

The Master's Yoke.



Ye call me Master and Lord : and
ye say well ; for so I am.

The servant is not greater than his
Lord.

John viii. 13—15.

PRESENT GLORIES.

NO. 2—HIS SERVANTS.

God has ordained that, in His due time, every knee shall bow to Christ Jesus and every tongue shall confess Him Lord. Those who are called in this day of grace own Him now as Lord as well as Saviour. Let us look at the implications of this confession from four of its many aspects.

Firstly there is the question of identification. Not likeness, but the open acknowledgment that we are bond-servants to our Lord, and that whatsoever we do in word or deed we do as to Himself, serving not man but Christ (Col. III, 22-25). For it is obvious that if there is to be reality in our profession we can allow no other motive for any of our actions than that it was done to please Him, in obedience to what He would have us to do. The Scriptures are clearer in teaching this than any human example; there is, however, the pattern of the One Who pleased not Himself, but yielded His will to that of His Father; yielded His entirety—thought, speech, being, time, and labour to the accomplishment of that will. But also (and this is where we so often compromise) He openly acknowledged to His disciples and to the world that He was doing the Father's commandment (Jn. VI, 38, 57, etc.). This surely is one of the least of the things that we can do, to ascribe the reasons for our actions not to motives of convenience, self interest or "because we thought it best," but because we had sought the Lord's mind and were doing what we believed He would have us do. This seems to be the first duty of a servant. Of course it throws us continually upon Him; of course it consorts ill with the speed and rapidity with which things are done in this age; our first and only concern must be to serve Him whom we call Lord, or else indeed in common honesty we should omit this title when we speak of Him. But in all difficulty the example of Nehemiah may encourage us, for we can read that he "prayed to the God of heaven"—a very brief and yet none the less earnest prayer—before answering immediately a question from King Artaxerxes (Neh. II, 4-5).

The second point is the need for dependence upon God alone. For it is a principle that God will be no man's

debtor, that none can go on His service at his own charges (1 Cor. IX). The testimony of the disciples, having gone out with no worldly provision, confidently confirming to the Lord Who sent them that they had known no lack is one aspect of this, but more to our particular point is the example of Abraham, servant of the Almighty, possessor of heaven and earth, who would not take from others from a thread to a shoe-latchet, lest his support might seem to come from any but that One Whom he served. And again may be cited those who, labouring in their Master's service, "went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles" (3 Jn. 7). Israel, too, came out of Egypt with unleavened bread, because they were not to be dependent upon the bakēhouses of Egypt. And it is not only a slight upon the God of provision, but a sad hindrance to the testimony, when the means for any service said to be done in His Name is drawn from any worldly source.

The third aspect is the claim that the Lord's service has over us. He calls us to follow Him, and those who were called in the early days left all and followed Him. True it is that theirs was a different manner of service, but ours has the same character in that its claims are pre-eminent in our lives. Paul was a tentmaker, labouring to supply his needs (2 Thess. III, 8); but these same needs were not allowed to make a disproportionate claim upon his time or energy; he was firstly the Lord's slave. We need to maintain a just balance in this matter, and the balance is weighed on the one side with "Seck ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness," and on the other with "your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things, (they) shall be added unto you." Do you work to provide necessities? It is work to the Lord, His provision for your need; but beware lest your estimate of such need becomes greater than the Lord's and you spend time in satisfying your own desires that He would use otherwise. Then he that was saved and called while a servant of men, was not to be anxious about it, but if he could be free from such service he was to be. And no man may voluntarily bind himself in service to men, or enter into any tie that hinders his liberty, for "Ye are bought with a price; be ye not the servants of men" (1 Cor. VII, 23). There is

such a thing as lawful subjection to authority, and sad to say there is a subjection that at best is thoughtless of the Lord's redemption, and at worst acquires to consume on lust (James IV, 3). Faith in the Lord Who calls, consciousness of the ransom that was paid to redeem us, and appreciation of the grace that would use us would surely enable us the better to honour scripture, and serve the Lord with gladness.

Finally (although this is by no means the end) we must be faithful in service. And faithfulness is above all else conformity to the example of our Lord. "Ye call me Master and Lord; and ye say well; for so I am. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done. Verily verily, I say unto you, the servant is not greater than his Lord." And as we gaze on that blessed One and study to show ourselves approved unto God, as we see His perfect path, we must praise the grace that would take us up in all our weakness and failure, to call us to walk in His steps, to labour in the power of His yoke, to have before us the promise of the joy of our Lord for service well done. We must be diligent to learn of Him, patient to sit at His feet and discover all His will, strong in His strength to undertake that to which He sends us, careful to do only that which He would have us do, and with a single eye, a single motive, a single heart to honour Him, our Lord, Who paid so great a price for us that we might be able to glorify God in our body and in our spirit, which are God's (1 Cor. VI, 20).

SEPARATION TO GOD.

READ NUMBERS 6.

What is presented so vividly before us in this type of the Nazarite is the character of our separation to God.

(*Verse 2*).

Before the Nazarite here is told to separate from anything at all he is represented as one who is separated unto the Lord. What is to maintain him in such a peculiar path in the wilderness? His heart is to be engaged with the God of Israel.

We are inclined in our day to pride ourselves on what we have separated from but what really matters is our

appreciation of the One to Whom we are separated. For are we not children of God by faith in Christ Jesus? And "not our own but bought with a price"? Were not the Hebrews exhorted to go forth unto Him?

(*Verses 3 and 4*).

God instructed the Nazarite to drink no wine and to eat nothing that came from the vine. Was it wrong to drink wine? That is not the point here. It was not in keeping with the character of his separation to God. Wine, we know, is often in scripture a picture of earthly joy, but was the Nazarite to find his joy in earthly things? Was he not rather to joy in the God to whom he was separated?

Christians often come and ask, "Do you think it is wrong to do so-and-so? I see no harm in it." Very often our pathway is not so much a matter of right and wrong but of "Is it in keeping with the character of our separation?" What have I to do with the pleasures and joys of earth when I am separated to God? "We joy in God" says the scripture, and we sing "In Thy presence we are happy." The Lord Jesus Christ Himself is our portion. Can we want more? God has nothing more to give us in eternity even. We sing in the gospel "Now none but Christ can satisfy," but do we really mean it? It is certainly blessedly true.

(*Verses 5*).

It was obvious to anyone seeing a Nazarite in public that he was separated to God. "He shall be holy and shall let the locks of his hair grow." Of the early Christians, too, it was said "They took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus." Should not the character of our separation to God mark us out immediately?

(*Verses 6-12*).

The Nazarite, too, was commanded to have no contact with death. To touch the dead body of a near relative spelt defilement. Even an accidental touch made him unclean and the days of his separation counted for nothing. He had to go right back to the beginning. He was separated to the living God and what could such an one have to do with death?

When we look around do we not see death and decay? What then have we to do with the world who are separated to the living God?

(*Verses 13-20*).

When the Nazarite came to bring an offering he brought nothing of himself, only what spoke to God of Christ. So, too, when we come to worship, we bring Christ, His Person and His Work. We sing "'Tis the Church triumphant singing, Worthy the Lamb," and anticipate the day when we shall by His own act of power be entirely separated to Him, surround Him, and serve Him in worship.

IF THE TRUMPET MAKE AN UNCERTAIN SOUND.

We want to see a plain decision for the Lord Jesus Christ, the positive owning of Him in all things, the linking on of everything to Him Who is our Saviour and Lord, so that He may be glorified and all men constrained to see that there is, after all, unmistakeable reality in having to do with the name of Jesus. We have little idea of the effect which would be produced on the minds of men were all Christians only led to connect all they do, and all they do not do, with the name of Jesus, and with His authority as Lord. Generally speaking, people will resolve all questions of religious associations, social habits, and domestic concerns into a simple matter of opinion, taste, prejudice, or predilection. Hence the importance of being able to refer all to a "Thus saith the Lord." We have no right to have an opinion or a will of our own. The Word of the Lord is to be our opinion, His authority our will, His will our rule. We ought to be able to refer all our ways, our habits, and our associations to Jesus as Lord, to His authority, and to His example. "Thus saith the Lord" should be the great regulating and governing motto in everything, be it great or small. We should not go on for one hour in anything, no matter how attractive, how plausible, or how expedient it may be, for which we have not authority in the revealed will of God. C.H.M.

The great thing is lack of interest. If every person present in the morning came themselves and brought an unsaved person in the evening a difference would soon be seen—

The question of Bible classes, young men's meetings, etc..

also requires some emphasis these days: It keeps coming back to the need for personal interest and a great deal of hard and prayerful work to prepare the way for such activities. The army conditions have taught us in a measure to "endure hardness," and I trust we shall not easily slip back to the old ways of regarding everything except a weekly attendance at the room as "too much trouble." I was considerably awakened when on leave last to note quite half a dozen young chaps I have known some time, who one feels only wait for a gracious approach to come along to the room or, if that is too frightening, to something less formal. May the Lord give us each a fuller idea of our responsibility and the needed grace and wisdom to support it.

SCRIPTURE DEFINITIONS: SIN.

Adam, in innocency, gave allegiance to God. This was God's right as Creator over the creature. The relationship being right, Adam was kept, knowing and observing, good only.

When Adam listened to Satan he gave him obedience deliberately, for he was not deceived (1 Tim. II, 14). It was an act of rebellion against God, and had three main consequences. Firstly his eyes were opened and Adam knew both good and evil. Secondly, having given to the devil the place that belonged to God, he lost the power to follow the good that he still had the ability to recognise. (See Rom. VII, 15 *et seq.*). Thirdly he became a fallen creature; one in whom was the seed of death, the wages of sin; who must both himself die, and must bequeath a like inheritance to his seed, themselves born sinners.

This "body of sin" is therefore dependent upon birth under the headship, or of the race of, Adam. The proof of its continued existence with us is the continued presence of death. The only future before the sinner is to pay the wages due to sin; death. "In Adam all die" (1 Cor. XV, 22).

By believing in the Lord Jesus Christ we are born again; this time not of flesh and blood, which would associate us with Adam's headship, but of the will of God (Jn. I, 13). But we are also associated with Christ in His death; in Him is paid the penalty due to sin, and so we escape from

under its dominion (Röm. VI). For the believer all association with Adam's race has been broken by death; if this were not so, sin's wages would still have to be paid, but our life is now of God. The power and dominion of sin has no more claim over us, and we therefore are required and exhorted to live in the power of the new life imparted to us, yielding now our members "servants to righteousness unto holiness."

NEWS OF THE BRETHREN.

T. E. NOALL gives us this record: I served at Gloucester for a year or more, when I went on a merchant ship as an A.A. gunner. The following months were of great interest to me. I visited West Africa, Egypt, India, South Africa, etc., and whilst in Egypt I was able to remember the Lord in His death, and to meet some of our Egyptian brethren in Alexandria, where I spent some eleven weeks. On our homeward journey we were torpedoed soon after leaving South Africa, which resulted in our spending eleven days and nights in an open lifeboat. During these terrible days I experienced a wonderful nearness of the presence of the Lord, and I was able also to testify for Him. On the eleventh day land was sighted, and after six hours' hard rowing we landed in West Africa, and after being there for four days were taken to Cape Town. I was there in hospital for six weeks, and was then put on a hospital ship and brought home to England. From this time until the date of my discharge in November, 1942, I was in and out of various hospitals suffering from the effects of the torpedoing and the experiences of the open boat.

C. MARTIN says: The work at Redruth continues to be blessed too, though in rather a different form now that the forces in the district have largely cleared out. I hear there has been blessing at Exeter, and while at home we have been greatly encouraged by the increased interest shown in reading meetings and one or two being received into fellowship. Sunday Schools continue a problem with the return of so many evacuee scholars. There is great need of prayer for this important work, more important than ever, I believe, as a result of present conditions.

W. H. V. BLEWETT tells us that while he enjoyed happy fellowship in Italy, he has now "been home just over

three weeks, and it is such a joy, and indeed a blessing, to be amongst the assembly again. When I look back over my years of service in the army, and see where the hand of God has led me, I have indeed a lot to be thankful for."

C. W. KEMP is enjoying the discomforts of a camp under construction at Dorchester, and looking forward to release.

R. WARING is still very much on his own in Brunswick, where there appears to be considerable opportunity. Our prayers are needed for the work there, and for his strengthening and encouragement.

A. DIMERY has sent a note to tell us of his return to this country, and records, though without detail, how much there is to thank Him for.

MANY OF OUR BRETHREN are now released from the different forms of national service in which they have been found. We must all surely turn to praise the God Who has brought us all through these times of difficulty and danger, and Who, beyond all this, has taught us more of His blest ways, and made more fragrant the preciousness of Christ. But we still need to pray for each other, and to pray the more fervently as these evil days draw on to the Lord's return for us, that we may not shun the reproach of the Cross, nor put off the yoke of the meek and lowly Christ, but that we may be found as those who come up out of a wilderness, leaning only upon the Beloved (Song of Sol., VIII 5).

BRIEF OUTLINES: NUMBERS.

Numbers is largely a book of failure. It sets before us a picture of the children of Israel in their order, the nation as God would have them; at the end it shows them ready for the inheritance; but between is a story of rebellion and disobedience, of failure at every point.

The first ten chapters display Israel in their Godly order, the sight that Balaam described when God put His words into his mouth. They are numbered, either for war or for the Levitical service, for it was impossible to be a healthy Israelite without falling into one class or the other. Their

order follows, both on the march and in camp, each centred around the tabernacle, with the service of which Chapters III and IV are concerned. The camp is cleansed, and after the declaration of complete separation to the Lord as seen in the Nazarite, the Lord's blessing follows. Called thus as Jehovah's people, the princes respond with willing offerings, and in Chapters IX and X Jehovah shows us His full provision for His people as they move on into their inheritance.

But after this beautiful and orderly scene failure occupies the stage. The weakness of the flesh is exposed and judged in Chapter XI, to be immediately followed by rebellion against God, firstly in the complaint against Moses, then in the evil report on the land. While judgment has to fall, there are two reassuring pictures; of Moses accepted in intercession, and in Chapter XV of the grace of God that could still anticipate their settlement in the land. Rebellion against the priesthood follows, and, after judgment, Jehovah Himself justifies Aaron and confirms the service of the Levites.

There follow in Chapters XX and XXI scenes in which ties with the past are broken, in which failure again appears, but also where definite progress is made towards the land, and victories are enjoyed over their enemies. But this somewhat mixed picture is followed by God's complete vindication of the nation before men, where in the history of Balaam man's conspiracy and obstinacy are made to bring out the fulness of Jehovah's blessing and the consequent judgment of the nations. But sin in connection with Moab emphasises that this jewel is of God's grace alone, and failure sums up in Chapter XXV the conclusion of this section.

The last division shows us Israel ready to enter the land and to take possession of their inheritance. Full preparations are made before the event, and rejoicing completes them before Israel are called into the fight with Midian. But—foretaste of the power of Jehovah with them as they go into Canaan—the spoils are divided, and in the last five chapters of the book the portion of Reuben and Gad, the limits of the inheritance and final principles are settled. Everything is ready for them to go in and take possession.

THE SEVEN CHURCHES.

3—PERGAMOS AND THYATIRA.

The tone changes again in Pergamos, and the Lord's judicial character is emphasised as "He that hath the sharp two-edged sword." Some phrases are most striking and command our attention. This assembly "dwelt" where Satan's seat was; the word "dwelt" in Scripture provides a most instructive study and particularly in Revelation it signifies a "sphere of interest." Thus the "earth dwellers" are those whose interest and affections concern only the earth; Lot "dwelt in Sodom" (Gen. XIV, 12); David hated the thought of "dwelling in the tents of wickedness," and longed to "dwell in the House of the Lord" (Psa. LXXXIV). The prophets lamented that Israel "dwelt among the heathen" (Lam. I, 3), and tried to shake them from the lethargy that caused them to "dwell with the daughter of Bābylon" (Zech. II, 7). So here we find professing Christians dwelling, being at home, in a place where Satan dwelt and was at home, indeed where his throne was. It is true they still held fast Christ's name and had not denied the faith, but how cold such a profession can be! "The doctrine of Balaam" is referred to several times (Jude 11; 2 Pet. II, 15) always as regards error within the house of God, introduced by false teachers "by reason of whom the way of truth is evil spoken of." We have Balaam's history in Numbers XXII-XXIV, and can see in Chapter XXV the ruin he caused by distracting the children of Israel from their separate character. We need to guard constantly against this error. It starts in unfaithfulness and involves joining in the world's so-called worship. So James condemns those who seek the friendship of the world (Jas. IV, 4). How can we attend the world's "temples" without being connected with and defiled by its idolatrous worship of pleasure, money, power? This is the truth pressed in 1 Cor. X. At the first the saints met together as members of the one Body, and their breaking bread, partaking of the one loaf, showed this. To join in the world's worship involves fellowship with it and its objects, provoking the Lord to jealousy. Thank God the truth still stands in spite of all failure; all true believers

are still members of His Body, and so we may meet in His name alone showing our fellowship in the breaking of bread, -apart from all the mixture of Christendom.

“The doctrine of the Nicolaitans” (mentioned also to Ephesus) is taken to be the spirit of ecclesiasticism which has its rise at this time. At the first it appears to have been strongly resisted, even Ephesus with all its lack refusing it. But as the true heavenly nature of the church is lost sight of, these errors find easier entrance. In Pergamos then, we find the sorrowful effect of Christianity becoming popular with the world. How true are the Lord’s words “Woe unto you when men shall speak well of you.” Notice, too, that all are not accused of agreeing with these doctrines, but “thou hast those that hold the doctrine.” There is responsibility of exercising discipline resting upon the assembly, and while this should be only after the most loving remonstrance and sincere endeavours to convince the teachers of their errors, yet the responsibility remains, and any such allowed are “spots in your feasts.” The assembly has lost sight of its heavenly calling and character ; they have truly adopted Balaam’s error “for reward”—and what a reward ! How our idea of values changes when we lose sight of that blessed hope. And there the visible church has stayed in great measure. We have still to-day great professing religions allied with the world and government, not only the Establishment, but many Free Churches being quite at home in the world and manifesting no other character. Also the “doctrine of the Nicolaitans” is rife in such systems and each has its own priesthood or clergy ordained by man. It is noteworthy that when the truth of Christ’s second coming, among other important truths, was recovered, these errors of Balaam and the Nicolaitans were brought to light and rejected by those to whom the truth was revealed. How it behoves us then to assure ourselves of these truths and to spread them abroad among believers still ignorant as to their mighty import ; that our hope is heavenly ; we are pilgrims and strangers here ; that all the saints are one and should gather on that basis and to the name of the Lord ; that the Spirit Himself has authority and gives gifts in the assembly.

In Balaam’s day, Phinchas’ bold and faithful action stayed

the judgment, but in Pergamos there is no such revival, and from the days of Constantine to the present day the professing church is quite at home on earth, hand in glove with its politics, ideals, and practice. From then on there has been and is only a remnant walking in truth.

How needful the closing message ; our sustenance is not of the world's providing but "the hidden manna," the true Bread from heaven. We have no connection of citizenship in the world, but a new name which "none but His loved ones know."

The errors seen in Pergamos come into full view in Thyatira. Balaam's doctrine started with the love of money and we find historically the rise and consolidation of Romanism was one of the most corrupt periods of Church history. The message addressed to such a company is from "the Son of God, Who hath His eyes as a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass." Again an Old Testament history is alluded to as showing the nature of evil ; a man's heart does not change, though evil may take different outward forms. The worldly alliance begun in Pergamos is personified in Jezebel, who was herself a heathen princess. Ahab's connection with her is spoken of as one of his greatest sins (1 Kings XVI, 31). The outward show was pompous and attractive with devotion and works (no Romanist can be too devoted in his observances), but within it was the worship of idols. The ruthlessness and unscrupulousness of such a system can be gathered from the Book of Kings, where Jezebel's life is recorded ; anyone who crossed her path was disposed of, as Naboth. Such was the record of Rome in the Dark Ages and, though in God's mercy somewhat veiled in this country to-day, still we see a little of the spirit of it in countries where it still holds power. How earnest our prayers should be for the Lord's people in those lands, that they may be sustained and that the truth may be proclaimed. There is no sign of repentance and it appears from v. 22 that the system is now beyond hope, although there is still repentance for the individual who has joined in its unfaithfulness. Yet the sad part is that to-day we find other professing bodies seeking favour with Rome, and we realise we are indeed in the last days with the professing church, ripening for judgment as shown in

Chaps. XVII and XVIII. The judgment of this adulterous system is indeed solemn; all shall understand that the Lord searcheth the heart and gives to everyone according to his works. Let every true saint of God leave such an association. "Come ye out of her My people and be not partaker of her sins."

Such is the outstanding character of Thyatira, but here there is a faithful remnant, some who "have not this doctrine and have not known the depths of Satan." To them there is encouragement, and as ever, the bright and blessed hope is brought before them to nerve their effort. "That which thou hast, hold fast till I come." Note, there is no command to put right the many wrongs; opportunity for repentance is passed as far as the profession is concerned; but there is a command to hold fast the truth committed to us. The power of evil will not always be unchecked; it is only "till I come," and then will be manifested true values as the Lord sees them. Rome has had power over the nations, has it in measure to-day, will have it in a coming day, but the very nations will turn on her and be her destroyers. The true Church, however, will exercise government over the earth under its glorious Head when Rome and all professing religion is a thing of the past. And this is not of our merit but of His love; we learn even now that song "Thou art worthy . . . for Thou wast slain and hast redeemed to God by Thy blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation; and made them unto our God kings and priests, and they shall reign over the earth" (Ch. V, 9-10). The reference to the "morning star" may be connected with 2 Pet. I, 19, as a present appreciation of the truth of His coming; or we may think of it as a promise; the Lord Himself is the bright and morning star, arising before the "Sun of Righteousness," and suggesting the two phases of His coming; first for His own and then as Sun of Righteousness at His appearing with healing in His wings for Israel (Mal. IV).

FRAGMENTS.

May we all be found clinging fast to Paul's persuasions: "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that

he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (2 Tim. I, 12).

"For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. VIII, 38-39).

Where is the voice of the prophet making the Word of God heard in the conscience?

Teachers we have had, who have given us back through the grace of God many a long lost truth. But the ministry of yesterday is not that of to-day. Yesterday, ignorance was the prevailing sin; for this, teachers were needed. To-day, it is deadness of conscience; for this a prophet's voice is required.

Truth, that cost those who dug it out years of prayer and fasting, can now be clearly apprehended by the perusal of a single tract, without the least exercise of heart or conscience. The result is appalling.

Laying hold of a truth and being laid hold of by one are two vastly different things. Shall we not cry to God for true prophets, men of godly lives, who are gifted to speak solemnly, searchingly, and unsparingly—who can waken the long slumbering conscience; men who will be content to call things by their true names, and who will not flinch in exposing "in the light" that hidden corruption that loves darkness?

Let none say that love forbids such an exercise of gift. Love calls for it. None loved like the Master, and yet none ever spoke to the conscience like Him, who was not only full of grace but of truth.

Such a ministry is greatly needed. Only that which is false and unreal could suffer, and surely no heart would regret this. Is our reputation dearer to our hearts than God's glory? We have speakers and writers, but where is this ministry to be found? Is it silent through the fear of man?

The Lord will hear prayer. Let every true heart to whom His honour is dear, cry to Him to raise up in our midst, in conscience searching power, this missing ministry.

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