked by the restraints which the law put on his self-will, the evil that was there and at work manifested itself in the most open, daring, contempt for God's authority. The truth of man's moral state was now fully revealed, the law entered that the offence might abound. Do we not see many around us daily, but especially on the Lord's day, sinning with a high hand—sinning openly, unblushingly, in trading, in seeking their own pleasure, on the first day of the week ? and that, not in ignorance, but in contempt of the known and acknowledged authority of God ? But the law was given that men might know the truth about himself and about the claims of God in righteousness ; both have been fully discussed, and all is in evidence now. Insensible as the Jews were to their sad condition, they condemn the husbandmen, and thus bear witness against themselves. "When the Lord, therefore, of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen ? They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those

wicked men, and will let out his vineyard to other husbandmen, who shall render him the fruits in their season."

THE MORAL HISTORY OF MAN CLOSED IN THE CROSS.

Thus closed the trial of man, of the Jew, of the first Adam. Four thousand years of probation had run their course. And what is the result of this long trial? Most humiliating to the pride and vanity of man—to the religious imagination and the reasoning powers of the self-righteous, self-sufficient man. The law brought out, and demonstrated in a variety of ways and conduct, what man really is. Not what man might or should have been, as men talk, but what man is as God proved. When tried by a divine standard, and under the most favourable circumstances, no good thing is found in fallen man, but the presence of every principle of evil. Search has been made, and the human heart is found to be deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? is the challenge; I, the Lord, is the answer. None can fathom the depths of its wickedness but Himself. But in the betrayal and crucifixion of Christ, man's sin rose to its fullest height. The presence of perfect love and goodness in the Person of the blessed Lord, brought out the bitter enmity of the heart against God, and demonstrated, beyond a question, that man was utterly incorrigible.

We have now reached the end of man's history, as under trial before God. His moral history closes in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Innocence lost; conscience disobeyed; promises despised; covenants broken; prophets persecuted; and, last of all, the Christ of God cast out and crucified. Henceforth man is to be dealt with as morally dead.

All blessing must now flow through Christ the Second man, and be received by faith, on the ground of sovereign grace alone. This has been essentially true from the beginning, but now that man is fully manifested, God takes His place more openly as the Saviour of the lost.

DIVINE LOVE AND ITS FRUITS.

ROMANS V. 6-11.

WE have now come to that period in the history of God's ways with man—His "due time"—when His love as *perfect* is manifested in connection with the cross of Christ. The whole condition of man from Adam to Christ has been looked at in every way; full trial has been made in the long patience of God. Four thousand years of probation, and every fair trial under all the possible circumstances in which man could be placed, have demonstrated his true character and condition.

But he is not only without one good thing towards a merciful and long-suffering God, but there is in his heart and in all his ways the presence of every evil thing.

God had known this from the beginning ; but it was not until after it had been fully proved that He takes *His* place towards the sinner in Christ Jesus, according to the greatness of His love and the riches of His grace. This is a point of immense practical importance in the history of souls. How often we have found a young believer greatly troubled and long kept from peace with God, through experiencing so much within that is contrary to Him. How can I believe God loves me—how can I believe He hears my prayers—how can I believe that I am His child with all this in-dwelling sin ? This perplexity is natural, and so far it is right to be troubled on account of indwelling evil ; but Satan's object is to keep the soul in this state, and to turn the mind in upon self for evidences, and so to harass and perplex the feeble in faith. Such souls have not yet learnt the grand truth which the apostle is here discussing, and which is now before us—perfect love to the sinner, *consequent* upon, not before, the trial of man, and founded on the finished work of Christ. When this grand, consoling, peace-giving truth is known, all doubts, fears, and perplexities must immediately disappear. Nothing short of perfect rest and

cloudless joy would fill the soul, and nothing could disturb its sweet repose. It is one with Christ in resurrection, beyond the reach of every foe, and possessed of His "*unsearchable riches*."

Had God manifested His love towards man before He had proved what was in him, He might have been afterwards disappointed, as men speak, with his ingratitude and disobedience; and *we* might reasonably enough have been in doubt as to what God would now say, and whether He would not turn away from us and judge us as hopelessly evil. But oh! blessed! precious! yea, thrice precious truth to the soul! It was not until man had been fully tried in every way, and his terrible guilt consummated in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, God's well-beloved Son, that His love is fully revealed. If God *can* love, and *does* love the sinner in Christ Jesus after this expression of his hatred, rebellion, and wickedness, what must the love be! Again the heart exclaims, as it rests in the effulgent beams of that love which can never be darkened by a cloud, oh, mighty, marvellous, wondrous, matchless love! And like an ocean without a shore; it is measureless, boundless, whence flow the ten thousand streams of living grace for the refreshment of the weary by the way, and for the establishment of our souls in faith and holiness.

It was this love which overflowed the heart of the apostle as he wrote the first eleven verses of

this chapter—the richest perhaps in divine love that have been given to us. “For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

This is the gospel of the grace of God—God’s new principle in dealing with man who now stands before Him as entirely lost. All His past ways with man, dispensational and personal, down to the cross, only demonstrated him to be utterly alien in nature, and hopelessly bad in condition; consequently, the love that was henceforth displayed must be absolutely free and perfect. Nothing was ever found in man to induce, but everything to dissuade, the manifestation of divine love. But now all is changed. God retires into the rights of His own sovereignty; grace reigns; but not on the ruins of law and justice; not in setting aside the claims of God, nor in lightly passing over the guilt of man; but through accomplished righteousness towards God, and eternal life to the lost sinner by Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour.

This, we affirm, is the gospel on the divine side; the *effects* on the human side will be manifested in genuine faith, godly repentance, and a life of holiness, and would to God it were

better understood ; for when received in simplicity every question is settled. If I know that He loves me with a perfect love, after He has estimated all my sin and guilt, then no evil can ever spring up in my heart that He knew not beforehand, and that He has not fully judged in the cross of Christ and put out of His sight for ever. But here it may be asked, Did God not love the sinner before the death of Christ ? Most assuredly He did. Perfect love always dwelt in the heart of God towards man. To speak of the death of Christ as exciting or procuring the love of God towards the sinner, is a pernicious doctrine and without the shadow of foundation in scripture. On the contrary, the death of the Lord Jesus is represented as the expression of God's love towards us, and the character, or greatness of that love, is revealed by the condition of those for whom Christ died. Love, full, perfect, and active, always dwelt in His heart ; and its grand object ever was the reconciliation of man to Himself. God never was the enemy of man, therefore He needed not to be reconciled ; nay, rather, " He was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." Innumerable passages rush into the mind in proof of this rest-giving truth ; such as, " In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that

we might live through him. And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." 1 John iv. 9-19.

Yes, what a mercy for us, this love was always there ; and although rejected, it was not weakened. But the death of Jesus opened the way for its full revelation, and for the accomplishing of all the purposes of grace. There was no link between God and man in the flesh ; for all His love, He had only received hatred ; no response was ever found in the human heart to His most tender appeals. But Christ glorified God about sin in His death ; He accomplished all righteousness ; He met the highest claims of heaven, and the deepest necessities of man ; the law was magnified and the promise established in His Person ; and He laid a righteous foundation in His death and resurrection for the perfect display of the divine nature and character, and that in respect of sin. Now God takes His own place, and manifests what He is towards the sinner in Christ Jesus. We have seen what man is, now we have to see what God is, and what the fruits of His love are.

Our attention is now directed by the apostle to what we may call the *first-fruits* of perfect love—the death of Christ as an object for faith outside ourselves. "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." No more difficult truth for man to believe was ever revealed than this. It is so

opposed to all human thoughts, feelings, affections, and ways, that he cannot understand it. Who ever heard of love lavishing its choicest gifts on unrelenting but powerless enemies? Thou shalt do this, and thou shalt not do that, or, abide the consequences, man can understand; it is consistent with his reason. But for love to say, after it has proved that there is nothing in its object but hatred, and a hatred too, unchangeable, and cruel as death—I have opened the flood-gates of heaven that my love may flow forth in unmeasured, unhindered fulness for your eternal happiness, far transcends the loftiest thoughts of the human mind. That God should love the righteous, the good and the holy, excites no surprise; but that He should love the unholy, the unrighteous, and the evil, and give His own beloved Son to die the death they deserved, must ever shine forth throughout the countless ages of eternity as the wonder of all wonders.

But who could believe it? even with this oracle of love, man has found something to find fault with and to complain of. He cannot bear the idea of being proclaimed powerless. He would sooner far believe that he is ungodly than that he is weak. By trying, he hopes to cease being ungodly, and to become better, and he refuses to bow to the humiliating truth, that he is wholly "without strength." But this is where the gospel begins, and where man must be brought

to if his soul is to be saved. He may struggle long against the truth, as many do, thinking they can do something, or at least *feel* that they are growing better by their own doings, such as prayer, reading the word, and attending to the means of grace. But no ! God will wait till the awakened sinner bows to the result of his own history as written by God Himself, powerless for good ; morally and spiritually dead ; condemned already, and lying under the guilt of the death of Christ.

This then, we repeat, is the gospel ; not what man is, not what God requires of man, but what God is, after He has proved man to be both powerless and godless. This believed, the light of heaven fills the soul. With his first breath the believer may exclaim, "God loves me with a perfect love, notwithstanding all I am and have done ; Christ died for me, and all the benefits of His death are mine ; now my salvation depends, not on my own consistency—though I ought to be consistent—but on the unchangeable love of God, and the eternal efficacy of the blood of Christ. I have simply to rest in His love, and to rejoice in the effects of the work of Christ, which fits me for His holy presence."

But what must be the guilt of those who reject the Lord Jesus, full of all grace and goodness, yea and of God Himself in reconciling love ? Everything in which blessing can be found is rejected,

and the soul must eternally perish by its own suicidal act. The very remembrance of such love, and so slighted; of such opportunities, and so neglected; must give vehemence to the flames that shall never be quenched, and vitality to the worm that shall never die. May the Lord have mercy upon my unconverted reader, and lead him to take his true place at the feet of Jesus, and to believe what is so plainly revealed, "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly."*

The expression, "in due time," seems to convey two distinct thoughts. 1. It was the time of man's utmost need; his guilt had reached its fullest height, and all was lost as to man. He was without strength to come out of this condition, although God under the law had shewed him the way. He had nothing to look for but wrath. 2. It was the "due time" for the full manifestation of divine love in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." Galatians iv. 4, 5.

* The evangelist may find many rich thoughts as to the gospel in the two volumes, *Evangelic*, of "The Collected Writings of J. N. D."

THE CHARACTER OF GOD'S LOVE.

Verses 7, 8. "*For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*" If the character and quality of love is to be determined by the character and condition of its object, how far divine love must transcend every illustration of human love! God only can love without a motive, save that which is within His own heart. Man must have a motive without, and his feelings and affections are thereby governed. He may be moved to esteem, to approval, by righteousness, and to affection by benevolence: but it is *scarcely* to be expected that any one would think of dying for a merely just or righteous man; though for a good man, a benefactor, such self-devotion might be found; but such love could not be surpassed among the children of men; this would be its strongest expression. "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

What characterises God's love is His sending His own Son to die, not for the righteous, or even for the good, but for sinners, for those who were deserving His wrath, not His love. Yes, here we may pause for a moment, and wonder and adore. Man required a strong motive to

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draw forth his love ; God had none. Fresh and full, pure and perfect, from His own heart—its native fountain—it flowed forth, and overflowed all the boundaries of human sin. “Where sin abounded grace did much more abound.” There was nothing in man to call forth, but everything to hinder, the expression of His love ; but the spring and the power were within, and no object without was needed to induce or draw it forth. God is love, and God only can thus love.

Do any inquire, Can God love sin ? All answer, No. Can He love the sinner ? Many hesitate to answer fearlessly. But what does the word say ? God *commendeth* His love in not sparing His own Son. He thus commends, proves, makes manifest His love by Christ dying for sinners, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. So that, speaking as a believer, I have the positive certainty of how much God loves me, and what He is to me, in spite of all that I am, or have been. It was after He knew all the evil that is in me, and of which I am guilty, that He gave His Son to die for me. This is the expression of His love to me, in so far as that love can be expressed. Thus the death of the Lord Jesus is the fullest proof of my sin, and of God’s love to me. But all my evil is judged and gone—gone for ever—His love alone remains. What a resting-place for the conscience, as well as the heart ? “Herein is love, not that we loved

God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." God being righteous and holy, as truly as love, could not introduce me into His presence in my sins, therefore He laid them all on Jesus, who put them away on the cross. There I must look to see them all put away, not within; God has never said He would put them away from my heart while I am here. He looks to the cross, and sees the work finished, and so does faith: unbelief looks within, and judges by experience.

But is there not a sense, my anxious friend may inquire, in which the love of God is known and enjoyed in the heart? Most true, most blessedly true! But that is by faith, after the judgment of present things, and when Christ is before the heart as the hope of glory. Pardon and justification are viewed as past things; peace with God, and standing in grace, as present; waiting for glory as future. Then comes trial, sustained by faith in the power of the Holy Ghost. "And not only so, but we glory in tribulation also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience experience; and experience hope; and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." This is good and wholesome exercise for the Christian, but we must bear in mind that the Holy Spirit never points the soul to His own work in us—

which is never finished while we are here—but to the work of Christ for us, which is finished—absolutely perfect—and outside ourselves.

“THE GOSPEL OF GOD.”

This, we love to repeat, is the gospel on God's part, on the divine side. God loves the sinner. What a wonderful thing for an anxious soul to find that there is love in the heart of God for him—for one who had only thought of God as a judge ready to condemn. But now he finds that God loves him, that Christ has borne the punishment of sin in his stead, poured out His soul unto death, and put away sin; that He has risen again, has ascended into heaven; that God is glorified, and the Holy Ghost has come down to make His love known in the heart by faith, and to seal home the work of Christ in the soul. This is more than something *from* God, such as justification, peace, and hope, or His tender care in tribulation; it is like God Himself coming to take up His abode in the heart. To enter into the full perception of God's ways in grace with the sinner constitutes the believer's highest enjoyment, opens up a vast field for the loftiest meditations, and the greatest activities of heart and mind in the scene around us. The Father's love, the Saviour's grace, the Spirit's power, are our associates in labour. The bright regions of glory, the dark regions of hell, the priceless value

of the immortal soul, are the weighty motives which govern the evangelist.

Yet, strange to say, some have the temerity to speak of the gospel as if it were merely elementary truth, and only fit to be listened to by the unconverted or newly-awakened soul. But what have we here before us? In the simple truth that "Jesus came down to be a man, and die," we have the revelation of Him who is infinite, of the God of love; and, we may say, of the depths of His heart, for He who lay deepest there God freely gave. Yet withal it is adapted to the simplest minds, and to the wants of every heart that knows its condition as lost under sin. "Thus the display of His love in the death of Christ comes down to the child, while it wholly transcends the highest soarings of poor but proud philosophy. There is the most profound truth, but it is embodied in facts which speak to every heart and conscience when the will has been dealt with by the Holy Spirit. While we were yet sinners Christ died for us; and in this God commends His own love toward us."*

The sinner that has been converted by means of this gospel has found a place of perfect rest not merely, because he is pardoned, or his debts paid; nor even in his faith, however genuine; nor in his repentance, however deep—and deep

* "Lectures on the Romans," chapter v.—W. K.

it will be when he knows what God is, and what he has been; nor in the work of the Spirit in him, though that has given him light and power; but far above all these he rises, and rests on the heart of God, through the finished work of Christ. As water rises to its level, so the living water that came down to the defiled Samaritan reascends to its source, giving the title and the capacity to enjoy the richest blessings which flow from that eternal spring. And as it was in her case, there is no better fitness to preach the gospel to others than the full enjoyment of it ourselves. Knowing the remedy for perishing souls, we must not conceal it. If we found a man lying on the road-side, dying from pain, and we had a remedy at hand that would remove the pain and restore him to health, it would be wicked and cruel to withhold it. True, he might be slow to believe in the sincerity of our intentions, but we should not fail to entreat and beseech until we had persuaded him to try our cure. And knowing man's love of the world, and his disinclination to attend to the spiritual concerns of his soul, we must entreat and beseech as those who see his danger, and carry with us a divine specific for every malady of his precious soul.

We have sometimes referred to the teaching of one to whom many are indebted, and we have profited by many a rich thought without ac-

knowledging it—save to the Great Original—but as an earnest, fervent, beseeching gospel preacher he is less known. We give the following appeal—slightly abridged—as an example which we should think safe for the preacher to follow, and most suitable for the unsaved reader. May he give good heed to it, and believe to the salvation of his soul.

“Now, dear friends, I would just, in conclusion, ask you, Have you been led to come, as you are, ungodly sinners, to God? Not to bring your own righteousness, which is nothing but filthy rags; but have you come pleading the blood-shedding of the Lamb of God? If you have, assuredly there is peace for you, for that is a sure token that God is for you. Or have you been acting against God all your lives, and have never found peace? Are you still tormented with a guilty conscience, and are you still rejecting and refusing salvation? I would earnestly beseech you to consider the danger you are in, and I would ask you to look before you, and see where you are going and what you are doing. You are wandering in the midst of the wide sea of this world, you are toiling through its waves, without a prospect of deliverance; and if persisted in, you will ere long sink down into the sleep of death, to wake in eternal misery. . . .

“But be of good cheer if your hearts are set

on Christ: there is your stay, the anchor of your soul. If He is such, dear friends, stand forward for Him; be not ashamed to own your relationship to Him, your dependence on Him; be decided, cut short all expedients for deferring the bold acknowledgment of your being His; confess Him before men, act for Him, and live for Him in an ungodly world. . . . Be not debating within yourselves *when* you shall avow yourselves; do it at once, decidedly. Make the plunge, and trust God for the consequence. I know it by experience that an open, bold, confession of being Christ's is more than half the struggle over. I know the devil tempts, and says, 'Oh don't be too hasty, you might ruin the cause by over-forwardness; this is not the time to confess yourself openly, wait for another opportunity.' But I say, dear friends, as one who knows that if a man, in the strength of the Lord, is just brought to say to his companions and friends, 'I am Christ's, and must act for Him,' that he will not suffer what others will feel who are creeping on, fearful and afraid to avow Him whom they desire to serve. Believe me, my friends, it is as I say, by this decided and open opposition to the world: he may at first be laughed at, and mocked, but what of that? Christ was served so. . . .

"Oh! I once more entreat you to be candid. Be open, be decided, confess Christ's name on

earth, and He will not be ashamed to confess your name before the whole assembled universe.”*

The apostle having established the great truth of the love of God and its effects, as demonstrated by the gift of Christ and His death for us, now reasons, in a divine way, as to the perfect security of the believer. Justification is his true state before God in virtue of the work of Christ: “Being justified by his blood.” When it is said in the first verse of this chapter, “Being justified by faith;” the meaning is, not that we are saved by faith as a virtue, but that faith includes its object, which, in this connection, embraces the whole work of Christ, His death and resurrection. This being known to faith, the believer has peace with God, the enjoyment of His favour and the hope of glory. Thus we are brought by the risen Lord into association with Himself, and in the place where He Himself is gone, and in all His acceptance, our sins are all blotted out, annihilated by the work of Christ, and the heart, unburdened, rejoices in the Lord.

But this is not all; we pass through tribulation. God leads us into it and is with us in it. He is glorified in the trial. In place of the impatience of nature, there is the endurance of grace. The will is subdued, and we learn the true character of the scene in which we move, and through

* Collected Writings of J. N. D., “Evangelic,” vol. i., page 137.

which we pass on our way home. Divine love is now demonstrated, not only in the gift of Christ, but also in the gift of the Holy Ghost, and that love shed abroad in the heart. The believer has now a twofold security for his present blessing and future glory—the place which he has in God's heart; and, oh! wondrous, marvellous, mysterious, truth! the place which He has chosen to occupy in the heart that has been cleansed by the blood of Jesus. "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." This is the presence of the God of love in us. Thus we know the love of God both subjectively and objectively: we have the consciousness of the former; the latter we have displayed in the great public fact of the death of Christ for us.

THE APOSTLE'S CONCLUSIONS.

From the freeness and greatness of the divine love as thus unfolded, the apostle draws the following most obvious conclusions. "*Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.*" Verses 9, 10.

Much more is emphatic and conclusive. The reasoning of the apostle is founded on the blood-shedding of the Lord Jesus; "Being now justified

by his blood." This is an expression of peculiar weight and solemnity, and ought not to be passed lightly over. It gives us an overwhelming view of the infinite evil and malignant nature of sin; and that blood of infinite dignity was required to discharge its claim on the sinner. "Without shedding of blood is no remission." It also speaks of the inflexible justice of God, the integrity of His word, and of the execution of the first sentence; "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." How utterly impossible for the guilty to escape the awful judgment of God if not sheltered and cleansed by the precious blood of Jesus! As the apostle says, "How shall we escape if we neglect [not wickedly reject, but carelessly neglect] so great salvation?" Nothing but the blood of the paschal lamb sprinkled on Israel's door-posts could save them from the sword of the destroyer. "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." Truth was satisfied, justice was stayed, and deliverance from Pharaoh secured, by the blood-sprinkled lintels. God is holy; and as such He is against sin, and must judge it. Happy day, when the sinner sees that his own soul is lost without the safeguard of the Saviour's precious blood. The work of grace is then in the conscience, and it will never be at rest until the doorposts of the heart are sprinkled with the blood of the true paschal Lamb. Then he is safe for ever and beyond the reach of every destroyer.

He has a safe passport to the goodly land of Canaan.

On the other hand, the expression, "justified by his blood," proves, as nothing else could, not only the evil of sin, but the perfect love of God toward the sinner. He spared not His own Son; while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Faith in that precious blood is complete justification and eternal life to the once guilty and condemned soul. It is now "whiter than snow." What a mercy to know and be able to say in view of the awful judgment of God against sin; "It is God [yes, God Himself by virtue of Jesus' blood] that justifieth; who is he that condemneth?" 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." And faith, standing in the midst of these eternal realities, can raise the shout of victory, and send out its challenge in the face of every foe, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" He gave His Son to die; that is God's love to the guilty. He accepted the work of His Son, and set the workman at His own right hand; that is God's righteousness. It was righteousness on God's part to accept the perfect righteousness presented to Him by the righteous One; and we, being accepted in Christ, are made the righteousness of God in Him.

Here we have a full gospel—justified by the blood of Jesus, complete deliverance through Him.

Not merely that our sins are all forgiven ; that would only be a negative blessing. But we have positive divine righteousness in Christ, which is our title to glory. Thus the intelligent believer can say, Now I stand in the presence of God, not only without my sins, but in the absolute righteousness of God. Divine righteousness has taken the place of human sin. This is perfect love, perfect righteousness, perfect rest, perfect blessedness, and God perfectly glorified. But wrath, not love, awaits the unbelieving soul, yea, abides on him that submits not to the power of that justifying blood. Only those who believe in Jesus, and trust in His precious blood to cleanse from all sin, are delivered from the wrath to come.

Verse 10. "*For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.*" Here the apostle pursues his subject with deepening interest and energy. The Spirit of God is leading the apostle in this verse to yet more definite reasoning and more powerful conclusions. Had God discovered any symptoms of love in us to serve Him, or any willingness to obey Him, His love would not have been absolutely perfect, He would have found a motive in us for His love. But how did matters stand ? We were ungodly, without strength, sinners, enemies ; so that the positive enmity of man, as shewn in these four features, but furnished the

deepest occasion for the display of His all-perfect love.

From the garden of Eden to the cross of Calvary, in place of man shewing any symptoms of love or of obedience, he takes no pleasure in the things of God, sees no beauty, no loveliness in His holiness, no glory in His righteousness, and dares to insult His majesty. His judgments, though a law-breaker, he disregards ; His mercies, though he would perish were they to be withdrawn, he despises ; His temporal favours, he uses, or, it may be, abuses, to His dishonour ; His love, in the coming of His Christ, he rejected ; the testimony of the Holy Spirit to the work of Christ and the salvation which is in Him unto eternal glory, he refuses as less worthy of his thoughts than the fleeting vanities of a day. Can any reason be found in man why God should love him ? Rather, is there not every reason why God should be against him ? To love such, must be free, perfect, sovereign, love. The reason, the motive, the power, is in Himself. It is God's own love : He only can love like this ; and, for ever be adored His great and holy name, He has loved us, He does love us with an everlasting love, and with loving kindness has He drawn us to Himself, and blessed us in His love.

Such are the blessed fruits of divine love—of the gospel of God. The believer is not only pardoned, justified, and reconciled, but he is

associated with Christ as risen from among the dead ; possessed of the same life, indwelt by the same Holy Spirit, standing in the same relationship to God the Father, blessed with the same inheritance, an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ. Nor is this rich roll of blessing all the fruit of that love, even that which may be enjoyed here on our pilgrim way. The apostle boasts of a yet higher privilege.

THE CHRISTIAN'S HIGHEST JOY.

Verse 11. "*And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement*"—reconciliation (see margin). Higher joy than this we can never have ; it is infinite, yet we have already entered into it. *We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ*—in virtue of completed reconciliation, a blessed, conscious, happy re-union with the living God is accomplished. This verse brings us back to the beginning of our chapter, where it is said that believers have peace with God, have access to Him, and rejoice in hope of His glory. But here we have arrived at the fountain head, looking through all the blessings conferred on us, and rejoicing in God Himself as the highest spring and object of them all. Yes ! God Himself is the Christian's joy, glory, and boast ! It is not now merely in hope of the glory of God that we rejoice ; nor is it in our

tribulation, because of its effects, divine love being known in our hearts through the Holy Ghost given unto us; nor is it in the many blessings He has given us, but better far, in Himself.

This is grace, pure grace, grace to the poorest, grace to the vilest, grace to thee, my reader. if thou wilt only have it in God's way. Man's ability to meet the requirements of the holiness of God has been fully tried, but the plainer the truth, the clearer the light, the more did it bring out man's darkness and opposition to God. And then grace came in—it was God's due time—and Christ died for the ungodly. We can only be pardoned and saved through faith in the blood of Jesus. When God sees the blood of the slain Lamb, He is satisfied. He sees that which has blotted out sin, vindicated His character, verified His word, and met the whole need of ruined man. And now, observe, if *thou* art satisfied with this precious blood alone, trusting wholly to it, as the only answer to sin's claims upon thy precious soul—the only discharge from that dread tribunal; thy soul is saved, and God is glorified.



THE MIDNIGHT CRY.

MATTHEW XXV.

THE long-suffering and patient grace of the Lord Jesus shine very sweetly to faith in the parable of the ten virgins, which represents the great body of professing Christians, true and false, wise and foolish. The heart loves to dwell on Him who lingers in His compassion for those who are still outside; who have the lamp of profession, but no oil to sustain the light. He is unwilling to shut the door. Wide open it stands, both night and day, speaking after the manner of men. Seven times the blood of the cross is sprinkled on the throne, and seven times before it. God's claims are fairly and fully met; the throne and the way up to it are reconciled; and whosoever will may now enter in through faith in that precious blood. All who come are pardoned and "accepted in the beloved." . . . "Him that cometh to me," says the blessed Lord, "I will in nowise cast out." Thus the way is open to faith, and thus it remains, during the period of the Lord's long-suffering. "And account," says Peter, "that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation." He lingers on the throne, He keeps the door open, for the salvation of souls. Precious thought! He waits for the salvation of lost sinners. May we share in His

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sympathies, and seek to win souls for Him. Ephesians i. 6 ; John vi. 37 ; 2 Peter iii. 15.

But not only is the door open, and the Lord waiting in grace to receive and pardon all who come to Him, His love is active and unwearied—it goes out to seek as well as to save the lost. The midnight cry, so full of solemn warning to the utterly careless and mere professor, is full of comfort to those who are looking and longing for His coming. To the latter it will be a morning of cloudless joy, the dawn of eternal day : to the former it will be the beginning of endless sorrow, confusion, and eternal night.

But why not listen to the cry now ? It is full of the purest mercy and affectionate warning. It as good as says, “ Why will ye die ? ” “ Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.” Once more hear and weigh these words, of priceless value, because they seek to awaken the careless from their fatal slumbers, and the wise virgins from their unwatchfulness. “ And at midnight there was a cry made. Behold the bridegroom cometh ; go ye out to meet him.” Who can mistake the meaning of these words ? The midnight, we are assured, is past, the morning must be near ; hope springs up in the heart ; like the chilly night traveller, who hails with transports of delight the first appearance of the morning star. There, unbelief would be folly, or worse. Who would think of denying that the morning must

be near when the midnight is past? And thus it is now to faith and hope, "the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." Already the church, as awakened by the Spirit, has heard His voice, and responded to His expecting love. "I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Revelation xxii. 16, 17.

But we dwell not at present on the beautiful attitude of the church as here presented; our thoughts turn for a moment to the foolish virgins and the utterly careless.

The second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven is the one all-important event placed before both saints and sinners in the New Testament; not death, as is commonly said, or the uncertainty of life. Of course, we may die, and life is always uncertain; but the testimony of scripture is not to these, in order to arouse the slumbering virgins, but to the coming of the Lord. When He comes, the real condition of all is manifested, whether in the vigour of youth, and dreaming of many years to come, or in the feebleness of age, and feeling that the end is near; or whether making a profession of Christianity, or living according to the course of this world. And as this great and decisive event may take

place, for anything we know, before the dawn of another day—before this paper is finished—should not the thought of it, the terror of it, awaken, alarm, arrest the most careless?

All who have heard the gospel of the grace of God—all who have been invited to come to Jesus—and especially all who have heard the midnight cry, but have persisted in a course of unbelief—will then be judged by the Lord as unworthy of that which they have despised, and the door of mercy will then be closed against them for ever. The wise virgins, true Christians, will go in with Christ to the marriage, and the door will be shut. But, like the door of the ark, it will now be shut by the hand of the Lord, and none can open it. Against all who refused to enter in while it stood open, it will be closed for ever. The awakening will now be terrible, but too late. "And the door was shut." This will prove an overwhelming reality to those who can find no admittance, and no oil to buy. Eternal darkness must now be their doom, and they know it. The scene is too awful to contemplate, but the Lord has said enough to convince us of what will then be, and to warn us while the door still stands wide open.

It is perfectly clear, we think, both from this parable and other scriptures, that great excitement will prevail among the foolish virgins immediately the church is gone. They are

evidently taken by surprise, and astonished to find that there is no hope—that the Lord will not open the door to them. Like many in the present day, they intended to be saved, but not until it suited themselves. They never dreamed of being shut out, but of surely being saved at a more convenient season. Nearly all their relatives, friends, and acquaintances, were Christians; they are now inside; the eternal song begins; the sight of Jesus fills the enraptured throng with joy unutterable; their hallelujahs wax louder and louder; all catch the flying joy, and rolling round the rapturous hosanna, fill the vast regions of glory with their new, eternal song of loftiest praise. “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain,” with a loud voice they cry, “to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, glory, and blessing.” Revelation v. 12.

But, once more, what of those outside? They cry too, but with a loud and bitter wail: “Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily, I say unto you, I know you not.” This is decisive; there is no appeal from His tribunal. The heart sinks in despair, to be lifted up no more for ever. Oh! that careless souls would think of such things now; it is lacerating to our every feeling to write them, what must it be to endure them in hopeless despair! In Luke xiii. they are represented as knocking at the door, and

saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us ; we have eaten and drunk in Thy presence, and Thou hast taught in our streets. This clearly shews that they had not only been professors, but that they had enjoyed great privileges. Of course, there is no door to knock at, but the language conveys the most distressing thought of their disappointment and agony of mind ; and this may continue until they fall into the hands of Satan, and believe his lie. (2 Thess. ii. 10-12.) But how could it be otherwise ? From some families all will be gone save two or three ; from others, only two or three will be gone ; and some houses will be left without an inhabitant. Chiefest friends, too, and nearest relations, will be parted, to meet no more for ever. Then the awful thought will burst upon their bewildered minds with undisguised reality : What we refused to believe has taken place—the Lord has come, the church is gone, the door is closed, and over it is written, “There is no hope.” But those who have been caught up will neither hear their cries, nor witness their agonies. In their bodies of glory, they are far and for ever removed from all scenes of suffering. The lower things will be forgotten in our occupation with the higher.

How merciful and gracious, then, my dear reader, is the warning voice of our parable ! “Behold, the bridegroom cometh.” Time enough is given thee between the midnight cry and the

Bridegroom's arrival to prove thy state, and find oil to buy. Thou knowest the easy terms on which the oil is sold—"without money and without price!" The door is open, the oil is free, free to the poorest, free to the vilest, free to thee. Come to Jesus just as thou art, but see that thou come now. There is not a moment to lose. Haste thee; flee to Jesus. Canst thou afford to lose Him, and all the friends thou holdest dear? What would be the value of all thy property and thy pleasures, if the door of heaven were shut against thee? Rich thou mayest be now, but then thou wouldst be poor indeed—Christless, friendless, homeless, godless, heavenless, hopeless. Come, then, oh come! Come as thou art! But, oh, come now! Thou wilt find all in Jesus—blessed Jesus! There is no oil, no saving grace, no Holy Spirit, no eternal life, save in Jesus; but all are thine; thine now, thine for ever, through faith in His blessed name. Oh, trust in Him alone!

When the sight of Jesus bursts upon the gaze of the wise but once slumbering virgins, what thinkest thou will be the shout of their praise? Better come and join the joyful chorus, than swell with thine own agonies the bitter wail of the lost in hell. I will now leave thee, but I hope not for ever, with the encouraging, assuring, word of Jesus: "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest

be rich ; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear ; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see." Revelation iii. 18.



"I HAVE AN OBJECT NOW."

THE difference between looking to feelings within and to an object without, is a subject with which every evangelist is painfully familiar. No matter how long he may have been in the field, how large his experience, or how well acquainted with the subject, he must go over it again and again, with every fresh convert. There is no direct or royal road to peace with God according to the experience of anxious souls. However direct or plain the way may be in scripture, it is made most circuitous through the unbelief of the human heart and the subtlety of Satan. It is a rare thing for a soul to be turned completely away from itself to Christ when first awakened. Hence the unspeakable importance of personal conversation with experienced Christians by all such when first awakened. It might save them years of trouble afterwards.

Nearly all newly awakened souls judge of their state before God by their feelings. They cannot understand how they can be different in

God's sight to what they feel themselves to be. Hence their faith is governed by their feelings. They believe just what they feel to be true to them—that they are as good or as bad as they feel. Still, thank God, the soul is awakened, it is anxious, and Satan can no longer lull it to sleep as before; it will not be quiet, it is troubled, it wants rest; it wants to be sure of salvation. And the one grand object of the enemy now is to throw the anxious one off the true ground of faith and in upon itself—to be guided by feelings in place of the word of God. And so successful is this snare, that few escape its toils, and multitudes are entangled therein and held in bondage for years, though this ought never to be, surely. Still, it is the Lord, and the Lord only, that can speak peace to a troubled soul and give it to enjoy full deliverance. He only can say, "Loose him and let him go." But this brings me to the following simple incident from real life, which is the occasion of this paper.

On a Lord's day afternoon in a town hall in the country, not long ago, a person was introduced to me by a christian friend, as anxious about her soul. I found it to be a chronic case of *feelings* with very little intelligence about Christ, His work, or the word of God, but most sincere and earnest. My point was, that Christ could not be more willing to receive her to-morrow than to-day, His word could not be truer, or His

work more complete; therefore, why not *come now*, believe and rejoice? The appeal in the afternoon for instant decision for Christ, was founded on these two words, "*Come now*;" which had greatly interested her, and presented a new line of truth to her mind. Like most of this class, she would be ready to own that all she had heard was true, and that she did not doubt a word of it, but it was not true to her because she did not feel it; she was waiting to experience that change within, which would be her warrant for believing that it was true to her. She acknowledged that she had been waiting for this inward change for years. Hardly anything can be more discouraging or hopeless to an evangelist than this, for the lives of such are generally most blameless; there is conscience enough to make them religious. After pointing out her mistake and assuring her that all her darkness arose from looking to herself in place of Christ, and from trusting to *feelings* in place of His finished work, we parted. She was back again in the evening, but I did not see her.

The following day her christian neighbour, who had induced her to come to the preaching, let me know that the woman I had spoken to had found peace with God, and that she would like to see me. With the assistance of a friend I found her humble home. We had scarcely entered when she began to speak of the blessing she had re-

ceived on Lord's day: but all I will give in her own words is the following. "When I awoke on Monday morning, at five o'clock, the thought came into my mind, *I have an object now—I have an object now.*" And spreading her hand over her breast, she added, "I used to think I must feel it all in here first, but now it's all in Christ; and often to-day when I was at my work it came into my mind."

From the simplicity of the woman, it was perfectly evident that she had no idea that she was saying anything particular; it was the truthful expression of her new experience. But, nevertheless, these few simple words went straight home to my heart, clothed with light and power. They contain truths of the very deepest and highest practical instruction and value. There is not a troubled conscience in Christendom that would not find peace in looking to that same blessed object; not a doubting heart that would not be settled; not a weary soul that would not find rest; not a lost soul that would not find salvation. True, we read, "Look unto me and be ye saved Come unto me and I will give you rest Hear, and your soul shall live Only believe." But the power—the healing virtue—is not in the *looking*, the *coming*, the *hearing*, the *believing*; but all in the object—the heavenly Christ, the man in the glory. When the eye rests on Him as its one object, all doubts

and darkness flee away. The midnight of the soul is exchanged for the brightness of the noon-day sun. Now the eye is single, having but one object, and the whole body is full of light. "They looked unto him and were lightened, and their faces were not ashamed." Psalm xxxiv. 5.

These are some of the immediate and necessary results of looking to Jesus in place of self. The feelings cease to be the centre of importance, and the blessed Lord, the exalted man in the glory, becomes the new object of the eye—the new centre of our thoughts, feelings, affections, ways, and worship. All is changed, but the change is deep and all-prevailing. And as we grow in our knowledge of Christ, the results are infinite. By degrees, if the eye is fixed on its heavenly object, we enter into the fulness of Christ as the measure of our own blessing. We know our place in the presence of God according to the acceptance of Christ Himself—we are accepted in the beloved, and have settled peace with God. And now, the feelings, so long looked for and waited for, are come. But how? By making self the centre—by some felt change within? Ah no; but by looking to Jesus and believing the word of God. The only thing that can produce the feelings so much desired is the written word—"Thus it is written"—but until the word is believed, the feelings can never be experienced. But now when the eye rests on its new object, the Holy

Spirit is free to reveal the grace and truth of Christ to the soul. Light breaks in on the mind, the truth of God fills the heart, and new joy overflows the whole soul.

It is no longer with the anxious one, "If I could only feel it I would believe," but, "I see all in Jesus now. When I am looking up to Him, so many things come into my mind which move my heart with deep emotion and fill my eyes with tears of joy. How can I think of His wondrous love in coming down from heaven to die for me, without being thus deeply moved? I think of His sufferings on the cross, of His crown of thorns, but chiefly of His love which nothing could turn aside, which carried Him through everything, which only became the stronger as the pressure from all sides increased." Such are the sweet and tender breathings of first love when the blessed Jesus covers the eyes and fills the heart.

THE CONVERSION OF SAUL.

But apart from the varying condition of soul which we meet with in our own day, and the disappointments which we sometimes meet with in the history of young Christians, we have the example of the great apostle of the Gentiles on this point, whose experience has been recorded by the pen of inspiration.

When on his way to Damascus, as we learn from the Acts he was arrested by a light from heaven shining round about him above the brightness of the sun. The astonished, persecuting Saul fell to the ground. He had now come to the end of himself; not only as to the sins of the flesh, but as to the righteousness of the flesh with all his advantages, natural and acquired, from his birth to that day and hour. This is the true preparation of heart for the right apprehension of a glorified Christ—our heavenly object. When we are down, when we are nothing, when we are no longer looking for holy feelings, a change for the better within, to make us worthy of divine favour; but when with our faces on the ground we are obedient to the heavenly vision, the light of the glory shines into our souls. "And I heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest." Here we have the proper object of the Christian, and that which should form and govern every Christian's character. Saul learns from Christ Himself in the glory, that He was Jesus of Nazareth, the crucified, and that Christians are a part of Himself—one with Himself in the glory. "Why persecutest thou me? . . . I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." Who would care to look to their feelings, their own righteousness or religious-

ness, who had caught a glimpse of this glorified Christ?

This is the grand truth, the grand object for Christians, as we go through this world. Hold it fast, O my soul; think again on the peculiar sweetness and beauty of these words, "Christ Jesus my Lord," oh cherish them in the deepest recesses of thy heart, embrace them with all the fervour and affection of thy soul; think again on each word, and let thine eye and thy heart be ever up to Him as thy heavenly object—Christ Jesus thy Lord. Like Rebekah in the wilderness, tarry not, look not behind thee or around thee, but pursue thy desert path until He comes to close thy weary way, and take thee up to be with Himself, and like Himself, for ever and for ever.

One thought more presses on my mind for utterance before laying down my pen, namely—What must be the *folly* of those Christians who allow themselves to be influenced by the world, the theories of men, or to be drawn aside, and so lose sight of this grand transforming object—a glorified Christ? But what must be the *wickedness* of those who reject this Christ altogether? The former must suffer great loss in their own souls, but the latter eternal shame and hopeless ruin. Which, let me ask, has a hold of this paper just now? Enough may have been said already to the former; but to the latter, enough

can never be said, so long as he continues to reject the Saviour. Surely we cannot give thee up; surely we cannot leave thee alone. While there is life, we must plead for thee to bow to Jesus as Saviour and Lord. What will become of thee if thy knee refuses to bow to Him now? The word has gone forth and can never be recalled, that every knee must bow to Him, and every tongue must confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

God has ordained it; subjection to the name of Jesus must be universal. In heaven, earth, and hell, every knee must bow, and every tongue must confess to the divine glories of the once lowly Jesus of Nazareth. The faithful, we know, with loud and joyous hallelujahs will confess Him Saviour and Lord; the holy angels will swell the song of the saints on high; but the fallen angels with the lost of every name and age, who are "under the earth," in the regions of woe, must also confess that "Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Yes, my dear reader, willingly or unwillingly, thy knee must bow with the rest, and thy tongue must confess. But how awful the thought, to be compelled, however reluctantly, under the iron rod of judgment, to confess the glories of the Saviour in whom thou hast no part, and to bow to Him whom thou didst once reject!

Oh! think, think, of these things now—at

once, I pray thee! think of that awful future for all who reject Christ and His great salvation. Couldst thou dwell "under the earth," in the dark regions of despair, for ever and ever? Hast thou any feeling, O my dear fellow-sinner? Couldst thou risk such an awful eternity? Couldst thou throw away such a glorious opportunity as thou hast at this moment? Does it seem hard to bow at the feet of Him who once died amidst shame and cruel mockings, that thou, even thou, mightest be saved? For myself, I know no privilege so great, no honour, no dignity, so transcendent, as to bathe those feet with tears; but what more can I say to thee? Only one thing is right—Let thy heart be decided for Christ on the spot. Bow to Him now, confess Him now, He is still on His throne of grace, He waits for thee in love. As a lost and needy sinner, look up to Him now; pardon, salvation, and heavenly glory are thine, from the first moment of thy surrender to Him. What a prize! How near thy reach! Henceforth let thy motto be, Looking up to Christ in the glory, He "loved me and gave himself for me." Galatians ii. 20.



MEETNESS FOR HEAVEN.

COLOSSIANS I. 12-14.

MAN in his lost condition is the object of the grace of God. But where does that grace find him? how does it deliver him? what does it do for him? and where does it set him? As the slave of Satan and of darkness it finds him, out of this condition it delivers him, from all his guilt it cleanses him, and sets him in the light and liberty of the free-born children of God. The soul's blessing is complete: not by a rule given him to obey, not by long watchings, fastings, prayers, individual or concerted—good as these things may be—but by the grace of God acting in power, and setting him in an entirely new relationship with Himself.

So far does this operation of grace transcend all human thought, that it can only be understood in the simplicity of faith, and by setting aside all present experience as a guide. The word of God reveals it, faith receives it, and maintains it to be true beyond a question. Experience we shall have, but it will be the experience of a joy and a happiness answering to the truth believed, and to the grace of God in which we stand. To look within for evidences of our pardon and acceptance is to be filled with darkness and uncertainty.

The believer in his new place—this wondrous place of measureless blessedness—can only worship. He has nothing to ask for as regards the blessing of his soul, he is complete in Christ, though in everything by prayer and supplication he is to let his requests be made known unto God, as to his whole path here below. But his prayers are full of praise ; so perfectly at rest, so assured of the changeless favour of God, his heart, like David's cup, overflows. How can it be otherwise ? Hear what the apostle says:—

Verse 12. *Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.* Here we are arrested, overwhelmed, by the greatness of the grace. No human pen can add to the fulness and blessedness of these words. We do well to pause, and meditate on the vast but gracious thought—made meet to share the portion of the saints in light. Not merely to share the inheritance of saints, or of saints in heaven, but of saints "*in light*"—in the light of our Father's immediate presence. How absolute is the effect of the work of Christ on the soul ! Whiter than snow, we stand in the light where holiness and righteousness dwell, and find that we are made meet to enjoy the children's portion there.

But the saints here referred to, some may suppose, must be advanced saints, those who have reached great attainment in the christian life.

No, not so ; what is said here is said of all who believe in the Lord Jesus, in every period in life, and in all ages and in all countries. The youngest as well as the oldest, the most ignorant and the most learned, who believe, are made meet by the Father for the light in which He dwells—it is the work of God in Christ Jesus, and can never fail. The Christian, from the day of his conversion, is in the light as God is in the light. Practically, we know, both young and old in the divine life may forget this, may not always walk according to the light, may indeed be sometimes in a dark state and unhappy. Still, he is always in the light, as to his place and acceptance in Christ ; that is now his native place, and can never know any change, but this makes the failure of Christians all the more serious. The grace of God, however can never fail, and, blessed be His name, we stand in grace.

The penitent thief on the cross, we are assured, was as fit for Paradise the moment he believed as if he had lived fifty years the most devoted saint on earth. His crown would have been different, but he himself would not have been better fitted for the realms of light and glory. He had Christ and His acceptance in heaven. The prodigal son is another instance of the same kind, a blessed picture, an example—ever fresh, ever refreshing—of every case of conversion. Met by a Father's love, reconciled with a Father's

kiss, sealed with a Father's ring; the best of everything in heaven is his. He leaves the husks for the fatted calf—that was his last meal in the old country, *this* his first in the new. But could he ever have better—Christ in resurrection? And could he ever lose his robe, his ring, with all his new treasures, in his Father's house? Impossible! The once lost sheep, safely within the gates of glory, no harm can ever reach it there; no evil can ever disturb that scene of love; no enemy can ever invade those peaceful shores—that happy land of pure, unmingled, eternal, changeless blessedness!

All this is true to faith now; ours is always a present meetness. Oh, what rest there is to the heart in grace! We can think and speak of those who have finished their course, not according to the variableness of early piety, but according to the true, unvarying, grace of our God. We read of their fitness, their welcome, their home, their companions, in light, in the words of eternal truth. The shadow of a doubt can never cross the mind as to our dear departed. The messenger of peace may have come at an earlier hour than he was expected, but he could never find him unprepared. No matter where he was, or what the circumstances may have been, his last moments were the happiest in his existence. To depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better, closes the pilgrim's weary way, and

begins his new eternal song, with the saints that have gone before, in the presence of their Lord. Dear and loved ones may surround and smooth the pillow on which the weary head reclines; or he may be alone, far away from a well-known voice, tossed on life's roughest wave; but our God is there, and has ordered everything. We can always trust in Him.

“ My bark is wafted from the strand
By breath divine,
And on the helm there rests a hand
Other than mine.

One who has known in storms to sail,
I have on board;
Above the raging of the gale
I have my Lord.

He holds me when the billows smite:
I shall not fall.
If sharp, 'tis short; if long, 'tis light:
He tempers all.

Safe to the land!—Safe to the land!
The end is His,
And then with Him go hand in hand
Far into bliss.”*

But however sure and certain that the separation is only for “a little while,” and that good is the will of the Lord, the poor human heart is bowed down beneath the weight of a sorrow that has cast its dark shade over everything around,

* Lines by the late Dean Alford.

and deepens by the tender recollections of a thousand associations day by day. It is not unbelief, it is not murmuring, it is the agony of a bereaved affection. Oh, mysterious agony! Thy voice is groans and sighs; thy repast is tears, yet we would not be withdrawn from thee, we love to feed upon thee, we love to dwell with thee alone. It changes everything here below, but more to some than to others. The paths of the wilderness may be dark and lonely, the poor body may be feeble, the spirit may be crushed, the heart may lie bleeding, the shadows of death may so thicken around us in the valley, that we are unable to proceed, and can only say, "Father, take my hand, and through the gloom lead safely home thy child."

Time alone restores. After a while the sorrow sleeps, but never dies; or it may ebb like the tide, but flows again as deep as ever. Communion with the Lord is the only healing balm for the wounded spirit, and communion with His word the true means for recovering power for service. And nothing will so naturally and sweetly take a sorrowing heart off itself as being interested in the salvation of others for the Lord's glory.

We can only just glance at the next two verses, though they are of such rare beauty and importance.

Verses 13, 14. *Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into*

the kingdom of his dear Son. In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins. Here we have the character of the work which sets us in the light. This great blessing—made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light—depends upon two things—Deliverance and Forgiveness. Complete deliverance from the power of darkness, from the whole realm and region of the enemy; and not only so, “we are translated into the kingdom of his dear Son.” Both are absolutely complete now in the reckoning of faith. “Who hath”—not who may, or will, but “who hath delivered us.” Redemption and the forgiveness of sins sum up the Father’s blessing to His children, in happy association with the Son of His love, throughout the eternal ages. See also Ephesians i. 3–6; ii. 4–7.

The Lord grant that all who read these lines may be led to inquire, “Am I ready, should the summons come to-night? or am I still the slave of Satan, and in the realm of darkness?” There is no middle place. Every one who reads this paper is either made meet by the Father for the inheritance of the saints in light, or he is still under the power of darkness. But, oh, how great the difference! The bright inheritance on high, or the dark regions of hell below! Which is it to be, my dear reader? Make thy choice now; let thy heart be decided for Jesus now: rest not, sleep

not, until thou hast surrendered thy whole heart to Jesus. One look to Him in faith changes everything—changes thy position, changes thy present state of mind, and changes thy destinies for ever. He has died for sinners—He has died for thee; what hast thou done for Him? He has paid the ransom price adequate for the redemption of all.

“I gave My life for thee,
My precious blood I shed,
That thou might'st ransomed be,
And quickened from the dead,
I gave My life for thee;
What hast thou given for Me?”

The blessed Lord still waits to receive all who come to Him, and welcomes them as He welcomed the penitent thief and the prodigal son; surely that is encouragement enough. Oh, be at once decided for the Lord; own His claims, bow to His word, believe in His love, and rejoice in all the grace which is thine in Him. And then should the Lord come for His saints before death comes for thee, thou wilt be ready to ascend with them to meet thy Lord in the air. Come, oh come, happy morning, come! Then shall all tears be dried, and all shadows shall flee away. It is the morning without clouds; it is the morning when our loved departed shall rise again; when we shall be reunited in our bodies of glory, all perfectly conformed to the image of the Lord,

and dwell together, an unbroken circle, in the bright, bright beams of His unchanging love, throughout the countless ages of eternity.

“O happy morn ! the Lord will come,
And take His waiting people home
Beyond the reach of care ;
Where guilt and sin are all unknown :
The Lord will come and claim His own,
And place them with Him on His throne,
Thy glory bright to share.

The resurrection-morn will break,
And every sleeping saint awake
Brought forth in light again ;
O morn, too bright for mortal eyes !
When all the ransomed church shall rise,
And wing their way to yonder skies—
Called up with Christ to reign.

O Lord ! my pilgrim-spirit longs
To sing the everlasting songs
Of glory, honour, power :
When heaven and earth, and all things yield,
My Saviour will be still my shield,
For He has to my soul revealed
Himself my strength and tower.”





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