

FOUR LECTURES

BY F. W. GRANT,

At the Plainfield Meeting, 1882

LECTURE I.—*The Mediator.*

“ II.—“*Outside the Camp.*”

“ III.—*Conflict and Progress.*

“ IV.—“*From the Top of the Rocks.*”

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THE MEDIATOR

(Ev. xxviii. 15-30.)

I HAVE read these verses, beloved friends, not with the thought of trying to bring out, in any wise, even in outline, all that might present itself to me here, but rather taking them as the key to some thoughts with regard to our blessed Lord Himself, in that character which is His exclusively,—the character of Mediator. He is the “one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus.” And this word, Mediator, means, one who is in the midst—between two. Thus Christ is, on the one hand, with God, for God, and God; and with man, for man, and man. The fact of what He is in His own person is, I would say, the basis-fact for all the rest.

How wonderful, beloved friends, that there is now in the presence of God for us a Man,—yea, and upon the Father's throne! though there, of course, because He is, in the highest and most exclusive sense, Son of the Father. He is thus the *only* begotten Son in virtue of His deity as He is the *first*-begotten Son in virtue of His humanity—head of a race. In the tabernacle of His manhood was thus displayed, and without a veil, the glory of Godhead. “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt [“tabernacled,” the word is,] among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the *only* begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” Thus, what answered to the glory dwelling in the

tabernacle of old was the glory of the Eternal Son. But the glory in Israel's tabernacle they could not behold. The glory of Christ we *do* behold (that of which the other was but a type). And why? Because it is full of grace and truth. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him"—"told Him out."

Now, in this expression—"full of grace and truth"—we have, in brief, the two main thoughts of the breastplate. "Truth" is the effect of the light, and God is light. Light is what manifests,—brings out the truth, *is* the truth. Christ, the light of the world, is the truth come into it: every thing gets its true character from Him. "Grace," while it is what is in God, is *toward* man. Look, now, at the breastplate. It was, as you know, what was on the heart of the high-priest when he went in to God. In the breastplate were the Urim and Thummim—"lights and perfections," as the words mean; and the Urim and Thummim must be upon the priest in order that he might give an answer from God.

Thus, in the day of the return from the captivity, when the remnant who returned found certain priests who could not show their genealogy, they were put from the priesthood, not because their claim could be disproved, but because it could not be proved. There was no one to decide the question whether they were really priests,—no recognized way of getting an answer from God; and they were told that they must wait until there should stand up a priest with Urim and Thummim. God might raise up a prophet and send a message through him, as He did at that very time

by Haggai and Zechariah, but there was no *regular* way of access to God, to get answer such as the case required.

Now, these Urim and Thummim are the things I want to speak of particularly. "Lights and perfections" the term means, as I have said. And these things are one: the "lights" *are* the "perfections,"—they are two ways of speaking of the same thing.

"God is light;" He is "*the Father of lights.*" That is to say, all partial displays of glory, of whatever character, come from Him as Source. Light is a wonderful thing—a thing in which nature itself (now that we have the Word) speaks to us very plainly, and very beautifully too. According to the views of modern investigators, light is (as God is) a trinity—a trinity in unity. These primary rays, so called, make up the one ray of white, or colorless, light. There is, at the outset, a very evident basis for the Scripture comparison.

But then there is something more, and more striking, I think; and it is this: that the color by which every thing in nature is clothed comes from the light itself—from the different combinations of these three primary colors; or, to express it better, from the *partial* display by the object of the light itself. To make plain what I mean: A blue object is one in which the red and the yellow rays of the white light are absorbed, and only the blue, therefore, are left to come out. The blue of the object is thus derived from the light itself. So with a green object—the red alone is absorbed, and the blue and yellow combined makes the color green. Again, if the blue be absorbed, it is an orange; if the yellow, a purple; and so on for all the rest.

Now, what a beautiful thought that is! and how true, that every thing here—every work of God's hands is the display, more or less, of some attribute or attributes in Himself. These colors are the diverse glory of the one light, displayed in a various beauty, which we have not eyes for in the one white ray. Yet, though invisible, these colors are all there, and by being separated from one another are brought to our notice, so that the distinct beauty of each is seen.

Now, that is how God delights to come out and spread Himself before the vision of His creatures. As "light" in Himself, we could at least but little know Him; but as the "Father of lights," as He displays these before us, we learn Him so.

Take the gospels as an example, in which the one Son, whom in His fullness "no man knows, but the Father only," is given to us in four separate ways, that, as Son of David, as Minister (not ministered unto), as Son of Man, as Son of God, we might be able to discern Him better. So, in fact, the separate books of Scripture divide the truth for us into distinctly characterized parts, too little realized, indeed, for what they are, or accepted in the gracious design of God in shaping them.

So, again, in the Church,—collectively, the "epistle [not epistles] of Christ." No man could be an "epistle" by himself,—the parchment is not broad enough to write it; yet each one, reflecting in his measure some part of the divine image, and getting thus accordingly his character (or color), may help to manifest Him to the eyes of men. Thus, you may find in one man, as in Job, remarkable patience; in another, as remarkable energy; seldom, perhaps, one who can display in equal measure the

patience and the energy. Men are thus characterized by some overbalance—some one or more things prominently developed, and which often means, a defect of some other quality; and yet to our dull eyes the predominant one is thus strikingly brought out.

And so, beloved friends, does God display, in His various dealings with us, His various attributes; in one thing His holiness shining out pre-eminently, in another His truth, in another His love, and so on. Thus He adapts His greatness to our littleness, speaking to us in language that we are able to bear, that we may apprehend Him more as He desires we should.

A few words more as to the light. Not that I want to dwell upon this too much; and yet I think it is not in vain, especially in the present day, to speak of what nature presents to us, where Scripture gives the real and only key. We find, if we turn to the first chapter of Genesis, that light was before the sun. It puzzles the wise men to explain it; nevertheless, for the natural to figure the spiritual, it must have been so. For what is the sun? Is it not a dark earth-mass which God has clothed with the glory of the light, His image? Now, that is what God has done in Christ. He has clothed humanity, in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, with the glory of deity; and that is the Sun in Scripture-type. That "Sun of Righteousness" yet to rise upon the world with healing in His wings is Christ—Immanuel: manhood clothed with the glory of the Godhead—dark no more.

Thus the "lights" in the breastplate are the "perfections," the various perfections, of God Himself. These many-colored jewels are the

manifold display of the divine excellency. And mark, these jewels are crystallized lights—*unchangeable* perfections. It is not a display, passing however great. In the rainbow, the token of God's covenant with the new earth brought through the judgment, you have what is essentially similar in character, but it is the display of God in one act. The whole diversified display of divine glory, I believe,—the whole spectrum of color—banding the storm of divine judgment in the cross. “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him.” But however God might thus be at one time displayed, it is for all time that He is displayed; for He is always the same, and that is what is marked here. The jewels never lose and never change their light; and so is God always the “Father of lights,” always “without variableness or shadow of turning.”

Mark, now, where these stones are found. They are upon the breastplate. And where is the breastplate? Upon the heart of the high-priest. The stones press upon the heart of Israel's high-priest. Surely we know now what that means,—that the one who goes to God for man (and that is what the priest does) must be one who has upon his heart before he goes, and as going, all that God Himself is. Only Christ could be, or was, that; but all that God is, in every varied attribute of His—every color, so to speak, of the light—is there upon His heart abidingly; so dear, that He can never forget it, never lose sight of what is due to God in any one solitary particular.

But even that, taken by itself, would not qualify Him for a mediator. There must be something else, and there is. The mediator-priest springs

from the tribe of Levi—"joined,"—third son of Israel; for in resurrection (of which these "thirds" manifestly speak) alone can He "join" or bring others to God. In Himself personally He is indeed, we know, a Levi—"joined"—only begotten and first-begotten—Man to God; but in resurrection is He priest-Levite to join as Mediator others. This He is perfectly in heart as office; for upon these jewels, "graven upon them with the engraving of a signet" ("Set me as a seal upon thine heart," says the spouse in the Song of Songs), are the names of God's people,—here, of course, the names of the twelve tribes of Israel; for us, the type of all the people of God. These twelve names are engraven upon the jewels, so that you would have to break the jewels to pieces to get them off. There they abide, unchangeably as the jewels themselves. In the light of the jewels you read the names. They are identified with the display of the lights and perfections of God Himself; so that here is One upon whose heart the people of God dwell, unfailingly and unchangeably connected with the display of the glory of God. Standing as He does on the one hand for God, on the other for man, it is not as if these were two separate or separable things with Him, much less things that might be in opposition to one another; they are things seen together, as the names written upon the Urim and Thummim-jewels—typically, the divine perfections.

Beloved, that is what the Lord Jesus Christ is; that is how He abides before God now, the blessed One who can never forget what is due to God, never the need of His people, never the righteousness which must be displayed in the blessing itself.

Aye, for blessing, there must be righteousness! and again, thank God, for righteousness now (such the value of His work), there must be blessing! There is no discord then; there is the very opposite. The blessing of the people is the very way in which the glory of God is to be displayed. God takes them up for that very end; not merely to bless them and retain this too, but to show it forth in blessing them, to the end "that in the ages to come He might show forth the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."

Thus the names are upon the breastplate, and the breastplate upon the high-priest's heart. How glorious the Person in whom all this is fulfilled—in whom Godhead and manhood meet in one!—Immanuel!—in His own person "God with us." And oh, beloved friends, marvelous as the cross is, (surely, the most marvelous thing that could be,) yet we should do Him wrong if we thought of that prepared body of His as if it was *only* prepared that He might go to the cross in it. No, He has taken it to keep it forever and ever; He has taken it as the equivalent of those bored ears of the Hebrew servant which signified perpetual service, when he might have gone out free. Think of One who looked down upon us when we had all gone astray from God—"turned every one to his own way"—and, seeing how we had fretted ourselves against the will of God, and esteemed as bondage His easy yoke, took up Himself that slighted path of obedience,—took up that service which we had so disparaged,—never again to relinquish it, becoming Himself the "Leader and Perfecter of faith," "learning obedience"—He to whom all was due—"from the things which He suffered"!

For that path of His lay not through a fair world, decked out as Adam's was, but in one such as the sin of Adam and our sin had made it,—a world to Him, beloved friends, such as we can scarcely have an idea of; yet He chose such a world in order to display in it, amid all its misery, how blessed the Father's will is.

See Him ministering to one poor needy soul, as at the well of Sychar, where hungered and athirst Himself He ministers to her and is satisfied. "I have meat to eat," He says to the disciples, as they bring Him the food which they have procured,— "I have meat to eat which ye know not of." He is satisfied. His meat is, to do the will of Him that sent Him, and to finish His work. In hunger, in thirst, in weariness, in lowliest service to one poor sinner, the Son of Man finds His own satisfaction, and delights in the Father's will. And such as He was He is, however different may be His surroundings now. He has taken this place unrepentingly, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever." Yes, if I look at Him, I see how in His very person God and man have met in an eternal embrace impossible to be sundered. God's Fellow on the one side, owned such when He was upon the cross—"The Man that is My Fellow," saith Jehovah of Hosts; on the other, the cross accomplished, "anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows.

What preciousness in the manhood of One of whom the apostle can say, "We have heard [Him] with our ears, seen with our eyes, looked upon, and our hands have handled"! Notice how in these words all distance is put away, and He comes, as it were, continually nearer to us. For He might

not be visibly in sight at all to be heard with the ears, so it is added, "seen with our eyes." Then, it is no mere momentary vision,—“we have looked upon” Him—have had Him before us steadily and continuously. But more, “our hands have handled” Him. And yet this is the One who is God over all, blessed forever; One “whom no man hath seen nor can see, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto.” And this it is that gives its infinite value to that manhood in which He gives Himself into our hands and hearts in all the blessed reality of unchanging love.

But if He is God with God and God for man, He is also man for God—true, perfect man, in whom manhood finds and fills its destined place forever,—God’s thought from eternity. “Lord, what is man, that Thou art mindful of him?” has its answer in the One made a little lower than the angels; His own title for Himself in the address to Laodicea—“The beginning of the creation of God.” He is the Mediator.

But now look how this runs through His work. We have thought of Him a little in His path down here: what was He on the cross? Oh, beloved friends, it is there that we find indeed the very storm of judgment of which I have spoken, in which, after it has passed, we see the many-colored rays of divine glory. The rainbow was, as you know, the sign of God’s covenant with the new world risen from the flood; and this blessed bow of promise is the sign of His covenant with the new creation forever and ever. Sin shall no more disturb. God has been glorified as to it, and being glorified, He has absolute title over it. Title, I do not mean, to put sinners into hell; that title, of

course, He ever had; but title in goodness,—absolute title to show His grace.

But now, what was the cross, beloved friends? Surely the crisis in which was summed up the whole conflict between good and evil, and the victory of divine goodness over evil.

Sin had come into the world, and God had been dishonored by it. What was the hindrance to God's coming in in grace? This: that He must first be honored where He had been dishonored, and about that which had dishonored Him. He must be glorified,—that is, He must be displayed in His true character: not indifferent to sin, and not indifferent to the misery resulting in a world of sin. He must not fail in love, nor in righteousness. In the work which puts away sin, the glory of God must be displayed,—that is, all the glory of divine goodness, for that is His glory. Goodness must be manifested supreme over evil, supreme *as* goodness. Not power must get the victory: that might put man in hell, but not bring him to heaven. Not power, I say again, but goodness, and as such.

And on the cross, as is manifest, power is all on the other side. "He was crucified through weakness." You see the power of man, you see the power of the world, you see the power of the devil,—all these are manifested fully; and on the side of the One who is left to suffer there, no sign of power at all. There He is,—unresisting, helpless: men may do as they will with Him who made them. He will not withdraw Himself, will not hide His face from shame and spitting. He has taken the servant's place: "Man has acquired me from my youth," He says; and even to a slave's death He will stoop for man. "What are

those wounds in Thy hands?" "Even those with which I was wounded in the house of My friends."

And yet, "if God be for us, who can be against us?" And was He ever otherwise than for His people? Let all others leave them, what is it to them, if God be with them? Men have been in the fire itself and come out to ask, as one did—the first martyr in Spain, when supposing he was going to retract they had released him for the moment,—“Did you envy me my happiness?”

How easily, then, could He, the Prince of martyrs, have gone through martyrdom, if it were only that. Much as He felt all that man was doing, and showing himself to be in all he did, yet in what perfect quietness could He have gone through it all if it were only man's hour—"your hour," as He said to the Jews,—aye, or Satan's! But oh, beloved friends, it was not that only. *God* must be against Him. That was what gave its real character to the cross; that was what distinguished the death of the Lord from the death of any righteous man before or since; and it was that which gave even His precious blood the power to sanctify us. It was not simply because He was what He was, but that because, being such, He took our place, our guilt, bearing our sins in His own body on the tree, His soul also being made a sacrifice for sin. This was man's double sentence—death and judgment; both parts of this He took, dying in the outside place, type of the deeper and more dread reality.—“Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate.”

But where was power in all that? Every-where against Him. This was not a victory that power

could gain. Evil must be overcome by good alone. He must be left to drink man's full cup to the dregs. The One to whom God had given testimony—"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," now cries, and is not heard. The One whom they had seen on the mount transfigured, above the brightness of the sun, now lies with that glory eclipsed in utter darkness. But not the pressure of that whole agony upon His soul could get from Him aught in response but perfect submission, unfaltering obedience. The more the pressure, the more manifest the perfection—the absolute perfection that was His: goodness absolute—"the Son of Man glorified, and God glorified in Him."

Such was the cross. And thus, and thus only, could flow out, as now we know them, those "rivers of waters in a dry place"—yea, from the Rock itself, now smitten, the streams of abounding grace. There had been no compromise; nothing had been given up; He had borne all. Righteousness had been displayed, not merely conciliated. I look at the cross to see in its fullness what the righteousness of God is. Righteousness, holiness, love,—all that God is, has been displayed and glorified, and now He can be what He will, He can be gracious.

Such is the Mediator in His work Godward and manward. How the jewels shine upon the golden breastplate! Let us not think that God claimed from Him this work merely. God forbid. He who said, "Lo, I come to do Thy will,"—He whom zeal for the Father's house devoured,—*He* claimed the atonement, claimed and made it, both. And now, as the fruit of it, He is gone up into the pres-

ence of God, to take there His place in His presence, resurrection-priest and Mediator; no more on earth, for "if He were on earth, He should not be a priest," but "such a high-priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." There, beloved friends, now He is for us, as we rejoice to know.

Let us look now at this truth of His priesthood, and of that other form of intercession of which Scripture speaks—of advocacy. The priest is the intercessor for infirmity; for if you look at the epistle to the Hebrews, it is denied there that as such He has any thing to do with sin. He is now "separate from sinners." His work of atonement had to do with sin, and so complete is the efficacy of that that we are perfected by that precious blood which has gone into the presence of God for us. "By the which will," says the apostle, speaking of that will which Christ came to do,—“by the which will we are sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all;” and again, he says, “By one offering He has perfected forever [perpetually, or without interruption, as the word means,] them that are sanctified.”

Thus the priest has not to do with sin. He has to do with us as those who are down here in the wilderness of the world, the needy objects of His care. He is priest for our infirmity,—not sinful infirmity, but creature-weakness, only in a place of constant trial and exposure by what is in us to the *danger* of sin. “Seeing, then, that we have a great High-Priest who is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, . . . let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may

obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

On the other hand, "if any one *sin*, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Notice that character here: "Jesus Christ the"—what? The One who loves us? That is implied in the very fact that He is our Advocate, our Intercessor. No, it is "Jesus Christ the *righteous*." The same mediatorial character, you see,—the same jewels upon His breast, but the names of His people too—"the propitiation for our sins." Here again are the two things—never to be disjoined, that make Him the Mediator.

People ask sometimes,—and many who do not ask have it upon their minds—why any need of intercession at all? Does it imply an imperfect work? or can it be that God the Father is not absolutely for us as is God the Son? Far be either thought. But what, then, does it imply? Well, this: that He is the Mediator. Tried, and proved how fully trustworthy His hands sustain the burden of every thing. "Son over God's house," the people of God are put under His charge, that, having wrought atonement for them upon the cross, He may work out in living power their complete salvation as now risen from the dead. Do you remember that wonderful seventeenth chapter of John? Do you remember how there where the Lord gives us a sample, so to speak, of His intercessory work above—how constantly He speaks of His people as of those whom the Father had given Him?—"Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me."—"Keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me."—"As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that

He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him." They are given Him, put under His hand and care, as of One of assured competency to bring them through. All the responsibility of their salvation rests upon Him who has done the work of atonement and gone into heaven, angels and authorities and powers being made subject to Him.

Beloved, He is competent: God is satisfied—satisfied! Why, He brought Him out in the face of man, of the world, of the devil, before His work was done, when He had just pledged Himself to do it, as in John's baptism to that deeper baptism which was to follow,—He opened the heavens in testimony of unmingled delight in Him: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And what then? The Holy Ghost, just come upon Him, the seal of that divine complacency, carries Him up into the wilderness. Why there? "To be tempted of the devil." God says, "This is My beloved Son." I know Him; I can trust Him; I can rest all My glory safely in His hands. Take Him away; try Him; do what you please with Him; and see if He be not worthy of My delight.

Thus He goes forth into the wilderness, (complete contrast with all the surroundings of the first man,) to fast His forty days; not as a Moses or an Elias—to meet God, but that in weakness, and with the hunger of that forty days upon Him, He may meet man's adversary, and be fully tested. Did the Spirit of God ever bring up another to be tempted in most utter need, in all the reality of human weakness, by the devil?

Aye, God can trust Him. In a deeper need

than that, in a darker scene by far,—nay, darkness at its height, upon that awful cross, (the last step in His self-emptying,) God could leave Him there in solitary weakness, with all the counsels of God—all that which was to be the manifestation of God in His own creation forever,—all His love and all His righteousness,—all the blessing of man,—all, all, resting with its whole weight upon Him;—He can rest it there, I say, and turn away His head, and leave all to Him, satisfied there shall be no loss of any one thing trusted to His care.

And now, shall He not carry out what He has begun? Shall He not, as the Captain of salvation, save to the uttermost (or bring right through, as that means,) all that come unto God by Him? Yes, He, as risen priest, shall have the responsibility of the people for whom He undertakes. Every thing shall be in His hand, and come through Him. Our Mediator-Priest, not interposed between us and God, as if He had not brought us Himself to God; for in that sense He says, “I do not say that I will pray the Father for you, for the Father Himself loveth you.” No, we have not to come to Him that He may go to God for us, as if we could not go to Him ourselves. That is not the meaning of His intercession; but it does imply His charge of carrying through to full result the blessed work He founded at the cross. Whatever is in question here, He is the One who is with the Father, Himself also God. With man, on the other hand, about it too. He is the One who as Priest or Advocate goes to God, or as Guardian of His people charges Himself with all their need. He can take the basin and towel to

wash the feet of His people, that they may have part with Him.

And how in this action once more the character of the Mediator appears! He is going up to God—He is going up, His work just accomplished. For although as a fact it had not yet been completed, He can, in the consciousness of what He is, already account it so. As the One, then, into whose hands all things are given, and who comes from God and goes to God, He rises from supper, and takes a towel and girds Himself. The jewels are upon His breast. He cannot give up what is due to God, nor we have part with Him except we are cleansed according to His estimate.

But then, mark, it is not merely, "Except you are washed," you can have no part with Me, but, "Except I wash you." Thus this most necessary work He will accomplish for us, stooping to the towel and the basin as in love the Servant of our need. Peter may resist, but Peter and all must bow. His embrace must hold us fast to God. Blessed be His name, if the jewels are on His breast, His people's names are engraved upon the jewels.

Let us ask ourselves, Are we submitting to this washing? Do not look at it, beloved friends, as if it were a question of souls gotten away from God. Don't let us think, if we are going on, as we may think, pretty well, and our consciences bear witness of nothing particularly against us,—don't think it implies that we have no need of this washing. It is not a thing of which we have need once or twice in a lifetime. We have constant need of being in the hands of this blessed One; not merely of taking the Word and judging

for ourselves what is wrong,—of judging this or that,—but of putting ourselves into His hands and saying, Lord, I may not know even what is wrong, but without reserve I come to Thee, that I may learn from Thee what cleanness is, not taking my thought at all.

You see what it implies, brethren,—that it implies an absolute surrender into His hands; and you and I are not right, not fit to have part with Him, if there is with us to-night a reserve,—if we would say, “Cleanse off that spot” merely. That is not it. It will not do if we are not looking up to Him and saying, rather, “Search me, O God, and try me; prove my reins and my heart; *see well* if there be any wicked way in me; and lead me in the way everlasting.”

Are you and I with the Lord Jesus Christ without reserve like that? Are we ready to be told, whatever the evil is; asking God to search it out? Not merely saying, I repeat, “I am not conscious of any thing particularly wrong.” Are we *exercising ourselves* to have always a conscience void of offense toward God and toward man? Are we in the consciousness of the failure of our own judgment, looking to Him whose eyes are as a flame of fire, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and asking Him to *see well* if there be in us any thing He cannot tolerate?

For we must be cleansed according to His own estimate, in order to have fellowship with Him.

Oh, beloved, how easy for our hearts to slip out of this fellowship, blessed as it is! Let us be jealous over ourselves, and not take for a heart in communion a heart at peace with itself because unexercised.

If our feet are in His hands, then, thank God, He takes the responsibility of our being cleansed. Basin and towel are His, with all things in heaven and earth also. We shall have part with Him even now;—in the midst of a poor, poor world, rotten to the core with sin, blessed, satisfying part with Him. Which of us would sacrifice it for aught else whatever that could be given us?

And now I want to point your attention to this before I close,—that, as I have said, the regular communication with God in Israel was by means of the Urim and Thummim. If they wanted an answer from God as to a certain thing, an oracular judgment about it, it was a priest who had Urim and Thummim who must go to God.

How can we apply this now? First of all, of course, to Christ our great High-Priest, who is passed into the heavens; but as a principle for us, and an important one, we may apply it this way: If we seek and obtain a divine answer as to any thing in the Church down here, what characteristics will it have to prove itself a divine answer? Well, surely these two which the Urim and Thummim imply. God must first of all have His place in it. We must see the jewels, the lights and perfections, whole and altogether there. But then across the jewels must be seen the names of His people too. Love,—divine love—to His people must characterize it, as well as love for God. Nay, the apostle asks how he who loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, can in fact love God whom he hath not seen.

Here are two things that will surely characterize every divine judgment—every judgment of the Priest with Urim and Thummim. If God is light

on the one hand, He is love on the other. As partakers of the divine nature, we must be doers of righteousness on the one hand; on the other, we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. Nay, as light and love are one in God, however much to us they may be two, so we may be sure of this: that whatever is not righteousness is not love, as whatever is not love is not righteousness.

Perhaps we have learned to say, if a thing be not righteous, it is not love; and it is most true and most important: for true love to my brother is not indifferent to evil in him, and cannot be. How can I take no notice of that which is dragging down his soul, and dishonoring God in him? It is impossible that love can act so. Call it social good feeling, if you will; that is love according to man's idea: but it lacks the divine quality—it leaves out God. But leave Him out, and you have left out every thing. "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep His commandments." That is the test. Emotion is all well, but the test is not emotion. *Obedience* is the test, and nothing else.

It is not love to our brother if in the way we show it we are not keeping His commandments; but on the other hand, it is not keeping His commandments if we are not showing love. Do not imagine that there can be righteousness apart from love. As I say, these two things are really, at the bottom, one. If God has shown us love, for us to show it is but righteousness. What witness have we, if it be not witness of the grace we have received? Surely, of nothing so much are we the witnesses. Is there not sometimes a very sad and

serious mistake, as if because it is *grace* we are called to show, that therefore as to quantity and quality, as it were, we may please ourselves about it?—nay, as if it were a little something extra we were doing in showing it at all! Ah, but God will require from us what He has been showing us. It is not a work of supererogation to show grace.

Look at this man. He owes his master an immense sum—ten thousand talents, representing perhaps £2,000,000,—and he is bankrupt: he cannot even make composition, he has nothing to pay. So he comes and falls down at his master's feet, and beseeches him for time in which to pay him. But his master is moved with compassion, and he does more,—“he loosed him, and forgave him the debt.”

Now, mark this forgiven man. “But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants, which owed him an hundred pence”—a pitiful sum in comparison, about £3:2s:6d, calculated at the same rate,—“and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, ‘Pay me that thou owest.’” Then, in words and action so like his own, you would think it must have smitten him to the heart, “his fellow-servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, ‘Have patience with me and I will pay thee all.’” Could you imagine a heart so hard?—“He would not, but went and cast him into prison till he should pay the debt.” What does the lord of both men do when he hears this? “O thou wicked servant,” he says, “I forgave thee all that debt because thou desiredst me. Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?” And his lord was wroth, and de-

livered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.

Beloved, what a lesson for us,—that for those who have received grace it is but *righteousness* to show it. It is not, I say again, a little overplus—a little more than duty,—something it is very good for us to do, and if we fail in it, it will not be required of us. It is a positive, absolute duty: God will require it of us.

And though it be in matters which concern God directly, and although it is true we cannot forgive debts that are due to God, we must not take it as if He could tolerate in us what He does not Himself practice—mere exaction. Neither must we forget, whether it be as regards our brother or ourselves, that grace, and grace alone, breaks the dominion of sin. The law is the strength of it.

Do not upset the balance on either side, beloved friends. Remember, the Priest who has the Urim and Thummim alone can give the divine answer. In a true judgment of any thing, God must be first ever, but in indissoluble union with His people, as *He* holds them together, blessed be His name, the true High-Priest, upon whom is the breastplate of righteousness; as He will hold them fast forever: He, the Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus.

F. W. G.

Plainfield, N. J., July 28th, 1882

“OUTSIDE THE CAMP”

Hebrews xiii. 8

I MAY say that is part of the appendix to the epistle to the Hebrews, beloved friends. It is the appendix as to doctrine—the final word of the apostle to the Jews—to Jewish Christians,—telling them that now the decisive time had arrived at which they must go forth from Judaism altogether—they must go forth from the camp. They must not any longer serve the tabernacle. They could not serve the tabernacle and eat of the Christian altar.

I want to put a little completely before you the subject we have here,—a very connected one, as we shall find,—and of course to enforce and apply it for our days. We shall find that it is as applicable to us now as it was to the Jewish Christians then.

Now, in the first place, notice that already a long time (for this epistle was written long after it) the decisive period had arrived in which the glory of God for the third time had left its place in the midst of Israel. You remember that when God brought them out of Egypt, He took His place in the midst of them and led them in the first place to Mount Sinai, and at that mount He proposed to them in view of what He had done,—He had done every thing to bind their hearts to Himself, He had displayed His power and His love toward them in Egypt, He had accomplished a wonderful deliverance for them, He had met their wants and

their murmurings in the wilderness by repeated grace, and now He says, "You have seen how I have borne you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself. If now you 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 a holy nation." And the people answered, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do."

Alas! beloved, it was all simple that they *ought* to have obeyed His voice and kept His covenant; but on the other hand, had they known themselves better, they would have dreaded to promise as to what they would do. God then gives them the law from Mount Sinai—the ten commandments; His whole manner changing as He does it, for it was a fiery law He was giving. Alas! it was not a law under which they could stand. But they needed it, and God saw their need, to test their condition, that they might see where they were. And Moses goes up into the mount, in order to receive from the Lord those same commandments written on tables of stone, that they might be kept abidingly amongst them.

Moses was there forty days in the mount, and before he came down again, before as yet therefore the people had received the tables of the covenant, they had broken them, and were worshipping the golden calf before the mount that had shaken and trembled in the presence of Jehovah.

That, beloved, was the end of the first trial—a very brief trial, but a very complete end so far. The glory, as a consequence, or the tabernacle which was connected with the glory, moved out

of their midst. "Moses took the tent and pitched it outside the camp, afar off from the camp, and called it," *not* the tabernacle of the congregation, for that is really a very wrong translation of the word, but he called it the "tent of meeting;" for all that sought the Lord, it says, now went outside the camp, or the congregation, to the tabernacle. It was not, therefore, the tabernacle of the congregation; it was not in the midst of the congregation at all, nor did it belong to them, but it was outside the congregation as a mass, and individuals who sought the Lord went out to meet Him there. It was therefore called the tent of meeting.

But this, the first trial, was over,—it ended in judgment; but it ended also in the display of God's sovereign mercy—"I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion;" and He takes them up again. But now, if He gives the law a second time, He gives it, beloved friends, accompanied with other declarations, different from any thing that had gone before,—He now couples His mercy with it, He declares the name of the Lord—the name of Jehovah; and as He passes by Moses He proclaims, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." Thus, while He gave them the law again, He now accompanied it with a declaration of His goodness and patience,—aye, and of His forgiving sin. It was still law,—they were still under responsibility to keep that; but now He was going to exercise patience, He would forgive

iniquity, transgression, and sin; and yet, beloved, at the same time, He could not clear the guilty.

Now, that was a new state of things. As the first giving of the law tried man as to what he was as godly or ungodly—his present state (it proved, alas! that he was ungodly), so the second giving of the law was the testing of whether man (for I say, "man," not merely Israel; for "as in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man,")—of whether man, I say, with all the opportunity that He could give him, had power to recover. Still he had to keep the law, but God would give him abundant opportunity, and assistance to him who had failed, to try again. It was really what you find written in the prophet Ezekiel—"When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness which he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive." You see, at the first giving of the law, there was no question of saving one's soul at all. It was not salvation, nothing was said of it. *Now*, if a man were a wicked man, here was God's mercy toward him. He could say now, if you turn from your wickedness, and do what is lawful and right, you shall save your soul alive. That is, He would cancel the blotted page of his life and permit him to turn over a clean page—a new leaf, as people say. Only, mark, if he turns over a new leaf, he must keep the new leaf clean,—he must do what is lawful and right. What is *lawful* is measured by law; he has to do that which is lawful and right.

Alas! beloved friends, it was as impossible at last as at first. It was impossible ever to produce for God that unblotted leaf He wanted. It was

impossible to bring to God His requirement, however low that requirement might be. God could not accept the blotted leaf, and man could never bring the unblotted. Thus now the testing proved that he was without strength—not only ungodly, but without strength also. Those are the two parts of man's condition, and these the two givings of the law show.

I do not want to dwell on this now, but it is of immense importance, beloved friends; because, in reality, what many think is the gospel in the present day is just man turning from his wickedness to save his soul alive. And it is that the apostle says, in the third chapter of the second epistle to the Corinthians, that it is "the ministration of death" and "of condemnation." That is all it accomplished for man. True, that was something—nay, a great deal, and a very real "ministration." A strange expression perhaps you think it. A ministration of grace you understand, but you don't perhaps understand a ministration of condemnation. Now, that was man's first want: what he wanted was, to have the knowledge of himself, to see that he must be debtor entirely to God's mercy. What he wanted was, not mere help to save himself, but *God's salvation*.

Now, that second testing by the law lasted a long time, for God had revealed Himself as forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin; so He went on, forgiving and forgiving, and trying generation after generation, to see if any one could be found who could fulfill His requirements. Under that covenant, with those tables in their ark, they went into the land; but, as you know, that ark itself went captive into Babylon. God had to dis-

own the people after all, by the prophet Hosea, and say they were not His people. So *that* testing came to an end. The glory went outside a second time. Ezekiel, if you remember, sees the glory leave the city, and now you find a remarkable expression in the books that give that time of the Babylonish captivity, God is now called the "God of heaven." If you look back to the time when the ark passes through the Jordan to its place in the land, you will find that it is said, "the ark of the covenant of the God of all the *earth* passed through." God in Israel had His place on the earth; He dwelt between the cherubim; but after this time He is called the God of heaven.

Nebuchadnezzar comes and establishes his empire where formerly had been the throne of God. God takes up Nebuchadnezzar and delivers the kingdom to him. "God hath made thee a king of kings." He puts every thing into Nebuchadnezzar's hands as to the earth, and if He rules still, as He must, it is as Daniel says,—providentially—"in the kingdom of *men*."

But God allowed a remnant to come back from Babylon into the land once more—into the city which had been ruined through their folly and rebellion, to raise it up again, and again to build their altar and temple. But, beloved, there was this remarkable difference now,—there was *no glory*. When they came back, they came as "not God's people"—"*Lo-ammi*;"—under the Persian kings, which God had set over them for their sins; without the ark of the covenant; without the Urim and Thummim. The ark was where His throne was, and the Urim and Thummim were the means by which God spoke to them ordinarily.

There was therefore now no dwelling of God amongst them; nothing but an empty temple, and and no ordinary means of communication with God. He could raise up prophets, and so He did; and the prophets of that time, Haggai and Zechariah, look onward to a future time, owning the ruin which had come in, and basing all their expectations on the coming of the Deliverer.

It was the time in which the great lesson was the lesson of their failure; it was not now any keeping of the law, so to speak, at all. I don't mean to say that the law was repealed, but that was not the point. They had all failed. Their very return there under their changed masters was the thing which marked out the different condition in which they were from any thing before; and now, as I say, the lesson was this: that they should accept humbly the judgment which was upon them, and wait in brokenness of spirit for the Deliverer.

But now, alas! you find again what the power of Satan is, and how subtly he can blind, through man's folly, the heart of man. It is very striking, and people generally notice it as favorable to them, that after their return, they were no more idolaters.

It had been their special sin. The prophet asks, you remember, "Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but My people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit." Even from the wilderness they had. There was first the golden calf, and all through the wilderness they had taken up "the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of their god Remphan, figures which they made to worship them." God

had declared that He was the one God, but they were idolaters to the core of the heart.

But as soon as there was no God in their midst—as soon as the temple was empty and the glory had departed—as soon as they were in the ruin which their sin had brought about, then immediately Satan came forward, not in the garb of idolatry any more, but now to resist the sentence which God had pronounced upon them,—now to persuade them that after all they were *not* Lo-ammi—that they *were* God's people, and to say, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord." In fact, pharisaism was the growth of that period, and pharisaism was the self-righteousness which resisted God's sentence upon them, pretending to have a righteousness when God had emphatically declared that man had none. So it was when that Deliverer prophesied of came, and when the glory, in a deeper and more wonderful way than ever, was once more in their midst,—aye, the "glory of the only begotten Son, in the bosom of the Father"—the Antitype of the glory of that tabernacle of old,—when He who was to come did come, and was amongst them in love and grace, ready to meet them with all the mercy and tenderness,—not coming to be ministered to, but to minister,—not requiring, but to give with both hands—to give without limit—to give as God,—alas! these Pharisees could turn comfortably to one another and say, "Which of the Pharisees have believed on Him?" Pharisees they were who slew the Lord of glory.

And when the Lord of life and glory died, the glory once more departed, the Lord went outside of the gate, outside of Jerusalem, outside of the

holy city, outside of the people. I say, the glory went outside when the Lord suffered without the gate. It was the third time this had taken place, and a *third* is a more than sufficient witness. Two witnesses are true, but a threefold witness is given here that there is nothing in man's heart for God. Not only when he had the law he broke it, but, alas! the carnal mind was enmity against God,—a cross was all they had for the Saviour and Deliverer. The glory of God had gone without the camp when the Lord Jesus Christ suffered without the gate, and now there was not only decisive rejection of the people, but a decisive sentence upon man as man. He was ungodly; he was without strength; the mind of the flesh was enmity against God: that was the threefold condemnation.

And now, beloved, as a matter of course, Judaism ends; and why? Because Judaism was the seeking, upon God's part, something from man, as long as there could be any hope of it, so to speak. Of course, He knew perfectly how it would be; He had pronounced upon man, in fact, before ever there was any law at all; He had said that every imagination of man's heart was only evil continually. And the testing could only bring that out. Man would not believe it, and forced it to be experimentally brought out. As I say, therefore, that which had been instituted for his trial,—that which was to be the means, if possible, of establishing his righteousness, necessarily passed away. As to this, all was over; there was nothing in man to be brought out, save that which God had pronounced long before, that "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

Now, if you look at Judaism, there was every

thing to lay hold of man naturally in it. There was every thing for the eye, a brilliant ceremonial; every thing for the ear, all the concord of sweet sounds there could be. There was every thing naturally to make man religious; every tie of nature was to act on him,—the whole nation,—children with the fathers, rulers and people, to follow the Lord together. There was every kind of motive that could be brought to bear upon man: natural affection, gratitude, (his history,—nay, his present, full of divine intervention on his behalf,) self-interest, for if obedient, he would be blest in basket and in store. If he had an ear to hear, if he had a heart to understand, if there were any thing in him susceptible to divine cultivation, God would thus bring forth fruit unto Himself. All failed, and the cross was the solemn sentence upon man that there was nothing in him whatever for God; no righteousness, and more than that, no strength; more than that, no response in his heart to the fullest grace: he crucified the Lord of glory.

And now, beloved, you will understand how, though God did bear long with those who clung to Judaism,—although He took into account all the sanction which He Himself had given it for His own wise purposes for a certain time, and was slow to break the links that bound them to it, yet, of necessity, the time must come which should snap those links forever. There must be a weaning-time; but when Isaac was weaned, so to speak, Ishmael's nature was brought fully out. He and his mother must be put out of the house. The law and the children of law must depart; and now the apostle's word to these Christian Jews is, You must come outside the camp. There must be no

more dallying—no more delay. There must be decision now: you must come outside of the camp altogether: God has gone out; it is a mere forsaken ruin.

Now, beloved, we want to apply this to ourselves. As I have said already, that was not Israel's sentence merely. Are we better? that is what the apostle asks—Are we better? God took up that nation, dealt with them by the law, but for what? "We know that whatsoever the law saith it saith to them that are under the law." But for what? "That *every* mouth may be stopped, and *all the world* become guilty before God." It was not merely that Israel, but that all the world, might become guilty before God. In fact, the cross was not Israel's sin alone. It was not merely the Jews that put the Lord to death, but the Gentiles also; and, beloved, that cross was, as the Lord Himself says, when He was looking forward to it, "the judgment of this world." It was the judgment of the *world*—not the judgment of Israel simply, but the judgment of the world.

Now mark, beloved friends, then, the Lord has gone outside the camp. If man is given up in that way,—totally given up as to having any thing in him whatever for God, what remains? Well, this: either absolute judgment or absolute grace. Nothing else will do, no middle ground is possible. That is where the world is left now. Not, mark, beloved friends, under trial with the issue undetermined. That is really how people look at it. They speak of being under probation, and they are doubtful as to how it will turn out with them; but there is nothing doubtful about it. People are not under probation, beloved; they *have been* under

probation, and the result is, that "there is none righteous, no, not one; there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." That is the judgment of the world, and man, as man, is a prisoner under condemnation, under sentence,—not on trial, but under sentence. But mark, then, what an aspect that gives now to the blessed gospel, that it is God's message of mercy in the midst of this state of things. The only question is now, Will man accept this grace? will he accept this wondrous grace of God? No question as to being lost,—*"The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which is lost."* No question as to being condemned,—all the world is guilty before God. No chance of getting a new trial; no pleading will avail for that. But now, blessed be God, God is in grace coming out to the lost,—to man without strength and ungodly,—to man a sinner,—aye, an enemy. Listen to the apostle Paul, who was the expression of that in his own person: he says, "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly;" "while we were yet sinners Christ died for us;" and again, "When we were *enemies* we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son." That is where the gospel meets those who are ungodly and without strength, as the two givings of the law have proved men,—enemies, as the cross has proved. God's own blessed grace nevertheless is here for every one who will accept it.

Now mark, if one accept it, he must, on the other hand, accept too God's sentence about himself.

Unless he accept the sentence upon himself, he cannot really accept the grace that is offered him; and that is why those two things go together, which it is of the utmost importance to keep together,—repentance and faith. They were the two things, you know, which God bore witness to by Paul,—“Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” Repentance is acceptance on man's part of the sentence under which he lies; faith is the acceptance, on the other hand, of the mercy which comes to him in that condition. I would dwell just a moment upon it, because of its real importance. You know, in many men's minds repentance is man's turning round and doing what is lawful and right, to meet God half way, and to save his soul alive. Now that is exactly what the second giving of the law showed man never could do.

But now the point is, Will man accept the sentence upon him? Will he set to his seal that God is true? Will he learn his condition from the lips of God Himself, and bow his head and own where he is? The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which is lost. But, beloved, unless man believes he is lost, what then? He doesn't want such a Saviour. That is how in Luke xv. the Lord puts it there. The Pharisees find fault when the publicans crowd to Him. He puts this parable: “What man of you having a hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost until he find it; and when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with

me, for I have found my sheep which was lost."

Now, beloved, what is His own application of that? An application very plain in view of those by whom He was surrounded at that moment. But what was His own application? "I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance:"—who, never knowing they are lost, never will be debtors to God's mere mercy. Such were those Pharisees who were finding fault with grace. What is the definition, then, that the Lord gives of a repenting sinner? A "*lost sheep*." You see, He was speaking to the heart—not mere doctrine. He was speaking thus in order to lay hold of the souls round about Him. These poor sinners, at least, would know that the lost sheep meant *them*,—aye, and these Pharisees too that the ninety-nine that needed no repentance were themselves. *In fact*, there were no such persons.

The lost sheep is one who has come to an end of himself, and is debtor wholly to the grace that comes after him, to seek and to save him where he is. To put it again—take as an illustration, beloved friends, what the Lord has given us elsewhere about this very thing—repentance. Who was Job? The very best man upon the earth. When God wishes to teach us the lesson of repentance He does not go to the jails. People do that. *God* takes up the very best man on earth. He says deliberately of Job, "There is no one like him on earth." But what does He do? He passes that man through unexampled sorrows which have made his name a proverb, and, beloved friends, for what? What are the last words of Job? "I re-

pent in dust and ashes"—"I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Was *he* turning over a new leaf? was he repenting of his sins? Why, beloved friends, he was the best man upon the earth at any rate; so if he had to repent and turn over a new leaf, it would be pretty hard for any body else. Was he a drunkard delivered from his cups? was he a criminal just let out of prison? He was the very best man on earth. What did he repent of? *Himself*,—he abhorred himself, and repented in dust and ashes. What was Job's repentance? Turning over a new leaf and cleaving faster to his righteousness and all that? No, beloved: his repentance was giving up all pretension to righteousness, and taking his place in self-abhorrence before God. Job was a child of God,—a saint. That makes it so solemn. "Enter not into judgment with Thy servant, O Lord; for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified."

Oh, if there is any soul that needs God's blessed gospel, it is His gospel that God's grace comes to you just where you are;—just as it met Saul of Tarsus on the way to Damascus. What sort of man was he? The best man on earth? The chief of sinners. This wonderful grace can meet the chief of sinners as well as the best man on earth. He had done the best he could to blot out the name of Christ from under heaven; but God met him there, not merely ungodly and without strength, but an enemy, and reconciled him to Himself through the death of His Son. Beloved, how outside of every thing in man's thought that is! Blessed be God, that is the only gospel that is worth any thing,—good news that comes to man where he is and as he is, and meets him with

complete salvation, where he is and as he is.

But now mark, then, that is the giving up of Judaism. You see, Judaism is not given up because it is worthless, but because it has accomplished its work. The schoolmaster has given his lessons well; but the result is, for every body that has learned those lessons—there is none that has done good. If he takes his place there, grace can meet him; and thus Hagar is Sarah's handmaid, but not to be put in Sarah's place. Now mark, the exhortation to these Christian Jews is to go forth to Him without the camp. What a solemn thing that is! Look at His cross—there it is, without the gate. Here is a people whom God has been nurturing for centuries, whom He has dealt with in constant and tender love, delivering them again and again, making manifest His power before their eyes, giving them His commandments, line upon line, and raising up prophets and sending them to them, carefully educating them for this present time. And what do they do? When He of whom all the prophets have spoken comes to His own, what do they do? Reject Him utterly! Beloved, that is what we all of us are, apart from God's sovereign grace.

Therefore you will notice that when the apostle goes out to men, he tells us, "I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling; and my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of spirit and of power; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." "We preach," he says, "Christ crucified; to the Jews a stumbling-block, to the Greeks foolishness." We preach a Christ who could not

commend Himself to the world. How vain to try by eloquence to win man's heart! How vain to try by any human power! It must be the power of God's own blessed Spirit, and nothing else.

But let us, beloved friends, before we pass on, look at this cross again—the wonderful cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. I want to show you what atonement is here. It was death that was needed. Man was under death, and the Lord Jesus Christ had to come and take his sentence; but was it only death? was it only death? The death of Christ was God's sentence upon man, but is there not more than that? Ah, yes! Scripture says, "After death, the judgment."—"It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." If the blessed Son of God, then, would come into our place to save us, is it only death that He must take? No, He must take judgment also.

Mark, then, how it is put here. "The bodies of those beasts," says the apostle, "whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high-priest for sin, are burned without the camp." You see, it was only one kind of sacrifice of which the blood could go into the sanctuary to be presented to God. We have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. Where, then, is that blood? It is in the sanctuary, on the mercy-seat, right before God. But what was the blood that could penetrate there? There were a great many sacrifices,—there was the paschal sacrifice, there were the burnt-offering, the peace-offering, the trespass-offering, besides other grades of the sin-offering itself. Of all, there was only one offering whose blood could be put upon the mercy-seat, which could really avail to open the way to God. What

was that? It was that in which the body of the victim was *burned outside the camp*.

What does that mean? It has the most unutterably solemn meaning, beloved friends. What it says is this: that death alone would not do; that a violent death alone—the shedding of blood—would not do. Outside the camp is where it is insisted the sacrifice must be; that is, outside the place of all recognized relationship with God; for such a place, while He remained in connection with the people, the camp was. If a man were a leper, for instance, and defiled, he was put outside the camp. Outside the camp was the place of the unclean,—of those who, as the leper, were cut off, not merely from the people, but from the approach to the Lord at all. So you find of Uzziah, the king of Israel though He was, but for his sin a leper.

That, only in the full reality of it, is the judgment which awaits guilty man; when, as rejecting God, God shall in His righteousness reject him. That awful distance! who knows (blessed be God that we do not know!) what it is? We are in a world where yet God's mercies come, as the sun upon the evil and on the good, or His tender rain upon the just and unjust. It is only here, encompassed by the infinite compassions of God, that one can dare to dream of doing without God; but to do without God is nothing short of HELL. It is the "outer darkness" of which Scripture speaks, where no ray of light is; for God, the Light of lights, is absent! Thank God, we do not know it. May none among us here ever know it. Only One ever did, to come out of it again; and we, permitted, as it were, to stand by the cross in the awful hour of the Saviour's agony, may look at

least upon its outside, if we cannot (as we cannot) penetrate its inner reality.

For what meant that darkness which in full day wrapped the cross? People talk about nature sympathizing with her Lord, and all that. It was no such thing. God is light, and darkness is the withdrawal of light. God had withdrawn. Out of the midst of it He proclaims its nature when there breaks from the lips of the Holy One that terrible cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" That was the Sin-offering; that was the Victim burned outside the camp. It was the One away, in our place of distance,—away from God.

The very Son of His bosom He was, and yet when He was made sin for us, though He knew no sin, He must know its desert. Only the blood of a Victim burned outside the camp could open the way for us to God. There was no altar, therefore, in such a case; it was the holy Sin-offering, and yet it was burned upon the ground without an altar. And what is that altar? The altar that sanctifies the gift is surely the type of the person of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. This it was that gave value to the gift; it was what He was Himself that made His offering so perfectly acceptable; and the gift upon the altar, as in the burnt-offering, showed the perfect acceptability of it all,—not the perfect judgment of sin; that was in the sin-offering, of which I was speaking,—but the perfect acceptability of the person and of the work of Christ.

On the other hand, in the sin-offering we look at the judgment of sin, and do not see, so to speak, who the person is. It is simply one in the sinner's

place, and thus as if it were the sinner; no thought of His personal perfection comes in to prevent or turn aside the judgment due. Man's portion was death and judgment; He bore both—bore in His own soul the judgment before God, and, because man was under death also, died. Each of these has its place in the atoning work; and as corresponding to the one, the vail of the temple was rent in the midst; in correspondence with the other, the earth too was rent, and gave up her dead. How beautiful that testimony to the sufficiency of the work, and what it had accomplished! The vail of the temple was rent, because the darkness was gone from the face of God, and, man's judgment borne, he could draw near. For those who believe in Him, the darkness gone is gone forever. But more: death too is gone; the keys of death and hades are at the girdle of the risen Saviour. Therefore the rent earth gives up her dead. Thus we find as to the work accomplished.

But thus we see that it was not only necessary that the Lord should die. Never mistake—never think of it as if mere death would satisfy. Look at the twenty-second psalm, and you will find His was such a death as never was before. It was the death of a righteous one; yet when was a righteous one ever forsaken? which of the righteous had God turned His face from? Outwardly, indeed, He might give them up to their enemies,—aye, let them go through death in its worst form; but, after all, only to make their triumph more assured. For He was there to minister to them, to turn the shadow of death into morning. He was there to sustain their souls, and with His rod and His staff to comfort them. Yet here was He

in whom God had proclaimed His delight, and, in the hour of His unequaled need, *He* was forsaken. Why, beloved? Faith surely can give the answer. You will find, if you look closely, that the psalm itself gives it. Is it not the answer, when after that "*Why* hast Thou forsaken Me?" the Sufferer exclaims, "But Thou art holy, O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel." Thus alone could a holy God dwell amid the praises of His people.

But this, then, was the cross; and in the cross what do I find? Surely the complete judgment of man: his judgment taken, but his judgment *owned* by the One who comes to take his place. Beloved, we cannot lay hold upon that cross without accepting that judgment. *We* must go "outside the camp" to Him. He is there,—He has had to go outside, I must go outside too.

From this point it is, in the passage in Hebrews before us, that we find all the blessedness of these sacrifices beginning to be told out to us. We have come to God by the Sin-offering; what do we find next? An altar of which I have a right to eat. That is not the Sin-offering, for there is no altar there. It is the Peace-offering. An offering in which part went up to God, part furnished the table for the offerer, and part of it was for the priest. So that God and man, and the mediator between God and man (Christ in type), can sit down and rejoice in one common joy. An altar from which the sacrifice is gone up to God, on the other hand, furnishes from that same sacrifice a portion for man. "We have an altar whereof they have no right to eat who serve the tabernacle." Do you understand that? He says, You cannot eat that and serve the tabernacle. How can you?

Why, that death of the Lord Jesus Christ means the complete putting an end to all that is connected with Judaism. All Christian ground is outside this camp. You must go outside. Hasn't He gone outside? Yes, He has gone outside, and He remains there. You must go outside to Him. There is your altar—an *empty* altar. Do you see? Ah, if we are Christians, we have got to believe profoundly in that empty altar. The work is accomplished; it is not accomplishing; it never needs to be accomplished any more; it is accomplished once for all; it is done. And we have got an empty altar; empty, because the sacrifice is accepted and gone up to God. What is this empty altar for? Look at what the apostle says. "By *Him* therefore," he says, "let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually." The altar is what sanctifies the gift. The Lord Jesus Christ it is who gives our praises power to ascend to God. By Him we offer—no propitiatory offering now, but a sacrifice of praise for propitiation accomplished. Do you see, then, what you have done? You have crossed from the court of the tabernacle to the holy place; from the altar of burnt-offering passed to the golden altar, which is now—the vail being rent—right in the presence of God. We have left the altar of sacrifice, and we have come to the priest's altar in the holy place. We have come to offer our sacrifice of praise continually, that is, the fruit of our lips confessing ("giving thanks" it is, but in the margin "confessing") His name,—“that is, the fruit of our lips confessing His name.” Oh, beloved, what a sweet and blessed thing that is—to be able to come to God to confess His name—to utter the name of Jesus before Him! Oh, there is

not any thing so sweet to God as the true confession of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is not any thing that so delights Him as when He sees a soul profoundly conscious of the value of Christ, who when he comes before Him has nothing to speak of but the name of Jesus.

But now mark, there is another thing. This golden altar is an altar of sacrifice of praise continually—nothing else but *praise*. Is there any thing else? Well, there is this, although it is not really any thing else in character,—“To do good and to communicate forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.” Here are more sacrifices, offerings for the same incense-altar—not the fruit of the lips now, but the *life*. That is the character of a Christian life. How beautiful it is! A whole volume of doctrine in it too. A Christian life is a sacrifice of praise to God in which the infinite value of the Lord Jesus Christ is confessed to Him. It is a sacrifice of praise to God, the heart thanking God for what He has done. Not a new claim upon God, not a claim at all; but the answer to God's claim, the answer of praise to Him for all that He has done for us.

Beloved, is there any one amongst us here who has any other thought of a Christian life than that?

Alas! many a so-called Christian has quite another; and many a true one also has thoughts that sadly mar the character of a Christian life. Praise is the instinct of every true heart; but there are prerequisites to be known before the life can be what it should be. And the first thing to be known (without which God Himself is not rightly known) is salvation,—full and eternal salvation. If all is not settled as to this,—if the grace of God is

not apprehended by the soul, necessarily the only other principle will come in, and the life will be lived for self, however religiously, and not for God. "Fear which hath torment" will take the place of that love by which alone faith works. How can life be a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to One known as a Judge at whose bar it is possible we may be adjudged to hell? No, the hired servant necessarily had no place at the passover-feast; and we must know the value for us of the work of Jesus if our life is to be the thanksgiving of the incense-altar; for the sacrifice offered there is the confession of His name and of His worthiness, and that alone.

Now let us return to consider the exhortation of the apostle to the Jews here. What application to us has this going outside the camp? Has it any? For you may say, If the camp be Judaism, we are not Jews. Hear me, then, as patiently as you can, while I seek as plainly as I can to answer this question. It is quite true for all of us, I suppose, who are here to-day that Judaism in the full sense has no attraction and therefore no danger for us, but it would be very light dealing with what is of the greatest possible importance to us to dismiss the subject thus. Judaism in its essence may be where ceremonial Judaism has no place at all. Nor, when I speak of its essence, must any suppose that the rejection of Christ is part of this. It is the sin of Jews, but not the fault of what God instituted, of course. It is this that God instituted at first that here by the apostle He calls on them to leave.

We have seen what Judaism in its essence was. It was the trial of man—an ordained and of course

needed trial. Nor was it a trial of man only, but of man's *way* also. You can easily understand that God Himself had no need *for* Himself of any experiment. He knew and had pronounced upon man long before the law. But man knows not himself, nor will believe the simple statement of God; and not knowing himself, nor his inability to stand before Him, *his* thought is ever of keeping law in some sense. If Hagar be its type, as the apostle says, God *found* Hagar in Abram's tent. He could not have first put her there. *Finding* her in this connection with the man of faith, He sends her back that the experiment He is making may be fully made. Abram shall have his Ishmael, but only to find that Ishmael is not the seed, nor Hagar she by whom he is to be really fruitful.

All human religion merely is law in some way. Grace is God's thought, which man never could anticipate. Alas! even when God has revealed it he turns back from it, as they were doing in Galatia, to experiment with himself by the law still. If he does not deny Christ, he supplements faith in Him with legal commandments, ceremonies, means to work upon the flesh and make it fruitful. He owns Christ, but brings Him into the camp again, instead of going to Him outside the camp. Hence the state of christendom to-day. If you dare to look, you will find what is essential Judaism every where: in forms, in doctrines; disguised with Christian names, which noway alter its nature or hinder its effect.

Look at ritualism. It allows, of course, that Christ has come, and Christ has died; but it would seem as if only to insist on the inefficacy

of His work. The value of His one offering is only to give mysterious virtue to a Jewish system of multitudinous offerings by which it is overshadowed and eclipsed. It is in fact the shadow, these the substance; in which, they say, He is continually offered,—equaling Him only with the beast-sacrifices, whose constant repetition, the apostle tells us, shows that they could never take away sin! Therefore, as the necessary result, they can never tell you that sin *is* taken away, as they quote, "No man knoweth that he is worthy of favor or hatred by all that is before them."

But we need not travel so far as Rome, or her would-be imitators in other ranks. Little less dreary doctrine is proclaimed ofttimes by those who are loud in their rejection of her enormities. By how many is assurance of salvation denied as strenuously; and by how many is salvation itself reduced to a mere conditional forgiveness which renders peace with God, for a soul conscious of its real condition, a mere impossibility. Whenever this is the case, it is certain that grace is so far unknown; and wherever grace is unknown, some system of works—that is, of law—is the sure accompaniment. These are the two things the apostle opposes to one another as mutually exclusive.—"If it be of work, it is no more of grace; otherwise work is no more work." And again, "If it be of grace, it is no more of work; otherwise grace is no more grace."

And wherever these systems are found, necessarily a "camp" is the result—a people of God, on legal footing, under trial to see what the end will be with them, and as to whom you cannot pronounce whether they are really of God or not. No

separation of children of God as such is possible: "tares and wheat," as they apply this, "grow up together to the harvest;" nay, the world is often openly gathered in, to be put under Christian influences, and Christian services again are made to take a form attractive to the world.

Then the eye and the ear and all the sensitive man are appealed to, as of old in Judaism; heedless of the lesson of the cross of Christ, which has pronounced once for all that not only is man ungodly and without strength, but also that the mind of the flesh is enmity against God. This is the solemn reality. Were it ignorance simply, education might remove the ignorance, as men still dream. If we have gone out to Christ outside the camp, it is impossible to accept this. With the complete judgment of man realized, Christ and His Spirit, and these alone, are left as of avail for him.

For the third and last time, the glory is outside the camp. On the failure under the law first given, it went outside, as we have seen. The end of the second dispensation of law was when God had pronounced them Lo-ammi—"not My people." Ezekiel it was who saw the glory then withdraw; and Nebuchadnezzar could then come and plant his throne where God had left His. The testimony of law was really then complete. Already its sentence was given,—“There is none righteous; there is none that doeth good.” And when a remnant gathered again under their Persian masters to rebuild their temple, it was not to reopen a question completely settled, but to wait in the sense of their utter ruin for Him who should come in grace to deliver. It was at this time, alas! that Pharisaism arose, the invention of the prince of this world to

build them up in self-righteousness, and make them refuse divine grace. The Lord came. The glory of God in deeper reality than ever shone in their midst, only again to go forth outside the city, when upon a cross the Lord of glory died. The testing of man was now over,—the full discovery of his condition reached,—and Judaism passed away, to be replaced for us here to-night by the "precious faith" of Christianity.

How deadly and disastrous, then, must the confusion be which would bring back again under a Christian dress the old rejected system, the exact opposite of the grace which has now been declared! Satan's work it is to destroy, if it might be, the glory of Him who alone is the wisdom and power of God for man's salvation. Are we clear of it, beloved friends? Have we gone forth from all that man has established of the Jewish camp, outside to Him, bearing His reproach? For reproach there still is, in various ways and different measures, according as our separation is complete or not; but reproach there is, and will be. Spite of the large going forth of the gospel now, for which, as God's mercy, we must surely praise Him, perhaps there never was a day fuller of schemes for man's improvement without (or *up to*) Christ; and these are very much one thing; and never perhaps a time in which there was so great a religious mixture and accommodation of Christianity itself to the thoughts of man. From the grosser systems in which Christ and His work are more openly set aside, to the singing of moving words to exciting music in an evangelistic meeting, men proclaim less or more openly that they have not given up hope of man, and that something else

or less than Christ and the Spirit will avail toward his recovery. How different *his* spirit, who, preaching Christ crucified (to the Jew a stumbling-block and to the Greek foolishness) preached *not* with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.

I close, beloved friends; may He Himself apply it to our hearts. Honest hearts they need to be to endure the application. And yet if *Christ* be without the camp, to go forth to *Him* should not be cost, but gain. The real cost is what would keep us from the place where He is, and where communion with Him is fully to be enjoyed. "Let us go forth to *Him* without the camp."

F. W. G.

Plainfield, N. J., July 31st, 1882

CONFLICT AND PROGRESS

Exod. xvii. and Num. xx. 1-21

I HAVE read these two passages together, beloved friends, because I believe they help much, when so read, to the understanding of either. I think you will easily see that the two scenes have close and designed relationship with one another. For although surely facts of history, it is a history so superintended and controlled by the providence of God, and so recorded by Infinite Wisdom in our behalf, that, as the apostle says, "the things that happened to them happened to them for types, and are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come."

In the first place, we have in each of them God giving the water from the rock in answer to the need and to the murmurings of the people; and in each case the same name, for the same reason, is given to the place. "And he called the name of the place 'Massah' and 'Meribah,' because of the chiding of the children of Israel;"—so it is said in Exodus. In Numbers we read, "This is the water of Meribah, because the children of Israel strove with the Lord, and He was sanctified in them." Then, in Exodus, immediately after, we have the conflict with Amalek, and the next thing after the scene in Numbers, the attempt to pass through Edom. The connection of these things is not so evident at first sight, but there is a very real one nevertheless; for if you will turn to Genesis xxxvi,

you will find, "And Timna was concubine to Eliphaz, Esau's son; and she bare to Eliphaz Amalek." Amalek was thus the grandson of Esau—that is, Edom; and as in the one book Amalek opposes Israel, so in the other does Edom, although it does not come to actual war.

The very difference we shall find to be instructive, and according to the line of truth proper to the two books. The book of Exodus is the book of redemption, the deliverance of Israel out of the land of Egypt being the type of ours out of that land of bondage in which we all are naturally. The book of Numbers is the book of progress, we may say rather, looking at it from the point of view in which we are now to do, although there are many other features. It is the history of the wilderness, as properly speaking Exodus is not, although it speaks of the wilderness, and part (and a large part) of its history is there. But the object of that part at least in which this scene occurs is to bring out the grace of Him who having redeemed them out of the hand of the enemy, provides also, with unfailing goodness and forbearance as to them, for all the need of the place into which He has brought them. Thus you have the bread from heaven, the water from the rock.

Numbers, on the other hand, is devoted to the history of the wilderness itself, as a place of trial, as the world through which we pass is, and where trial brings out as to them, what it does as to us no less, their proneness to constant failure, their readiness to start aside continually. Yet the grace that has laid hold upon them does not desert them here, does not fail to show itself in the fulfillment of its own unrepenting purposes in spite of all.

God has engaged to bring them into the land of which He has spoken to them, and into it they must come. Spite of the failure, an essential feature of the book of Numbers, therefore, is progress. At the close, they are found, after all their varied experiences, looking from the plains of Moab over into the promised land. Blessed be God, the same strong and holy hand which carries them through is that which has undertaken for us also; and these are indeed our types.

Let us remember, then, that whereas in Exodus we have redemption and its fruits, in Numbers we have the path of progress through the world. This will be found to bear upon the character of the opposition in the two books,—the enemy in the one case, Edom; in the other, Amalek.

Esau got this name Edom from the red pottage for which he sold his birthright. It is connected with that which stamped him as “a profane person, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.” The name itself is but Adam, with the change only of vowels, which in Hebrew change in a way that modern languages know nothing of. Edom is but over again that first man, which naturally indeed we all are; for Christ is the Second Man: there is no second man until we come to Christ.

Even when we are Christ's there is that in us which connects us with the fallen first man. It is not scriptural, indeed, to say that the “old man” remains in us, but the “flesh” surely does. The “old man” is the *man in* the flesh,—identified with it and acting according to its lusts; and that “old man” is crucified with Christ: we have put it off. That is always said in Scripture. It is the man in the nature, identified with it before God. The

flesh, on the other hand, is the nature: the lowest part of man now characterizes him as a fallen being. Edom is this flesh in us, if we take this scene in Numbers as a picture of internal experience; and such it surely is.

Now, in relation to the question of progress, what of Edom? Have you ever looked at the map of the journeying of the children of Israel toward Canaan, and noticed the position of this long, narrow strip of land, Edom? Right across their path it lies, an obstruction which to go round would cost them about six times the trouble (only looking at it as a matter of distance) that it would to go across. But the road across is not only the shorter, it is the pleasanter way. As you may see in Moses' message to the king of Edom, there are wells of water and a king's highway—a welcome exchange from the pathless desert-route. Which of us—had we been of Moses' council—would not have decided for the shorter and easier way? And if they had even to force a passage, could not He who had brought them through the sea without needing to strike a stroke in their own defense have as easily brought them through?

Assuredly; and this it is that conclusively shows that God's way for His people did not lie through Edom. Had it been of Him—this attempt to pass along the easier road, could He have allowed the king of so small a kingdom to stop His path? No; but the path itself was human calculation, not where the pillar of cloud and fire led. The attempt only brought out fully the enmity that was in Edom's heart and the powerlessness of Israel in the matter. After all, God's way lay for them in another direction, where Edom was not.

And just so, right athwart the path of progress for the saint lies the barrier of the flesh—the old nature. Who would not say that God's way for His people was—if the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and is contrary to it,—by the conquest of the flesh? How much less, according to our thought naturally, the simple injunction which takes the place of such an one—"This I say, then, *Walk in the Spirit*, and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh"? How many have undertaken to prove for God that the former is His method! How much doctrine is there afloat of this kind, according to which the narrow strip of Edom is to be crossed, and Edom to be overcome and got rid of! Yet God's Word does not bid us fight the flesh, or destroy it; but, as Israel in the scene before us, to *turn away from it*. So the apostle Peter: "Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." To abstain from is not to fight, but to hold off from—keep away from. But to keep away from a thing is the very opposite of fighting it. It makes fighting impossible. If I am fighting, it is a proof, rather, I have *not* been keeping away.

I think, beloved friends, that some of you will be disposed to turn round upon me and say, It is all very simple to talk about; is it as easy in practice to do this? No, I do not say, or imply, that it is as easy in practice; but it is practicable, thank God, or of course it would be folly to speak of it. It is not only practicable, but the *only* practicable thing.

But let me ask you to observe *how* it is that the apostle addresses Christians here. He says expressly that he beseeches us "*as* strangers and

pilgrims." It is only practicable for those who have this character; and while it is true that it is a character which rightly belongs to every follower of Christ as such, it is also true, as we must all sadly confess, that Christians may be very little *Christian*.

Are we pilgrims, beloved friends? What is a pilgrim? Does it make us that that we are all drifting, as it must be confessed we are, upon that stream of time which is hurrying all the world,—every child of man,—on, fast on, to a near eternity? Are we pilgrims perforce, because what we clutch we cannot hold,—because it slips out of our grasp, or bursts as a bubble there, or we who grasp pass away ourselves and cannot retain it?

Nay; if this were to be pilgrims, all the world would be such, and one no more than another. But mere circumstances make no man a pilgrim. For that, we must be first, what the apostle puts first, *strangers*. We must be those whose real home is elsewhere; who are "heavenly," because Christ is, and because He is there; our hearts being where our treasure is. Being strangers after this pattern, we shall be pilgrims, those with whom faith is not only the evidence of things not seen, but the substance of things *hoped* for. Thus we shall be those whose hearts are urging on their feet to a fixed point beyond the present; and thus alone shall we have power over the present. We shall be, in the spiritual sense, *Hebrews*; for that is the force of that word, inscribed, as you know, upon the epistle in which the stranger character of faith is put before us. Its first occurrence is a very beautiful one, and full of interest in connection with our present subject. It occurs in Genesis xiv, where,

in the raid of the four kings from the east upon the plain of Jordan, Lot, Abram's brother's son, dwelling then in Sodom, was carried away captive. Abram is told, and arms the men of his house, and with certain of his allies pursues the plunderers, overtakes them, falls upon them in the night, and, defeating them, brings back all the goods and captives. But it is not there his great victory is gained. Many an one has conquered others who has never yet conquered himself. Abram has now to meet the king of Sodom's offers—"Give me the people, and take the goods to thyself." It is then he shows himself the man of faith. "I have lift up my hand," he says, "to the Most High God, that I will not take from a thread to a shoelatchet; neither will I take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldst say, I have made Abram rich."

Now, Sodom is the plain type of the world, characterized, as the apostle characterizes it, by *lust*—"the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes." And here it is, in connection with this scene, that the word occurs,—*"There came one that had escaped, and told Abram the Hebrew;"* i. e., the "passenger," or, as we may say now, the "pilgrim." As such, the lust of the flesh has not power against him; he does not fulfill it. How much more should it be,—*will* it be,—for him who "walks in the Spirit" now!

God has made Christ to be sanctification to us; and, speaking of this practically, according to the line of things before us now, how fully has He provided for the drawing our hearts out of this scene, by giving them an object, a completely satisfying object, outside the whole scene of the flesh's lusts altogether!

Sanctification is separation to God. In Christ, He who had been lost to our souls in the darkness in which our sin and unbelief had enwrapped Him again shines out in the true light come into the world. Here alone I know Him; I know Him, and I rejoice in Him. Meeting me in my sins, and putting them away by the offering of Himself, He has opened the very heart of God, and, by His mighty love, loved me into love. Risen again, and gone up for me on high, I look up to where in His face shines all the glory of God, and *my* life is (in its practical character) a life "hid with Christ in God." The object before the eye is power for the heart.

In the blessed place where He is, I am free to let my heart out. *There* is all that is real, of value, and abiding. I am free to covet *there*. There liberty is safe. I am free to let my heart out in a scene where sin never enters, where the flesh, the world, and the devil have no place, but where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God.

Christ for our object, Christ for heart companionship, sanctification is secured. Even the world can say, Tell me who are your companions, and I will tell you who you are; and in Scripture, your associations form part, so to speak, of your individual character: you must purge yourself from vessels to dishonor, in order to be a "vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use." And if our hearts are in company with Christ, how truly we shall be known by the company we keep. We all with open face beholding the glory of the Lord, shall be "changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit."

If then where our treasure is our heart shall be,

and our treasure is indeed in Him who has passed into the heavens, pilgrims and strangers we shall be of course. The apostle's admonition will be in proportion easy as we have this character. With our eyes on Christ, they will not be caught by the baits of the prince of this world; we shall be *able* to "abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul." What faith wrought in Abraham should be wrought tenfold more in us with whom things unseen and eternal have brightness and blessedness of which he could know but little. Yet how God dwells upon his pilgrim character as that which had special value in His eyes! "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise." "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they set out, they might have had opportunity to have returned; but now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He hath prepared for them a city."

By faith, then, thus manifest, the elders obtained a good report. We are thus, says the apostle, "encompassed with so great a cloud of witnesses;" not *eye-witnesses* (as some take it)—spectators of our course down here, but witnesses (those giving testimony) to this acceptability of faith with God. But there is One other, of whom the apostle speaks

directly, not giving Him place among the other witnesses, but One who instead of showing merely certain characters of faith, as these, is "Author and Finisher of faith" in His own person. People mistake the meaning of this expression also, by following the common version, which says, "Author and Finisher of *our* faith,"—taking it to mean that He begets it in us, and sustains it to the end. This is surely true, but the truth in that place it is not. For, as you will see by the italic letters, the "our" has been added by the translators, and is not found in the original; and this insertion, which the late revisers have unwisely followed, alters the meaning of the passage altogether. The true thought is, that in His own person He is "Leader and Perfecter of faith"—One who has begun and completed its whole course, so as to be Himself the one perfect example and witness of what faith is. And thus the apostle goes on to speak of His path,— "who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

That cross endured was the complete trial and the perfect exemplification of faith. As the result, He is now at the right hand of God, pattern and object of our faith in one. "Therefore," says the apostle, "seeing that we are encompassed with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of faith."

Notice how similar that exhortation to what we had in Peter. It is as pilgrims that both passages address us, and those whose hearts are outside the

scene through which we pass; stay upon that which is unseen and eternal—"abstain from fleshly lusts." "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us." Quiet, however earnest, words! Strangely quiet, it may be, to those who are proving how easily indeed sin doth beset. To lay aside sin! how easy to talk of it! How gladly would many a soul do it, as he thinks, who finds that when he would do good, evil is present with him! But it is absolutely necessary to heed the order and connection here. To lay aside sin is not the first thing. Let us lay aside every *weight*, and sin. It is only as laying aside the weight that the laying aside of sin becomes a possibility at all.

How important, then, to realize these first words in the depth of their meaning! What is a weight? Only as racers can we rightly estimate its force in *this connection*. Think of a pack of wolves behind you, and how you would flee, and what a weight would be to you then. How easy to see that to drop the weights would be the only possibility of escape from what was pursuing you. Sin is this pack at our heels, and the connection between the weight and the besetment should be very obvious.

What then is the weight? Manifestly it is something different from the sin itself. It is something not in itself sinful; on the other hand, not a duty, clearly, for duties you have no right to lay aside. Duties, moreover, and for this very reason, are never a hindrance, never an occasion to besetting sin.

Some may be disposed to dispute this. Nay, to how many, conscious of the entanglement of a crowd of cares, which claim and possess them

continually, will it seem almost self-evident folly to assert that duties are never a drag upon the soul; yet it is true nevertheless, and should be plain, that God would never impose upon us that which would drag us down from communion with Himself. It could not be. Of course there are states of soul that unfit for any duty; we must not confound what comes of our own condition with what is due to the nature of the things themselves. There is a state of soul (alas! how common!) in which, as the apostle says, "the good that I would I do not;" yea, and the "evil that I would not, that I do." It is the secret of power that is lacking in such an one, and such may be helped by what is now before us; but the fault is not in the duty, but in the personal state.

And again, we must distinguish between duties of God's imposing (which, of course, only are such,) and those which people often consider such, which the artificial state in which we live, which custom, which society,—which the world, in short, imposes. How little we realize what the world is, and that all that is of the world—the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. We must not expect that if we accept a scale of duties which the fashion of the world imposes, that we shall not find them weights which if we seek to carry will hinder all progress and expose us to besetting sin. There are no duties to the god of this world, beloved friends; and he that will be the friend of the world is the enemy of God. Duties to society, duties (as they are subtly called) to one's family, to maintain a certain social standing for them in the world,—duty to lay up a competence, or a little

more, for a possible old age, or a "rainy day;" with how many do such things as these eat out all the vigor and freshness of spiritual life. These are weights, not duties, and duties are never weights.

A weight is any thing you are at liberty to lay aside, but which you choose to retain instead. The retaining it proves you are not a racer in the full and proper sense. You have not the eye simply on the object before you. You do not, with the apostle, count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus. Things present—the seen and visible,—weigh somewhat against the things unseen and eternal. No wonder that the freshness of spiritual life is lost, that real duties drag, that sin easily besets. What miracle shall God work for you that it may be otherwise—that you may be able to save your life in this world and keep it unto life eternal too?

If, on the other hand, your eye is on the object, and Christ that object, and your heart affected by your eye, you will not be endeavoring to see how much of this world you can carry, but how far you can strip yourself to run the race. Christ will be practical sanctification to you, and sanctification is *separation*, separation to God. It is only as we have this spirit that we shall even realize what is a weight.

But as surely as the weights are by God's grace laid aside, so surely shall we find that we are distancing besetting sin. It is a mistake, I believe, to suppose that this is some special form of sin. None can indeed deny that we have, each one of us, some special form to which we are prone, and that thus one man's temptations lie in one direc-

tion, another's in another ; still, here, it is sin as sin.

Drop the weights, and you will distance the sin. I know, beloved friends, you will be tempted to look on this and that which you are clinging to, and to ask, as Lot of the city that he desired as a place of refuge, "Is it not a little one?" A thing, too, not in itself sinful ; for, as I have said, we must carefully distinguish it from sin. How can it be, you ask, that such consequences can result from observing little points like these? But the thing is, are they indeed little points? is that what in your inmost heart you say of them? Alas! dear friends, it is a question of the whole tone and temper and spirit of your life. Is it a race you are running? Are you strangers and pilgrims here? Is it a little thing whether you are or not? It is just because a little thing, yea, a thing of naught, is really followed, as if it had value, that such immense consequences result to the soul.

Still, I can imagine, the question is asked, Is this Christianity—this wearisome observance of little things? No, dear friends; nothing of this sort am I advocating. I would not be of the company of those who would judge the tone of a man's spirit by niceties of style. A Saul might misjudge a Jonathan because of honey taken by the way, and Gideon's men who lapped seem to others not different from those who bowed down on their knees to drink; the deep and real question is, whether as before God our purpose is with him who said, "This one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and pressing on to that which is before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

If you are racers, you will find out very soon

what is a weight; and then the word is, "Let us lay aside *every* weight, and [thus] the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of faith."

For Israel, the path of progress did not lie through Edom; for the Christian, the way of progress is not found in conciliating or in conflict with the flesh. That word of the apostle, "Reckon yourselves dead indeed unto sin," if acted out, would exclude the thought of either. God's pilgrims and strangers have another, which if it lie through desert scenes is yet bright with the beckoning glory, which we follow to its home. The cross of Christ is at one and the same time the hopeless condemnation of the flesh, and our privilege to turn away from it altogether, to occupy ourselves with Him who, in that He died, died unto sin once, but in that He liveth, liveth unto God.

Do you even understand, beloved friends, this privilege to turn away? To some, yea, to many here, it may seem yet mystery or unreality to speak of being dead to sin. You are so conscious of its presence, yea, and of its power in you, that you would think it a mere untruth to speak of being dead to sin. Yet Scripture not only speaks of it, but as true of every Christian. It is not any special class who are dead, nor does it speak of a gradual process of dying to it, as so many think. "How shall we that are dead to sin"—we—all Christians. But then notice, the word is, "*Reckon* yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin." It is not "feel," or "find." You are to reckon yourself to be so, because you do not feel or find. It is faith's

application of the death of Christ as putting one in a new position before God. "In that He died, He died unto sin once, but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God: *thus* reckon,"—for "thus," rather than "likewise," we may better read it,—"*thus* reckon yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, and alive unto God *in* Christ Jesus."

It is not mysticism, then, but only faith to say, if we are Christians, that we are dead to sin. For us, that death on the cross was our death. In it, for God and for faith, "our old man,"—that is, all that we are as sinners naturally, or for experience now,—"*is crucified with Christ.*" In Christ there is no sin, no flesh; and in Christ we are. Thus, from that which we find within us we are yet privileged to turn away, as Israel from obstructive Edom, its type in the scene before us in the book of Numbers.

Yet in Exodus we have conflict, and with what springs from Edom too. Amalek was Edom's offspring, as we have seen. And the apostle reads the type for us—"Fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." His words illuminate the scene in Exodus, for he does not say, Fleshly lusts against which *we* war. Israel had not sought out Amalek, and had no charge from God to make war upon them. The assault was on the side of the desert-tribe,—"*Then came Amalek and fought with Israel in Rephidim.*" The occasion, and the exact way in which this is stated here, deserve to be carefully examined; for we are apt to pass over what is of the greatest importance for the interpretation of the chapter. We have already seen that the giving of the water from the rock is the type of the gift of the Spirit, that living water

which has flowed forth for us as the fruit of Christ's smiting. It will be no wonder to any instructed mind that in connection with the type of the Spirit we should have the type of the flesh or of its working. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other." It certainly confirms the interpretation already given as to Amalek that we find it so.

But let us not imagine that that is the whole thing; and that because we have the Spirit, conflict with the flesh is the direct necessity. Nor if even we find continual conflict, that therefore what we *find* is the inevitable thing. The word is, "Reckon yourselves dead;" and dead men are not fighters. You are called to reckon yourselves dead to that with which people suppose you must inevitably fight.

Notice, then, the connection in Exodus: "He called the name of the place 'Massah,' and 'Meribah,' because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the Lord, saying, 'Is the Lord among us, or not?' *Then* came Amalek and fought with Israel in Rephidim." Amalek's coming up is mentioned in direct connection with the failure and unbelief of the people, when, their eyes being on their circumstances,—judging by sight, and not by faith,—they questioned the Lord's presence with them. That led to the attack of the enemy.

There could be nothing arbitrary in it. With such a Leader, such an one in their midst, how was it the terror of the Lord was no longer upon their enemies, as at the Red Sea they had sung it should be? The chapter, as we have seen, supplies

the answer. Faith had failed, their divine Leader had been dishonored, and the attack of Amalek was the result. Nothing is arbitrary in the government of God: if His ways are in the seas, they are in the sanctuary too. With us also, if the eye be not on Christ,—if the heart be not occupied with him,—if we be not abiding there,—the world will surely come in to fill the gap, and the lusts of the flesh find their opportunity. Amalek comes up: we are entangled, and must fight.

To abstain from fleshly lusts is that to which we are called. Dead to sin is what we are to reckon ourselves to be. But when we have failed to do this, and our hearts have become entangled with any of the thousand things which are ready to lay hold of them on every side, then we shall find it impossible, without a struggle, to be free. Conflict becomes a necessity, not merely to progress, but that we may not be captives to the ever-watchful enemy of our souls. An ordained necessity to progress it is not; and to view it as such, a serious mistake. What did Israel gain in this respect? Even their victory left them still but where they were, although fight they had to when the enemy was upon them. Their toils, their wounds, were so much hindrance only. In the wilderness, God's thought for them was that they should be pilgrims, and not warriors; by and by, in the land, they should be warriors, but not here.

You are inclined, perhaps, again to stop and question the truth of this. Alas! for how many of us the Christian conflict is a conflict with the flesh! and instead of its being an exceptional thing, how much it makes up of the experience of our lives! But do not let us on that account ac-

commodate Scripture to our low condition, but judge our condition by the higher standard of Scripture. Take the epistle to the Philippians, for instance. It is, as most of us perhaps know, the epistle of Christian experience; and that not as laying hold of the heavenly places, but expressly as going through the world. It is the experience of one who was, perhaps of all mere men most, a stranger and pilgrim,—of one whose occupation was with one object,—to whom to win Christ and to be found in Him was all.

Does he give as his experience thus a constant warfare with the flesh and its lusts? Every one knows, the very contrary. The flesh is only mentioned to say he has no confidence in it. His experience is, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me."

That was Paul. If you say, We are not Pauls, I agree: alas! it is too plain we are not. Yet Paul bids us follow him; and the picture is but of what is proper to our common Christianity; it is but the effect of the governing object upon his soul. Are we to allow any thing else than scriptural Christianity?

Faith said in Paul, "All things are dung and loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus." Can faith in any of us say less or else than this? Only let this be simple and clear in us, and how easy, how joyful, to cast aside dung and loss to win Christ! How gladly shall we lay

aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of faith!

If our hearts are entangled, we must fight; but let us confess our hearts have been entangled. Still there is hope, blessed be God, and help. One is on the mount for us with God: One on the plain leads us to victory,—if indeed we are not willing captives. Can that indeed be for a moment a question as to any of those who have the Scripture-title to be called “saints of God”?

Let us look at this conflict, then: it is a thing which surely our souls know well, and yet in its details we may have much to learn that will be profitable to learn. This Moses upon the rock, who is he? and this Joshua upon the plain, who is he? Upon these two, manifestly, every thing depends for us.

Upon the mount, Moses holds up the rod which has smitten the rock. That the streams of refreshing might flow out for us in this wilderness-world, the Rock of Ages must be smitten. Righteousness struck the blow; and thus righteousness it is that justifies the sinner. God’s righteousness is toward all; it is *over* all them that believe in Jesus,—*over* them as their shield from all assault, from all accusation. It is the rod of righteousness which has become the rod of deliverance, the rod of power in behalf of the people. It is this that Moses holds up, appealing by it to God.

How wonderful that righteousness should be on the side of sinners through faith in Christ Jesus! It is the basis, as we know, of all our blessings. How can we escape from the power of the enemy, —what can bring in the help of God for us, if

righteousness did not appeal through Christ's work in our behalf? It is Christ Himself who holds up this rod for us in the presence of God, not with Moses' weary hands. Upon this all depends. Not even Joshua could avail for us in the plain if those patient hands of our royal Priest were not held up in the presence of our God.

But Joshua in the plain is needed none the less. His name shines by its own light. "Joshua" is "Jesus;" the great Captain of our salvation is here again, and in a character which is of the deepest significance. Joshua, as we know, is the one who leads them into Canaan afterward, and he is the leader here no less. Let us look at this closer, for it is a point of great importance.

The world of sight and sense is what we have learned to be the antitype of Israel's scene of wandering. It is the place of need and of dependence, a need in which God's unfailing power and tenderness are made known to us every step of the way. How wonderful to think that all that miracle-history with which we are so familiar is but the shadow of our own history as we pass through this world! How it would brighten and glorify many a life that seems tame and dull enough, to remember this! We have only to realize that, as it was with them, blindness and unbelief may blot out all evidence of God being with us, and leave our lives, of course, to be poor and dull enough. Israel, in full presence of all the miracles, could question still if the Lord were really with them. To spiritual sight, the evidence and the miracles will be as plain for us as them.

But there is another sphere, into which not only are we permitted to enter, but to abide. We have

a Canaan our dwelling-place, which even now by faith we take possession of; while nevertheless our feet are actually treading the wilderness sands. It puzzles many to reconcile a place in the wilderness with a place in Canaan, and the tendency is to drop out one of them. For most, the plain hard fact is, that we are in the world; and to talk of being in heaven is to them only mysticism. The typical meaning of the book of Joshua has thus dropped from the knowledge of the mass of even true Christians. They go to heaven when they die, after the experience of the wilderness is over; and they enter it, of course, not as Israel did—to fight, but to rest. Thus all the Canaan conflict is, as to any typical meaning, an inexplicable mystery. They know nothing of being in heavenly places, of being crucified to the world, or dead to sin. These terms are of course admitted to be in Scripture, but they are not in their souls, nor even in their minds. I cannot dwell upon this side of things now, and for most of you here, I trust, it will not be needful.

But on the other hand, there are those who having learned the blessed truth that they are already, for faith, and in Christ, in the heavenly places, are now almost unable to grasp the fact that they are in the wilderness at all. They too only enter Canaan when the wilderness is ended; only that for them it is already ended. At least, to be there is failure,—unbelief, and not faith. This is a complete mistake. It is to faith that the world is a wilderness. Unbelief will ever seek to settle down there. And, as we have seen, we are there, not as natural men, but as redeemed. In this way too all the experience of weakness, of need and depend-

ence is lost sight of—lessons which every day and hour, one would think, would be teaching us; and along with this, the blessed lessons of the Lord's unfailing care and love.

To such, all this Amalek-conflict must be a thing impossible to understand. They may think it no loss; but what about the manna, and the streams from the smitten rock?

In truth, the presence of Joshua in this scene in the wilderness is just a proof of the coincidence of our heavenly and earthly positions, and of how needed is the knowledge of the heavenly for power upon earth. For who is He who leads us in the struggle with the flesh but He who leads us into Canaan? The knowledge of what is ours above is what is absolutely necessary to break through the entanglements of flesh and sense. It is only by the consciousness of our portion in that which is unseen and eternal that we can find power to overcome the world. The knowledge of Canaan is necessary to the encounter with wilderness trials and difficulties; and who, one feels tempted to ask, can be really ignorant of this?

In the book of Genesis, the life of Abraham,—pattern life of faith as it is,—is a lesson of the same kind. It is as dwelling in Canaan that he is a pilgrim and a stranger; any where else he might have settled down. These two things are beautifully united in his history, and they are never to be sundered in our own.

I would reiterate, finally, beloved friends, that conflict with the flesh, as we have it in the picture here, is not what we are called to; it is no element of progress, but the contrary. Numbers, in the scene we have been looking at, will show us that

Edom does not lie on the road to our inheritance at all. As pilgrims and strangers, we are to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul. We are to reckon ourselves dead to sin; and laying aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, to run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of faith. May He quicken our steps on the path which Himself has traveled, and on which the light of the glory streams from the place to which He has ascended.

F. W. G.

Plainfield, N. J., July 29th, 1882.

“FROM
THE TOP OF THE ROCKS”

Numb. xxiii. 14—xxiv. 9

WE may briefly see how this place is reached in the book of Numbers. It is in this wise: First of all, we find in the first ten chapters the principles of the camp,—God’s principles for His people going through the wilderness; for the book of Numbers is the history of the wilderness,—the history of failure, alas! but also of His own wonderful ways with them in grace. When their history starts, as in the end of the tenth chapter, you find at once failure, and failure which goes on increasing steadily until it reaches apostasy in the rebellion of Korah. Then God executes judgment; but at the same time, in judgment He remembers mercy, and we find consequent upon the failure of the people the provisions of God’s grace for them there in the wilderness, to bring them through into the land in a way suitable to His own righteous character; preserving His own holiness, and manifesting it by His dealings with them.

The question then comes up, How are a people like these to be carried through? It is quite true the apostasy itself may be only the sin of some, but the whole people are of this character. Aye, you and I, beloved friends,—all of us, if it de-

pended upon us only, would go to any extreme—aye, to apostasy itself. Thank God, He does not permit it, that is all. Now, how are such a people to be brought through the wilderness according to God? The answer is in this: Aaron is told to take a rod for each of the tribes, his own rod for the tribe of Levi, and to put them into the sanctuary; and the tribe in whom the priesthood is is pointed out by the fact that the dead rod put into the sanctuary in the presence of God bursts into life and yields blossoms and almonds. It is a clear type of resurrection; but not only so, it is a beautiful type also of such a resurrection as implies and is the first-fruits of a harvest which is to follow. The almond-tree is, in the Hebrew tongue, called the "Wakeful," because it wakes up the first in the spring, and when it is awake, you know that the whole summer is at hand. Now, that, beloved friends, is how it is as to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ out of death, now gone into the sanctuary and in the presence of God in heaven. He is the first-fruits of the new-creation harvest,—the forerunner of all that shall come there through Him. He is the First-Begotten from the dead; that implies, of course, that others are to be begotten from the dead. He has title,—having shed his blood for His people,—He has title to bring them through, where He is, whatever they are.

In consequence, we find in the nineteenth chapter the provision for defilement—defilement from the dead. This is ever, in Numbers, the character of defilement, because the wilderness through which they are going is the type of the world; and the world passeth away; it has on it the stamp

of death—the stamp of God's displeasure. The provision of the ashes of the red heifer is therefore God's provision for defilement with the dead. The priest now being with God, the provision is here by which they are freed from all the defilements of the way.

But there is another thing which has to be taken into account. It is not enough that our sins should be gone, not enough that defilement should be removed; there is something deeper in us which makes all this defilement practicable, as I may say. There was One in the world who could touch, not only the physical, but the moral leper without defilement, in perfect superiority over it—in the midst of all man's unholiness, the Holy One of God. But, beloved, there was not in Him what there is in us—a fallen nature. Ours is a fallen nature: this is the secret of our condition; and how can we go with such a nature before God?

The answer to this is, the cross. The brazen serpent is the type of Christ as made sin for us—He who knew no sin. The brazen serpent represents, not sins borne, but sin in us,—the root, of which these are the bitter fruit,—judged in Him who in grace became our representative upon the cross. Thus the people's case is perfectly met; and as a consequence, let the enemy accuse,—surely he had plenty of material for accusation—a stiff-necked and rebellious people, as Moses says, from the day he knew them until that day;—so perfectly secure are they, he can only pronounce their blessing. The very attempt to curse only brings out blessing. How wonderful, beloved friends! and mark, it is just when they have finished their journey; they are in the plains of Moab, with only the Jor-

dan between them and the land they are going to. And it is there, after they have been told out fully in their history,—after all has been said of them, so to speak, that could be said,—it is there that the accuser comes up to curse and has to bless. How blessed that is for us! How sweet to know that that is the sure and certain result of the work of Christ, and of His presence in heaven for us! So, beloved, at the close of our journey, blessed be God, are we found before Him; so completely according to His mind, so completely sheltered from every accusation, that, after our whole story is told out, we can be presented "*blameless*" before God.

Now, I want to bring out specially the two blessings in these verses read; but in the first place, just let us glance at the whole together. There is an order in these blessings which I want to speak of. The point of view is different, as you see at once, in each of the three. Balak, in fact, takes Balaam to another and another place on purpose to change the point of view, in order to see if by any possibility he shall be able to curse. They are to be looked at from every side save one, and that is, the Canaan one,—heaven's side, in fact; which God gives, nevertheless, all through.

But more than that, the point of view is ever nearer. If you notice, at the end of the twenty-second chapter, it says that Balak took him to the heights of Baal, in order that he might see from thence the utmost part of the people—the "end" of the people. His effort there is to diminish them; he does not want to let him see too much. He sees the last camp, as it were—just the end. And you may notice that when Balaam sees them

from thence, he says, "Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the *fourth part* of Israel?" The *fourth part* was the hindermost of the camp, and that is what he was looking at.

But in the next place, he takes him to the field of Zophim—to the top of Pisgah, and here there is a little alteration which we shall have to make in our translation, as it is inconsistent with what has gone before, as you will notice in the forty-first verse of the last chapter (the twenty-second). Balak is here (in the thirteenth verse of the twenty-third chapter) made to say to him, "Come, I pray thee, with me unto another place, from whence thou mayest see them: thou *shalt* see but the utmost part of them." Now, that is only what he had seen before. A very simple alteration makes it all consistent. We have to alter the future, "thou shalt see," into the present, "thou seest." Future and present are all one in the Hebrew language, and it is simply a question of critical judgment as to which should be used. Here, it is evidently the present, and not the future. From the point where he stood at first he saw but the utmost part of them; and now Balak is going to show him, *not* the "utmost part," but *all*. He thinks he has made a mistake; he should not have shown him the utmost part merely, and that this was the reason, perhaps, he had not succeeded in cursing them. Now, he takes him where he can see them all. Thus, it is when Balaam looks through the length and breadth of them that he says, "God hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel." See, beloved friends, how that would be spoiled if, after all, He was only looking at the utmost part

of them. Balak might have said, as it were, You don't see any spot *there*, but there are plenty elsewhere. But Balaam's eye now looks upon the whole of the people, and he says there is not a spot *any where*.

And then Balak brings him nearer still. You can evidently see how near he is, for now the distinct order and arrangement of the camp comes up before him. Balaam, it says, "lifted up his eyes and saw Israel abiding in his tents *according to their tribes*." And now what does he say? "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!"

The nearer he comes, the more the beauty appears. In the first place, when at a distance, they are not like any other people on the earth. You cannot apply ordinary rules to them. When he comes nearer, he says there is not a spot any where; but when he comes nearest of all, his heart goes out in admiration, and he says, "How *goodly* are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!" Beloved, what a state that is! what a condition! What a people of whom it can be truly seen, the nearer you approach to them, the more they are blessed—the more it comes out! You know how we look at men at a distance from them, and think them very happy people. We see them with riches of all kinds, blessed in basket and in store, in the fruit of the body and the fruit of the field, and you think their cup is full. We have only got to look a little nearer to find there are flaws; and the nearer we consider them, the more their case differs from what it appeared at first; we end, perhaps, in not envying them at all. What a difference it is, beloved friends, when you

have God's people before you, and the portion which God gives! The nearer the point of view, the more blessed that portion is.

But now, then, let us look a little more at the first blessing. In the first place it is simply this: "How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy whom the Lord hath not defied? For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him." Now, notice, beloved friends, that is the point of view all through—the top of the rocks. He calls it, in the third blessing, the "vision of the Almighty." God sees from above; we see from the lower level—the level of earth. But God's view is the real one: an unobstructed view, you know, you get from a mountain-peak. From the lower level, you find all sorts of things in the way; you get mere fragmentary glimpses, which you cannot put together: but from the upper level, you see things as they really are,—God always sees them so. God's view is the real view; and all other, if not false, is still an inferior one.

"Lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations. Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" That is the first thing, beloved friends, that Balaam sees—a people who are separate from all the other nations of the earth; they are not numbered with them; they don't form part of them at all. As I said before, ordinary rules do not apply to them; you cannot merely judge of them by ordinary judgment: they are the people of God. The moment you bring in God, it makes all the differ-

ence. The thing that distinguished Israel from all the other nations of the earth was, that *God* was with them. And, beloved friends, if God was with them, from the very nature of the case, they must dwell alone. That was their privilege and blessing: they dwelt alone. The people of God, of necessity, ever dwell alone; they do not form part of the world. If we remember what the Lord Jesus Christ said of His disciples before He left them, it was distinctly that. He says, speaking to the Father, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." Nay, more—He says, "As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." So that, being distinctly not of the world even as He is not of the world, He sends them into it. They are in it simply as *sent of Him*, to represent Him even as He represented the Father. He alone *could* represent the *Father*: we could not do that; it would be impossible. Blessed be God, however, we can, through His grace, represent *Him*. Only the Son could represent the Father. We may, in a measure, at least, represent the blessed One who was Son of Man down here in the world.

But, now, if He says, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world," what does He mean by that? Remember, it is the vision of the Almighty. It is not at all, beloved, what may seem practically true. It ought to be, I quite grant it. Israel ought to have dwelt alone: was it true as to their practical history that they did? Alas! no. You know how in the wilderness they mixed themselves up with other people. You know how through the devices of this very Balaam who pronounced the blessing here they were

seduced into evil alliances with the Midianites, and judgment came upon them in consequence. How little could it be said, if you looked upon them from a mere human point of view, that they "*dwelt alone*"!

But, beloved friends, God's point of view is the true view. He has *a ground* for saying what He does; although faith only sees with Him. Faith alone reckons as God reckons,—sees as God sees. And, beloved, to faith it is true. We are not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world.

Is that in character? Alas! not wholly so. Character, you can say, in a certain sense; for, blessed be God, as born again, we are partakers of the holy nature of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Nevertheless, as to practical conduct in the world, how little can it be said of us, "the world knoweth us not"! And yet, beloved, it is what ought to be true in this way. Alas! it reads like a reproach,—in this day of far-spreading Christianity, it reads like a reproach when the apostle says, "The world knoweth us not, even as it knew Him not."

Beloved, is that true of you and me practically? How far is it true? It is not a question of profession, because the world can make a profession too. It is doing it; it is the easiest thing possible. How is it when we come to the reality, when the world practically tests us, what do we find? Are we able to enter into their pleasures? They can quite understand that. Are we able to follow the objects that they follow as objects? They quite understand that. Are we as keen at a bargain? They quite understand that. If they find us seeking to make money, they quite understand that. Alas! isn't it true in the present day, whatever it might

have been once, the world looks at Christians, and says, "Oh, we know these people very well; very good people they are; we enjoy their company, we go to their churches and they go to our places of amusement. They are a little peculiar, it is true; but after all, we like them very well"?

What a reproach! Look at the Lord Jesus Christ going through the world, and tell me, was it *ever* true that the world knew Him, or understood Him, or sympathized with Him? Never; no, never. Why did it not know Him? Beloved, He was come from God, and was going to God, and all through the world He was a pilgrim and a stranger—a man with only one object in it:—one whom the will of His Father, and His love for man, kept in the world at all, leading Him on to that cross where the Son of Man was glorified. How far are you and I like that? There was not an object in the world—not one single object which you can say is one to a man of the world, that was an object to the Lord Jesus. Was there one?

People want to make a moderate competence, make money moderately, get on in the world; they think that lawful, that it is allowable. Is it possible to find fault with that? Yet put that along with the example of the Lord Jesus Christ. Could you possibly, without blasphemy, think of *Him* trying to make money?

His was a place of very real necessity; it was not His Godhead which prevented Him being exposed to the common lot of man. The foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, but the Son of Man had not where to lay His head. That was His condition; and that was His answer to one who proposed to follow Him: "Lord, I will

follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest." Oh, beloved, how many professed followers has the Lord Jesus now?

Did the world understand Him? He could not recommend Himself to it; He could not, beloved friends, be at peace with it. Not that there was not peace, with Him. Yet He says, "I came not to send peace, but a sword." Why? Because He brought God and God's claim into the world; and, whatever He might give up personally on His own account, He could never give up that. And the world *hated* Him. Oh, beloved, you take God and God's claim into the midst of your business relations, into your houses, into your places of resort, what will be the effect? I tell you what,—you will soon "dwell alone,"—you won't be reckoned among the nations, so to speak, in that way. Do you think the people that don't want God will want you if you identify yourself with Him? "The reproaches of them that reproached Thee," He says, in the Psalms, "are fallen upon Me."

Oh, beloved, before Him there was but one object—the "pleasure of Jehovah," which was in His hand to accomplish, and that was what He steadfastly pursued.

He came from God, He went to God. He was not of the earth, earthy; He was the Lord from heaven. The world did not understand Him. How could it? Where it understood in measure, it hated. It understood that there was light there, and it hated the light, and loved the darkness, because its deeds were evil. If He was the light of the world, they would quench that light in order that they might enjoy the darkness.

Oh, beloved, what a reproach for us!—"The

world knoweth us not, even as it knew Him not." It comes back to us from those old days of reality, it comes back to us like the knell upon this pretentious christendom around,—“The world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not.”

And yet, blessed be God,—oh, wonderful to say! oh, marvel of His grace!—we *are* not of this world, even as He is not of this world. We are not of it; God has separated us from it—separated us from it by His own grace altogether. We belong to another scene. We may be unfaithful; alas! how easily unfaithful! We belong to another scene. And the place which is ours, beloved friends, before God, if we are Christians, is, “*in Him*” who has passed into the heavens, there. Our acceptance is in God’s own beloved, before Him. By God we are reckoned dead with Christ—dead because He died—dead with Christ, buried with Christ as to the world and all that belongs to it, passed out of the scene, and quickened together with Christ, raised up together, seated together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. That is our wonderful position. Death and judgment, instead of being before us as they are before the world, are behind us. He has taken our place on the cross—death and judgment in that awful cross of His. He has poured out His soul unto death, was reckoned with the transgressors. More than that, He was made a curse—He was made sin for us. “He who knew no sin, was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” Oh, beloved, all this blessed place is ours. All this that distinguishes us from all around has come to us from the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,—that grace in which, “though He was rich, yet for our

sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich." You cannot exhibit those riches in the world; and the world does not know us,—in that sense, really does not know us. But alas! alas! that we should not be practically more what He has made us really in His own grace, at the cost of His own agony and blood-shedding—the cost of the cross!

But I do not dwell on this first blessing any more; it is not my object. But notice how even a Balaam can say, "Let my last end be like his." Aye, if it were only that, if it were only the last end, even a Balaam would want that.

But now look at the second blessing. Notice here, as I say, he is in the field of Zophim, on the top of Pisgah. The field of Zophim is the field of the watchers, it is the jealous eye of the enemy that is watching here; it is an enemy that is scanning the people with eyes eager to discover, if they can, spot or defect. Now, these eager eyes search through the whole camp—nothing is hid from them. Yes; but still what is seen is "the vision of the Almighty." Beyond even the keen sight of an enemy, the eyes which are as a flame of fire are here, seeing through and through, and pronouncing His judgment. What, then, does He say of this people—this very people of whom we can take such a different view at another time, if we take the lower level? When we come to look with God, who ever thinks of His Son—righteously thinks of Him and what He has done, beloved, the answer to the accuser is, "HE *hath not beheld* iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel."

But now mark, and I want you to look at this a

little steadily. There is some very blessed truth brought out here, I believe, which we want to ponder. Of course, what we have here is the blessed truth of justification. God has not seen iniquity. He does not say there has not been any. There is none, in fact. But why? Oh, beloved, the real secret of all justification—of all non-imputation of iniquity, is, that the precious blood of Christ is before God. God looks at His Son—God looks at the work which has been accomplished by Him, and He *cannot* impute sin. How can He say there is iniquity when the precious blood of Christ cleanses from all sin? How can he who sees with the vision of the Almighty say that there is any there? There is none—none.

But it is not merely that. Look now at what we have further. These words which are given here as "iniquity" and "perverseness," I want to translate a little more closely to the original. It is really this: "He has not beheld *vanity* in Jacob, neither hath He seen *labor*"—toil, if you please, or the weariness produced by toil,—"*He hath not seen labor in Israel.*" What then? "The Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is amongst them." These last words explain the former, or at least give them their full character.

Now, I want to dwell upon this a little for our souls' sake to-night. In the first place, beloved friends, perhaps you will think, when I read, "He hath not beheld *vanity*," I take away from the blessedness of this assurance, because "*vanity*" is not, in people's apprehension of it, the same as sin; yet the word is one that is constantly used for sin. The "*workers of iniquity*," an expression you will find all the way through the Psalms, for instance,

is really the "workers of *vanity*." Call it, if you please, "worthlessness," and you will then have a word which comes near to the double sense of the original. You may speak of worthlessness as a moral thing, or you may mean simply what is of no value. Well, both meanings are right here. What has come in through sin? and what, in one aspect of it, is sin? Well, what is it but men spending their strength for naught? what is it, in fact, but man walking in a vain show, and disquieting himself in vain,—aye, it may be, heaping up riches, and not knowing who shall gather them? Oh, beloved, this world that values wisdom so much, this world that praises intellect, this world that worships genius,—oh, beloved, what is it in the esteem of God? He taketh the wise in their own craftiness, He knoweth the thoughts of the wise that they are vain. How utterly vain! Man lives for his seventy years possibly, and what then? Why, as you know, every thing that he has lived for—I speak of the ordinary life of men—every thing that he has lived for vanishes like a dream. I am only putting it now in the lightest way, I am not speaking of judgment to come. Judgment there is—awful judgment there is, but, beloved friends, apart even from that, suppose there were none, what is it to live a life of which every object, every thing that man has lived for, passes away in a moment with that which comes at last, however slowly, comes surely. It is what people say, "One thing certain is, we are all going to die;" and the one thing certain is, we are all living as if we never meant to. What is all the wisdom of the world about? Making the world a comfortable place. That is what they are doing every where, as you

may see in cemeteries any day, putting flowers over the unsightliness of death, covering it all up, and trying to fancy that it is not there.

You remember there was one in whom the devil dwelt once, when the Lord Jesus Christ was here upon earth, and one of the marks of that awful demoniacal possession was, that he had his dwelling in the tombs. Beloved, isn't that the mark of man? alas! under the power of Satan, that all His heart should attach itself to that which is really a place of tombs. Isn't it the simplest fact that can be that the world is much more the home of the dead than the living? How many are there of the living compared with the mass of the dead? Beloved, in Scripture, that is what gives the world its character before God. As I have said, defilement, all through the book of Numbers, which is the book of the wilderness, is defilement with the dead; death, in God's thought, defiles. Why? Why! Well, do you think that God is like a child, who makes his toy to-day and breaks it to-morrow? Do you think, beloved friends, it is a good thing or a natural thing that we "bring our years to an end as a tale that is told;" that in fourscore years, if we reach that, our "strength is but labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away"? Is it natural? What a terrible nature this must be! Is that just what you expect of God? What a strange God He must be in your thoughts! God? No, beloved, God did not make man for this. Man has made himself what now he is, and yet "their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue forever, and their dwelling-places to all generations; and they call the lands after their own names. This their way is their

folly, and their posterity approve their sayings."

Oh, beloved, never, never think the world is the place of wisdom. Man got his wisdom in disobedience,—as the fruit of the forbidden tree; and what has he done with that wisdom? God made him upright, and he has sought out many inventions. His first invention was an apron of fig-leaves, to hide his shame from another, if he could not hide it from God. When God came in, he was naked; and ever since, all his inventions have been just fig-leaves to cover his nakedness. They say necessity is the mother of invention. The fatal words! How came this necessity? It means that all his wisdom, all these inventions, which are the fruit of his necessity, are the signs of the fall.

Such is the world; and the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. In the midst of such a scene, and of it naturally, are the people of God. Upon them too death sets its mark in wrinkles and gray hairs and decrepitude. Vanity is on these also. On them, if the enemy looks, he may see abundant evidence of their shame. Well, here in this scene in Numbers, it is the keen eye of the enemy that is observing them—from the "field of Zophim," the field of the watchers;—nothing, you may be sure, will be omitted that can in any way discredit them. What does he say? Why, "He hath not beheld vanity in Jacob"! Compelled to see with the vision of the Almighty, he sees no trace even of sin or of the curse,—no, not in *Jacob*. Sin is gone, and that which sin has wrought. In God's sight, oh, wonderful to say, His people have not a wrinkle or spot. "Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee." What Christ is going to present His Church as unto Himself, that He sees them

now, without spot or wrinkle—not a sign of age—without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. God sees us in that way. God looks at us, beloved, in the unfading freshness that belongs to us, as having our real portion there where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt.

"He hath not beheld vanity in *Jacob*, neither hath He seen labor in *Israel*." If you look through these blessings, you will find the changes rung continually on these two names—Jacob and Israel. They were both names of the first father of Israel: one, the natural name; the other, the divine name. Jacob was the natural name—the supplanter ("he hath supplanted me," Esau says, "these two times,"); but God takes up this Jacob, and what does he come out as the result of this divine workmanship? Israel—a prince with God.

Ah, beloved, that is how God glorifies Himself. There is hardly a sweeter title throughout the Old Testament than that of the "God of Jacob,"—the God that could take up the poorest and basest thing that ever was—a Jacob, and turn him into an Israel—a "prince with God." No wonder "according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel" (you could not do without Jacob there; you want Jacob to compare with Israel; you want to see the material, in order to admire the workmanship;)—"according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought?"

That is the whole matter—What hath *God* wrought? Oh, beloved, how wonderful it is to have a God who can take up men in that way,—take *you* up, beloved friends, whoever you are, with all your vanity, with all your folly and evil! Oh, yield yourselves, if you have not, into His

blessed hands to-night. He shall make you a specimen of His workmanship that shall be the admiration of eternity; giving *Him* even a name; for He shall "show forth the riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."

But now put the first clause of the following sentence along side of this: "The Lord his God is with him." What does that mean? The Lord his God is with him—Jehovah, the eternal God. Ah, that redeems him from the curse of vanity, indeed. Take a string of ciphers, as many as you please; no multiplication of them will give them value. Multiply nothing ever so many times, it is nothing still. But put a simple *one* before these ciphers; now, six of them represent a million. So let man be the cipher that he is—be vanity, if the Lord his God be with him, all is changed. If the Lord his God is with him, surely he is redeemed from vanity. How wonderful to know that in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ man is joined to God forever! How wonderful to know that manhood is taken up from the degradation into which it has sunk, and that the Second Man is "God over all, blessed forever,"—aye, the Second Man sits upon the throne of God the Father. Vanity? No; eternity that means. Worthlessness? Oh, no; infinite value. Lord, "what is man that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man that Thou visitest him? Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands; Thou hast put all things under his feet." Yes, the Lord his God is with him, blessed be His name! He who, that He might be Emmanuel—"God with us," is

called Jesus, His people's Saviour from their sins. Think of the unutterable goodness of One who could come out of His everlasting dwelling-place to make His dwelling with the sons of men, and at His own personal cost taking them up to be with Himself in everlasting glory. Ah, the Lord His God is with Him.

But what then? "He has not beheld vanity in Jacob, neither hath He beheld *labor* in Israel." "Come unto Me," says the Lord, "all ye that *labor* and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." "Labor." Amalek means "labor." That is, at least, a part of the word apparently is the very same as the word here. Labor is just that weary, toilsome, profitless drudgery which is come in through sin. Man was intended to be active in the garden, to dress it and to keep it: quite true, but that was not "labor." Now, he labors—labors in the fire—labors for very vanity. "All things are full of labor," says the preacher; "man cannot utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing." And what is the secret of this? A heart dropped away from God. The corruption that is in the world through lust. That is what it means. What is lust? Why, just the parent of this very labor. The restless longing of the heart after what it can never get. It cannot get the satisfaction from the things in which it seeks it. "All the labor of a man is for the mouth, but the *soul* is not filled."

Where did man get this lust? How did this corruption come in? At the fall; from the fatal tree of knowledge. Man's heart has dropped away from God. He has lost confidence in God. In the midst of all the blessing in the garden of Eden, he

became a questioner in the devil's track. "Hath God said ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" Can it be possible God has put a tree in the midst of the garden and forbids you to use it? Such was man's first lesson in that reasoning in which he has become proficient since. That one little thing denied blotted out the beauty of that fair scene around. Man has been questioning ever since, and he cannot find out God by it. "*Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?*"

What then? Having lost confidence in God, he must confide in himself. He cannot trust God to provide for him. He does not believe in God's providence. He has forsaken the peaceful paths of faith. He has got wisdom, and he loves himself, at any rate; he thinks he can take better care of himself than God. He takes the goods of his father and carries them off into a far-off land, where to spend is easy, but where fortunes are not made in keeping swine.

What is the end? what must be the end? The world passeth away, and the lust thereof. What desolation for the soul when all is spent! as spent all *must* be.

Now let me ask, If there were to come into man's heart just this (which, blessed be God, He has given us to know in Christ): he were able to look up to God and say, My Father is the Lord of heaven and earth; the One whose resources are absolute, whose power is unlimited, whose wisdom is beyond all that man can understand; and who is for me—mine,—my Father. What would be the result? Why, the lust of the heart would cease; the soul would return to its quiet place of

rest, and say, Blessed be God, my weary toil is over. I have come into infinite riches in a Father's love and care. I need not look out for myself, He is looking out for me; never withdraws His eyes from me. What is my wisdom to His? Nay, the very love that He loves me with is love superior to my own, for He counts the hairs of my head and I scarcely care for the hairs of my head being counted. Oh, beloved, the heart would, like a poor fluttered bird, just fold its wings and drop into its nest. Isn't it so?

Now that is where God sees His people. Oh, you may say, I wish He could see this more in me. Ah, but God sees us according to what He has made us—in the full blessedness belonging to us. Faith is to assert its full claim to all this, and to fulfill it. And, beloved, according to the time it shall be yet said, "What hath God wrought?" Of *Jacob* and of *Israel* it shall be said, "What hath God wrought?" "He hath not beheld *labor* in *Israel*." No. "Come unto Me, all ye that *labor* and are heavy-laden, and I will give you *rest*. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; . . . and ye *shall* find rest unto your souls."

Yes, beloved, for surely, surely, when we have become satisfied with His will, when our hearts find—in proportion as they have found—the plan of faith in His love, perfect rest will take the place of all weary labor. "He hath not beheld vanity in *Jacob*, neither hath He seen labor in *Israel*."

But mark what goes with these: "The Lord his God is with him; *and the shout of a king* is among them." Do you know what that is? It is the ringing, loyal shout of welcome, the loyal shout with which we greet one to whom all our hearts

are subject. The shout of a king. Ah, beloved, the shout of a king!

Man has got away from God, and he deems himself independent; he likes to think so of himself, and if not—if he cannot be quite that, he will take up the devil's service rather than God's. The Lord Jesus Christ casts the devil out of that poor distraught man, and he becomes a quiet sitter at the feet of Jesus; and all the people come and—most respectfully; mark, you may do it in the most respectful way;—beg the Lord Jesus to depart out of their coasts.

But is he really independent who is the slave of his necessities? who is never at rest? How can he be? What are men's lives filled up with? Pleasure-seeking even,—all this effort after pleasure even, do you think a heart that had found *happiness* would be seeking pleasure? I say, such have not found happiness. It is a clear case. No, how could it be? Beloved, when our hearts return to true subjection to the blessed One whose yoke is easy, whose burden is light, then alone we find rest for our souls. When the shout of a king is with us, the curse of labor is removed. "I removed his shoulder from the burden," says God of Israel; "his hands were delivered from the pots." When we cease from our own ways, then we are indeed delivered.

Do you remember what was said of Moses, when Miriam and Aaron murmured against the divine leader? Just at that very juncture there is a word dropped as from God.—"Now the man Moses was *very meek*, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth." And *that* was the ruler they were objecting to. What better ruler could they

possibly have had than the very meekest man on the face of the earth? But, beloved, we have found a better one, who is the blessed Son of God—God over all, blessed forever; One who, taking this place, speaks of Himself under this very character: "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly of heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Beloved, God has got a path for His people; a path in which their Shepherd leads them; a path which infinite wisdom has chosen, in which infinite love ministers to them, and infinite power protects. "As the hills stand round about Jerusalem, so the Lord God stands round about His people." Do you think I want my own way in the presence of One seeking me after this fashion, loving me in this wonderful way? Do you think, beloved, if I believe this, I would sooner be allowed a little choice of my own? do you? Ah, "the shout of a king is amongst them." Do you know what that is? Have your hearts returned in delight to loyalty to the King of kings? Blessed be His name, that shout of a king is the shout of freedom; His law, the only law of liberty.

I have scarcely time for the third blessing. Just let me however, in the briefest possible way, speak a word or two about it.

Balaam is speaking now from the third point of view, and here the beauty and the order of their encampment is seen. Yet he speaks, mark, turning his face toward the wilderness. He says, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!" The tents are Jacob's, but they are Israel's tabernacles. Jacob has a tent; good enough for him, you might say, a man who has made his bed and must lie in it as he has made

it. This Jacob is a mere wanderer, from the world's point of view; a man who takes no more hold of the earth than his tent-pole and his tent-pins do. He is not a success, this Jacob. His own lips confess that few and evil have been the days of his life. Yet Balaam can speak of the goodness of Jacob's tents. For God, these tents of Jacob are the tabernacles of a prince. The wanderer is a pilgrim. "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!" Think of the tents of a people who were journeying to Canaan. Think of the poverty of a people of whom the Lord says, The world is not good enough for them; that is why I don't give it to them. That is the truth. Jacob's tents are Israel's tabernacles. It is a prince of God who is dwelling here. It is a prince of God who is going to his rest beyond. Oh, beloved, Jacob's tents are good, for they mean that. He says to us, I cannot give you your portion here; you shall have it with Me in eternity.

Now look: "As the valleys are they spread forth." Low enough the valley, but all its blessing is the result of this. It is cold on the mountain-tops, but the sun shines warm in the valley, and the streams run down there; aye, and whereas they only run down the rocks and do no good, as soon as they come down to the lower level, linger lovingly, and spread verdure round about. Beloved, what a picture it is of what will be by and by too, in the near eternity, when man's day of misrule is over, and God's time comes; and in His kingdom the highest shall minister to the lowest, the hills to the valleys; highest above all, He who, as Son of Man, came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for

many. That is God's thought. Are you sorry to be in the valley? Why, the sun shines there warmest; all the waters run down there. It is the place of unceasing ministry. But what more? "As the valleys are they spread forth; as gardens by the river's side; as the trees of lign aloes which the Lord hath planted." There is the special care of God. Not merely a valley, but a valley which is a garden. Let only man take up a piece of land and dress it and nurture it, and he can make it wonderfully beautiful. There is a strange power God has given to man, that he can take a flower, and nourish it, and care for it, and make it at last come out as different from the little humble thing it was at first as can be. If man can do that, what can God do with His care? what can God do with His garden which He plants? Think of being the objects of God's care.

Now once more: "As gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lign aloes which the Lord hath planted." What are these trees of lign aloes? They are precious trees, fragrant trees; but that is not all; they are *exotics*. You know what an exotic is: something that is brought from a foreign land, because of its fragrance or its beauty or its usefulness, or all these, and planted there. That is what the Lord's people are; He has sanctified us, and sent us into the world. Now, plainly, He must have taken us *out of* the world first. He sends us into the world, not as worldlings, but as those who belong to heaven. We are exotics—strange plants which the Lord has planted, not natural to the soil. And oh, beloved, if such plants are something for man's sight, and for man's taste, think of our being plants which the Lord hath planted

that He Himself may have His delight in us.

As "cedar-trees beside the waters"—the stateliest things in nature. But now look at the next: "He shall pour forth the waters out of his buckets." That is what characterizes a very fruitful place. Especially a warm land must have abundance of water. If a tree is planted by the rivers of waters, it shall bring forth its fruit in its season.

What says the Lord, beloved friends, of those that come to Him? "Whosoever is athirst, let him come unto Me and drink," and "he that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." You remember that in the fourth chapter of that gospel of John it says, "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." It is not properly a well: it is a fountain. There is this difference: In a well, you have to put your pail down to dip up what you want; but a fountain *comes up to you*. And, beloved, that is what God's blessed Spirit is in our souls, as it says, "This spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive."

I don't wonder if some turn in upon themselves and say, Is that true? Can that be possible? Is it true of any, what the Lord says,—"*he shall never thirst*"—"Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall *never thirst*"? *Do you thirst, beloved? How is it true, then?*

Just because God speaks from His own point of view. But then it is a real thing He speaks of. His point of view is a true one, for He speaks according to the quality of the gift He has given. His own blessed Spirit dwells in the very *bodies* of His saints. Do you understand that? Now, if

the Spirit of God dwell in us, can you measure the Spirit? No; He is a divine Person. Can you measure His power, then? can you measure His fullness? Alas! you can give Him a limit. By unbelief, indeed, you can repeat the sin of those who once limited the Holy One of Israel? Let us fear to set a limit to this infinite fullness that is ours. Thus indeed can we check the flow of living water.

Alas! we can set a measure where God has set no measure; and instead of being full and satisfied, we can thirst like others, and men can see our thirst to our shame. But has He made any mistake? No; it is we, not He,—the failure is on our part wholly.

I must close. Only, beloved, I want to leave with you, as the last thing, this thought: Think of how the apostle turns to Christians and says, "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit." The apostle puts it upon us,—upon you and me—to be filled with the Spirit. Isn't it the simplest thing possible, if it is a spring of living water, that all we have to do is to keep out all that hinders the rise and outflow of its waters? Here is the blessedness of self-judgment, of a heart exercised before God to have a conscience void of offense toward God and toward men. Oh, the blessedness of being able to look up and say, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me; and lead me in the way everlasting"!

Beloved, can you do that heartily and unreservedly? Are you saying to God unreservedly, See well whether there is any wicked way in me?

Every honest, real bit of self-judgment is like taking a stone out of the spring: the living water bubbles up in the soul after it. Did you never realize it? Did you never realize what it was to cling to something or other, no matter what, as impossible to be given up, until you have found that it was costing you all the brightness and freshness of your spiritual life; all the joy of Christ's companionship; and then when you have given it up, have you never felt a rush of life into your heart, as of a long pent-up stream that suddenly had burst its bonds? Such a sudden tide of jubilant gladness, have you not felt it? Well, I cannot tell you what it is, if you have not.

Beloved, it is a solemn responsibility this—to be filled with the Spirit. Think of being a vessel out of which there flow rivers of living water! It is the necessary effect if the spring is sufficient; and the vessel being an earthen vessel is no hindrance. The excellency of the power is of God, and not of us. When the vessel is full, it overflows. And when the vessel is full, it does not overflow, so to speak, by effort, but of necessity; and *what* overflows is the full strength and power of the stream. Think of all the power of the Holy Ghost, having first filled *you*, pouring itself forth even in a world like this, "rivers of living water."

Beloved, God's thoughts are not as our thoughts, and His ways not as our ways. If we take these types of old and only look at them in the poor, meagre way in which we have been looking at them, does it not shame us? But then, does it not encourage us also? If Israel of old could be pictured in a way like this, how of that of which Israel is but itself the shadow?

God grant, beloved friends, that our practical state may answer more to the reality of what we are before Him, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake.

F. W. G.

Plainfield, N. J., Aug. 1st, 1882.



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