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ALL THINGS OF GOD."

ADDRESSES
DELIVERED IN LONDON
OCTOBER 1885.

BY W. T. TURPIN.

"ALL THINGS OF GOD."

BEING

SIX ADDRESSES

Delivered in London, October, 1885,

BY

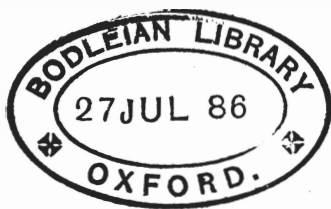
W. T. TURPIN.



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PREFACE.

THESE *spoken* words, uttered in how great weakness, no one is more conscious of than the speaker, are now committed to *print*.

Those who have had experience of it, are well aware how difficult it is to reduce an entirely extemporaneous address to the style of writing demanded in a printed page ; this must be remembered as to anything unusual in these addresses, to the deliberate character of that which is conveyed simply by means of writing.

With regard to the subjects treated, no words could possibly exaggerate their importance or their blessedness ; in proportion to this, stands out the feebleness of all the servant's efforts, however helped in grace, to give expression to them.

The *object* of the preacher, in preaching, was to minister Christ so as to reach conscience and heart ; this he desired above all, as he diligently sought to avoid all that would minister to the mere mind and intellect.

May the Lord, in His sovereign goodness, bless these feeble utterances to souls ; this is looked for, as

it is remembered that He it is who "hath chosen the *foolish* things of the world to confound the wise, . . . the *weak* things of the world to confound the mighty, and *base* things of the world, and things which are *despised*, . . . and things which *are not*, to bring to nought things that are ; that no flesh should glory in his presence."

W. T. T.

Tunbridge Wells.



THE TRUE GRACE OF GOD.

1 PETER v. 6-10; HEBREWS ix. 11-15;
HEBREWS vii. 23-25.

THERE are three great facts, three grand realities, which are unfolded to us, beloved brethren, in these three scriptures.

The first is God's unfailing grace, and that, remember, presented in an epistle which is especially the wilderness epistle, which deals with all the ups and downs of our history as we go through the desert of this world; our changeable history and our failing history too, we may say, because it is just in that part of our life where the failings, and the haltings, and the slippings, are liable to come out; and therefore it was suitable in a very especial way for us to have alongside, and with all that, as the resource for it, and as the comfort for our hearts in connection with it, God's unfailing grace. And hence He is

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spoken of in that beautiful way, as “the God of all grace.”

The second subject, is the eternal efficacy of Christ's blood, in all its precious consequences and in its own nature. It has the infinite value of Him, whose blood it is, attached to it. It was by the eternal Spirit He offered Himself to God. By that offering He secured “eternal redemption,” “for us,” no doubt ; yet it is of real importance to remember that those words are put in italics in the scripture, shewing that they form no part of the sacred text ; they no doubt express what is true, still here the sense is clouded instead of being improved by their insertion—it is eternal redemption which is the issue of it. And then, further, it is eternal inheritance that is the purchase of it. The eternal Spirit was the One by whom He offered Himself without spot to God ; through that offering He obtained eternal redemption, and secured eternal inheritance.

And then the last subject, beloved friends, is the continuous intercession and advocacy of the great High Priest. He lives for ever, and is able, because He lives for ever, “to save to the uttermost,” which does not mean that He is able to save our souls from either the consequences of our sins or from the effects of sin ; for you will notice that it is connected with His intercession ; because He continueth ever, He hath a priest-

hood that does not pass on from father to son, like the Jewish priesthood, but He abides and remains a priest for ever in heaven ; and therefore, always living to intercede, He is able to save to the uttermost ; that is to say, He is able to carry right through, on to the end, all that come to God by Him. His intercession is a thing commensurate with the existence of His priesthood ; He lives for ever, and therefore He intercedes for ever.

Now just let me say a word upon each of those three subjects this evening ; and may the Lord fit the subjects to the needs of each one here.

We begin where we must always begin, and indeed, I was going to say, where we must always end. We begin with grace ; we go on with grace and we end with grace that never ends ; we end with it, yet it never ends. But it is just the very thing that I suppose our hearts never really get to the full extent of—the marvellous grace of God in its fulness, in its divine comprehensions. It is a blessed basis of all the actings of God, “the God of all grace.” It is the eternal source and spring of everything that we get from Him, blessed be His name. There is a great difference, as it seems to me, between grace and mercy ; both belonging to God. He is “rich in mercy,” but He is also “the God of all grace.” And I suppose the difference between the two is this, that mercy is that which belongs to God’s own

character and nature, especially and peculiarly, because if He acts on the principle of mercy He is shut up to Himself; and what, may I ask, could be more blessed for you and me than that? If He acts on that principle of mercy, then God (we may say it again with reverence), blessed be His name, is shut up to Himself.

Mercy, then, is that great principle in His nature which specially and peculiarly marks Him off; but grace is *the ground* or basis upon which He acts. Mercy is in God Himself, and grace is the principle of all His actings towards us: that is to say, He acts towards us on the ground of grace, in contrast with acting towards us on the ground of law, or of any responsibility of ours entering into it. He acts towards us in grace; grace it is which underlies every part of it, the foundation of it, the great and precious platform of everything that has come to us from God Himself. Hence, He is "the God of *all* grace." And, beloved friends, from the first moment that we had to do with Him, on to the very end of our journey through the wilderness here, it is grace and mercy too. Mercy we have, as we have to do with Him who is rich in mercy, but grace is the divine basis of it all; and therefore, He is "the God of all grace." And for poor, wretched, feeble, failing things, such as we are, nothing could be more comforting and sustaining to our souls than that

great truth. You can never get to the end of it. And what we shall find is this, even that it is the very thing that we are least well established in. Strange as it may appear, we seem to be far better exponents and expounders of law than we are of grace. The principle of law, somehow or other, is akin to our nature.

Grace is not indigenous to any of us. It is not in any one of us naturally. Not one of us has got the sense of what grace is, by nature ; and even after we have found Him, or rather been found of Him in His grace, and have tasted it, and proved His goodness, and been saved by His grace, and lived on His grace, and been carried through His grace, and supported through it here, how little we have drunk in of it, how little and small a sense we have of it ; though we have proved it so often, and so unfailingly been ministered to of it by God Himself, see what a poor impress that grace has made upon us ! Hence it is that the apostle, in that first passage in Peter, when he is marking out the wilderness journey, and speaking of humbling ourselves, and resisting Satan, and all that belongs to us, while passing through present scenes, where we are tested and tried, sets forth God as the God of all grace. It is well to bear in mind the character of the desert. We are at school in this world, it is the place of our education, testing, and trial ;

heaven is the place of our home and rest; but here God is leading us and sifting us, and treating us in a variety of ways, individually and collectively, because our individual history comes under it, just as much as our collective history comes under it. He tests His people individually, and He tests His people collectively; but then, beloved friends, whilst He does this, the apostle brings this out so comfortingly for our souls; he says, Notwithstanding all, notwithstanding the kind of journey we have to expect through such a world, and what we are subject to here, still He is the God of all grace; and grace is the great spring and motive power of everything that we receive from His hand as we pass through present scenes. He does not deal with us on any other ground. If He comes to discipline us, it is on that ground; if He gives us a blow, it is on that ground; if we need the stripes, we get them on that ground; it is grace that fetches the whole thing out—it is not law, it is grace. And, beloved friends, that is an immense comfort for our hearts, because it is His own blessed principle of acting in everything, for He is the God of all grace.

And mark, He has called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus. He has called us to that glory; but then, between that glory, which springs, so to speak, out of His grace, there is a road along of suffering; “after that ye have

suffered awhile." You must go through the mill, so to speak, to reach the home; you must be subjected to the rack, and to pressure, and to difficulty, and all the rest of it, but after you have gone through the suffering, and by way of the suffering—after you have suffered awhile, not an unlimited time, but of limited duration, "after that ye have suffered a while, himself make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." Now nothing is more comforting for our souls than that. It is the end and issue of the whole thing; and what could be so wonderfully cheering to the heart? It is not progress, and it is not the mode of operation by which God secures this thing, it is the end. What is the issue which is in His mind? "Eternal glory!" Because we are looked at here as passing through the wilderness, this wretched world that was once the Egypt of our lusts, where we had our resources and our independences—for that is what characterises this world, we had our resources in it away from God, and we were independent of God; we had all that belonged to this world, over which Satan is the god and prince. But now, rescued from it, it is a desert, where we have God Himself, and we go through this world with God. It is the same world that it was physically; it is not changed yet, it is the same world, in that sense, precisely as it was

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when it was the Egypt of our lusts ; but its whole character is changed to us as Christians. It was the Egypt where we gratified ourselves with everything that belonged to it. Now it has become a desert, where we have in it nothing but God, and, beloved friends, where we are uncommonly well off in having nothing but God ; so that, instead of being commiserated with, or any one pitying us, for having nothing but God, we are to be immensely congratulated. We should indeed be the objects of great compassion and pity, if we wanted anything else besides God ; but having nothing but Him is part of the glory of the way in which God leads us on. We have the God of all grace as our stay, we have suffering for awhile, and all that is connected with it, as our path, but then the issue is to "make you perfect," perfect through all the things you pass through, and by them.

And, beloved friends, this is where God leads us in His grace, I do not say to understand, but He does lead us, in His grace, to accept the blessedness of the way by which He subjects us to all these things, and by which He trains us through all these things. And when we reach that glory by-and-by and really are in it, and look back over the whole way, we shall be able to see that there was not one sorrow too many, and not one burden too heavy, and not one pressure too great,

that He did not break our backs, nor break our hearts; He never does the one or the other; but He does subjugate and refuse the will; He refuses it, and leads us to abnegate everything of it that adheres to us; but, as to our hearts, God comforts them; and, as to our backs, the weariness and feebleness of the way to which we are subjected, only give Him occasion to uphold us, and that is what our souls need to get the sense of, and thus of His unfailing grace.

Think of that other instance—and a wonderful one it is—a small thing, if you like, but it is the small things that shew what is in the heart of God. Think of the blessed God Himself, long before the day of Christianity, and the revelation of His own character in the Lord Jesus Christ, and His own name, and the relationship we are brought into; think of God saying to His poor servant, who was in a pet, and who really got disappointed, not only with himself, but with God, and wanted to be removed out of this scene, “the journey is too great for thee:” and therefore every provision is made for his need; the way was long, and the blessed God, as it were, saying, I have consideration for your frame. Would to God, beloved friends, we had the sense of the delicacy and affectionate care of our God and Father, that He can think about us, in His grace, as to everything, small and great;

and, if you will allow me to say so, if we all had the sweet sense of this in our souls, we should not be so uneasily anxious as to what relates to ourselves, leading us so incessantly to think about ourselves. He thinks about us, thinks about the journey, "too great for thee," thinks as to whether our bodies are equal to the strain. "Arise, and eat, for the journey is too great for thee:" as if He had said, "I have a watchful care for your body in it, I am thinking you need more sustenance; I have provided for you, and there it is." I give that as an instance, and you may find hundreds of instances of the same kind in scripture, of the wonderful care and provision of God's grace in everything, small and great, down here, as we pass through this world. We have the suffering, and there is a need for us to have it; God has no other way of lifting us up but by humbling us. His purpose and object is to lift us up, but the way by which He does it, is to subject us to the suffering and the testing, to "settle" us through it, to "stablish" us through it, to "make you perfect" through it—"after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect stablish, strengthen, settle you."

Well now, it does seem to me this is a wonderful comfort for our hearts. For even if we fail a thousand times over, poor things as we are—though God forbid I should utter a word

in excuse or extenuation of it, for there is no excuse for failure—yet, when we do fail, what would become of us, if we had not to do with this “God of all grace”? We should get into despair. Thank God, there is no reason to despair. And why? Because we have to do with a God that is unlimited in the resources of His grace. And it is not a question, beloved friends, of that grace being applied to us, when we go on all right; but it is an unspeakable relief to the heart, to know that there is grace for us in God in every circumstance. God’s grace is unfailing and unlimited; it is not at all, in the very least, that there is found any desert on our part, nor is it that we are found as being what we ought to be. I fully admit we should be so. I repeat it, there is no excuse for failure, either individually or corporately; there is no excuse for starting aside, or for anything of the kind; but still, notwithstanding all, above all the shortcoming, and through all the breaking down, God is “the God of all grace.”

Now let me give you one other instance. Take Peter as an illustration of this principle. Here was a man who was warned by the Lord as to that denial beforehand, solemnly warned, warned because of the self-confidence that was in his heart; that is to say, the root of all Peter’s failure was this, that he

trusted *his love* to Christ. Do you ever trust your love to Christ? If you do, you will, as is said, go to the wall, even as did Peter. He trusted his own love to Christ; it was his own affection, his own love, that he had confidence in. And it was not that he did not love his Lord; he did love Him, yea, better than any one on earth; and herein lay the bitterness of his denial. I do not believe that there was one whom Peter loved so tenderly as he loved his Lord, but he trusted the affection that was in his own heart towards Christ, and every single thing that was connected with that went to pieces with Peter. And what Peter was brought out to at the end was this, he was brought out to trust that blessed, precious love of Christ that was the only unfailing and unchanging love that was ever known: to trust Christ's love, not his own, to trust Christ's interest, Christ's care, and Christ's unchanging, blessed heart; that was what Peter had to learn. His confidence was in his own affection for his Lord, and therefore he broke down.

But the part of his history that I am referring to now is this, that after he was restored, and the depths of the failure were reached by Christ Himself, and his moral being searched, as in John xxi., and the root of the denial manifested, and the blessed, skilful hand of Christ was, as it

were, laid on the very sore ; for it was not merely that he was restored in his conscience, but he was brought to judge his sin in its depths—what did the Lord do ? Restored him to everything ; restored him to the place of a martyr, restored him to the place of a follower, restored him to the place of a shepherd of His Jewish sheep and lambs.

It is sadly solemn, and ought to be heart-breaking to us, beloved friends, that it should be said, as I have myself heard it said, and that not many days ago, that there is very little hope of any one being restored or forgiven by the Lord's people if they fall. And I know perfectly, it is not in any one of our hearts by nature, if a man break down, if a man fail (I am using the words that are commonly employed), to have such person put back again, even as Peter was ; why, beloved friends, it is in perfect contrast with our whole nature ; we should shrink from any such thing, we should cherish an everlasting suspicion about that person. But then, that is not what Christ did. That was not Christ's grace to a man that had denied Him three times over, cursing and swearing ; one too, who had been warned of it ; that man, I repeat, was put back into the position of a shepherd of Christ's sheep and lambs. That is the manner of Christ's grace ; that is God's grace, to call that man to be a

follower of Christ, and to say to him, "Follow Me;" and not only so, but to say to him, "You shall be even a martyr for Me, and shall have the path of a martyr; that path that you essayed to pursue and walk in, in your flesh and natural energy, you shall tread it now as a restored, broken man." He restored him to everything; there was not a single position that pertained to Peter, that he was not restored to: that is grace.

And now, I pray you, mark this—and I know it so well, because one is made to know the workings of one's poor heart within one—it was not that Peter was to be watchful. Now I do know that when souls are brought back, when the Lord in His wonderful restoring grace brings back the soul after failure, or any other turning aside, how earnestly we seek to press upon such a person, the following: "Now you will have to be very watchful and very careful, and walk very guardedly;" and so forth. I do not deny it, it is perfectly true; but oh! beloved friends, do let us try and occupy people's souls with the *producing* power, God's grace, and not with themselves. You never can secure a person that has failed, from further failure by pressing upon him what he is to do; there is only one source and spring for lifting us up or keeping us up—it is the grace of God. I quite admit there should be watchfulness, I quite admit there should be care,

there should be diligence, but there is no power to keep or restore in all the watchfulness, or in all the care. And I maintain more than that, that the more His grace is in my heart, it is productive of the watchfulness, it is formative of the care needed, it is causative of the diligence called for. You must have a spring to produce those things; and it is God's grace that is the source of watchfulness, it is God's grace that is the spring of care. The more my soul has drunk in the sense of that grace, that unchanging, unalterable grace of God, the more diligent, and careful, and zealous would I walk with reference to everything that was before me. Whereas, if you press upon souls, as I have often heard it, that unless they walk watchfully, and unless they are very zealous and very guarded, and all the rest of it, they will fall again; you are occupying them with produced things, which have no power to produce themselves. You must have a spring to call those things into exercise, and that spring is God's grace; and therefore you can see what a blessed thing it is to imbibe this into our souls, that He is "the God of all grace"; grace to us as sinners, grace to bring us back when we have wandered, and grace to keep us. How is one to be kept? Is it not grace that keeps? And have not we often sung, and rightly too, that beautiful verse—

“ 'Twas grace that kept me to this day,
And will not let me go.”

What is it has ever kept any one but grace ?
What is it has ever saved any one, but grace ?
What is it has ever restored any one, but grace ?
Nothing. And therefore I delight to dilate on
the subject ; but I cannot get to the end of it.
Look at the wonderful field it is. Look at the
many sides of the glory of it. It is impossible
to get to the full extent of it, this marvellous,
precious, wondrous grace of God. “ The God of
all grace ;” “ the grace of God ;” but the grace of
God is the grace of Him that is the God of all
grace. God is the God of every kind of grace.
Oh, may the Lord impress our hearts more with
the sense of it, because that is what will keep us,
and guard us as we go along. Law never could
do it ; it never could accomplish it. The law is
just as bad for a saint, as it is for a sinner. I
suppose we should all admit law was a rule of
death for the sinner ; it is just as much a rule of
death for the saint. And you will find that the
only principle which wears well every day, as for
the sinner, so for the saint as well, is the grace of
God. Grace is the great source, the great spring,
the great principle of every single thing from
God to us.

Well now, let me say one word on the second

subject—I need not speak long about it—and that is, the preciousness of the efficacy, the eternal efficacy of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Because, observe, it is in the power and virtue of that blood that we are put in relationship with God. And a wonderful thing it is to think of, beloved friends, that every soul in this company to-night, who through grace has been brought to God, is before God, mark you, is before God in a double way—before God, *in Christ*. I know of no other footing to stand upon before God, no other platform to stand upon before God, except in Christ. But I am before God in Christ in all the eternal blessedness and efficacy of His blood. I stand before God in the acceptability of the Person who shed the blood; and I stand before God in His own appreciation and measurement of that blood; it is not our sense of its value, it is God's. None but the blessed God Himself could appreciate and estimate in its full efficacy the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is God's value of the blood; it is what God has found in that blood; it is what God sees in the blood. And therefore the relationship is unchangeable; must be, beloved friends. If that is the basis of it, it must be.

Does the blood lose its value? Does the blood change its value? Is it more valuable at one time than another? Is it more efficacious this year and less efficacious next year? You know

well, thank God, it is not. You know full well that the precious blood of Christ has an eternal value in God's estimation. And therefore it is said, and it is so precious and blessed, that verse that is so often used, so often on our lips, and I trust as well, fixed in our hearts—I am now thinking of the Epistle of John, that blessed word of our God in 1 John i. Oh, what heart can conceive, or lip adequately convey its full, deep, eternal blessedness, namely, “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.” He is speaking of what that blood is in its own actual nature before God; and what is that? That it cleanses; that is to say, that is what it effects, that is its abstract nature. As poison kills and food nourishes, so that blood cleanses. It is not the continual application, as some would in their mistaken zeal assert. The perpetual application of the blood would be the destruction of its efficacy; no surer way to cast a slight, even though unwittingly, upon the efficacy of the blood of Christ, than to speak of it as continually applied: hence to say here, “is cleansing,” meaning thereby as continually applied, is to reduce it to the level of the blood of bulls and goats. But when you speak of it in its own blessed nature as God does, and say that “the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin,” it is simply unfolding it as God does there. And so blessed

and so full is it, that the believer stands before God in the acceptability, and nearness, and dearness to God, of Him who shed His blood, and in all the value of that blood as God measures it.

Now what a blessed, living reality that is! Here then, is a basis that never changes, here is a relationship that never can be broken, here is a place in Christ before God, that knows no variation nor shadow of turning. The precious blood of the Christ of God in its efficacy, is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever;" that is, to the age of ages. What He has accomplished in His grace by the shedding of His blood, puts us, in all the unchangeableness of its own blessedness, before God, according to God's measure of it. And it is an immense thing for our souls, to know the ground upon which we are, and that it is on no less a footing than this our God has set us. And I am assured nothing could be more important, for every one of us, than to be established in all the truth and reality of it by Himself. And bear in mind it is not *our* taking a place. We have no right to take a place; but if God puts us in such a place before Him, can we exaggerate its blessedness, or make too much of the grace that bestows it upon us? Or would it be possible to exalt too highly the changeless efficacy of Christ's blood, and thus the glory of the One that shed it?

Oh, beloved brethren, how much the truth of God has suffered from, and how much it has been lowered by such thoughts ! What a really blessed thing it is to look at that precious blood as the blood of Him who upheld and vindicated all the glory of God. And who will limit the issues and consequences of all this work ? Christ glorified God down to the very dust of death, where His precious blood was poured forth and shed, for remember, the blood came from the side of the One who had been crucified, it came from the side of a dead Christ, not of a living Christ. If, let me say, Christ glorified God down to the very dust of death, down to where we lay in our moral ruin and distance from God, who will deny that we must be blessed up to the very heights of where that Christ is ? If you lower the blessing, you must somehow reflect upon the Blessor. And that is the very reality which we should strive to impress upon one another's hearts more and more every day.

If you limit or lower the blessing, you correspondingly take away from the glory of the One who secured it. But the more your heart has been impressed with the sense of the glory and perfections of Him, who has made all this good for His Father's glory, and for us, the higher your conceptions must be of the blessing. I repeat it, if Christ has given to God a glory that

He went down into the dust of death to secure and make good, if the blessed God has been glorified down to the lowest, where He went and lay in death, then I say, the believer must be blessed up to the very heights of where that precious One is, whom God has raised up from among the dead, and claimed as His own. And therefore, Christ's acceptance, blessed be His name, is the measure of ours. His acceptance as man, the glorified Man in heaven, is the acceptance of His saints, who through grace believe in Him. Then see, beloved friends, what a wonderful comfort that is ; because it settles and establishes everything as certain. It does not leave things uncertain or undecided ; it settles everything, and for ever ; it puts everything into a fixed, settled position before God, and that is outside all the flittings, and all the ebbings, and all the flowings of our poor life down here : well may we sing :—

“ Oh, I am my Belovèd's,
And my Belovèd's mine ;
He brings a poor vile sinner
Into His 'house of wine' !
I stand upon His merit,
I know no safer stand ;
Not e'en where glory dwelleth,
In Emmanuel's land.”

Now one other word upon the third subject

that I named. I would say affectionately and humbly to you, I felt, I trust of the Lord, led to touch these subjects in a kind of way as introductory to-night, as I felt one not only ought to do so, but, thank God, the delight of one's heart is to look at these great transactions as between God and Christ. I do not know anything that is more comforting to the soul than to stand outside of contingencies, and to look at divine transactions and facts which never can change. One is continually impressed with all the change down here, but, oh, to have to do with the things which know no change! The glory of such things is their changeless character. The exact failure of everything on earth is their changeability. It is just the contrast between what is divine and what is of the creature. This poor world needs constant change; men of the earth and world, could not endure the monotony of its sameness, they crave for the change; sameness is to them wearisome in the extreme "Is there anything whereof it may be said See, this is new?" This is the craving of man's heart, and his disappointment finds vent in the words of the reply: "It hath been already of old time, which was before us." The glory of Christ is that He is the same, that is redemption's glory, that is the glory of the place in which we are set before God, in virtue of the blood; there

has been secured not only eternal redemption, but eternal inheritance.

Well now, allow me to say a little on this third subject, the priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ. I have often thought lately whether our hearts have really given to that subject the importance that attaches to it, whether we have thought enough about the priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and whether we have traced sufficiently to its source in fellowship and divine intimacy with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ, the blessings that we derive from our Priest on high. Because, just reflect on this, in all its blessedness, here we are, going through this poor wretched world, where we need sympathy, and want succour and sustainment continually; we are down here, poor weak things; if I think of myself up there in heaven, I have a home, a rest, and no want, no care; we do not want sympathy or succour, or sustainment in heaven. Oh, what a moment, when we are for ever out of the scene where we need those things! But, then, whilst our home and rest are in heaven, and that is our true place, still we are going through this world and it is in our life in this scene as we pass through it, our life down here as in the body, and surrounded by all the things that belong to this world—this, I say, is the sphere, and these are the circumstances where this wonderful grace of

Christ is made known to us. *Now* we have need of sympathy, and what a sympathy is that of Christ!

There is a very marked difference between a person who knows Christ's sympathy and a person who does not. There is nothing that so softens the heart as sympathy. There is nothing that ministers such real divine softness to the heart as sympathy. It is just the very lack that you may often see in souls. If they only knew Christ's sympathy, with all the softening and subduing influence of it, what a change it would make. But then, who in very truth can meet us in that way save Christ? There are scenes and circumstances through which we pass down here, where no one can really sympathise with us but Jesus. And you will find, beloved friends, and I have no doubt many of you have often proved it for your own hearts—you will find that whilst there are many who will feel *for* you, there are but few, if indeed any, who can feel *with* you; how few there are who are free enough from themselves to say to you, "I feel so with you I have gone that road, I have traversed that path, I have passed through those circumstances; my heart has entered into all that." And that is just what is so blessed in its perfection about Christ, that He came down here, and went through the circumstances, in order that He

might be able to feel with His poor saints when in them !

Oh, think of that precious grace ! Think of Jesus coming down here, and passing through all the circumstances that belong to a man down here in this world, that He might know, and be able to enter into the feelings, and sorrows, and the afflictions, and the trials of His poor beloved saints, when they are passing through them ; so that the sympathy that we get from Christ is a sympathy which He has learned to accord to us. How blessed ! He learned it for us. He did pass through it all as man ; He learnt it as man. And it was His human life down here, through all the circumstances of this world, and what He endured and passed through, that fitted Him to accord that sympathy to us when we are in like circumstances. And that is one thing that comes from priesthood—even sympathy ; He is able to sympathise. And that is the meaning of that passage in the beginning of Hebrews, “ We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities ;” literally, who is not able to sympathise with our weaknesses. It is put in that negative way to present the intense reality of His sympathy. We have a High Priest who is able to sympathise with our weaknesses ; He is able to do it. How precious ! He is able to sympathise, He is able to succour, and He

is able to save ; the three things that are said of Him in connection with His priesthood. "He is able to sympathise;" "He is able to succour," inasmuch as "he hath himself suffered, being tempted;" and "He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth;" to carry them in His arms, in His affections, and to lift them up—"He ever liveth to make intercession for them."

Oh! beloved brethren, it is connected with so much of our history down here, things that we never could have got over, things we never could have surmounted. Have you not often found yourselves face to face with circumstances in which you could say, "I do not know how I ever got over that, how I passed through that trouble, or was able to endure that pressure that was upon me"? I will tell you. The Priest on high succoured you, saved you, carried you, because that is the meaning of it, "He is able to save to the uttermost." There is no circumstance which He is not able to carry you through ; there is no wall too high that He will not carry you over ; there is no pressure too grievous that He will not support you through it. "He is able to save to the uttermost." I remember very well how that scripture has been used to set forth the gospel ; and though I have a longing desire for more gospel energy and evangelic desire after the souls

of the miserable and perishing, still, I am jealous of that passage being misapplied, and this is the case, if it be attempted to bring the gospel into it. Further, it would be an entirely false conception of the gospel to connect it with the intercession of Christ.

If it be a question of the salvation of the soul, that is connected with His cross, and blood-shedding, and death, and not with His intercession. This in Hebrews is the salvation of a saint, not of a sinner. The saint needs to be carried through the wilderness, over the difficulties, through the trials, lifted over all the ups and downs—that is the salvation a saint needs. He must be carried in the arms of the Priest, if he is to get through : but that Priest is the One who bled, and wept, and suffered, and died in this world. He died to be the Saviour, and He lives to be the Priest. He died, and it is His death as the Saviour, and the shedding of His blood as the Saviour that settles the question of our peace with God, even the question of our sins; but it is His life in the heavens that supports, and carries, and sustains through all the difficulties down here. And such a High Priest became us; not a Priest for our sins, a Saviour for our sins, but a Priest for our trials, a Priest for our sorrows, a Priest for our difficulties down here, a Priest for our weaknesses. A saint

cannot do without a Priest for his weaknesses, a poor sinner wants a Saviour for his sins, thank God, He is both; He is the Saviour of our souls, and He is the Priest for our weaknesses.

Bear with me if I apply it in a personal way: I would ask, Are you conscious of this gracious ministry? Have you got the sense of this blessed priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ in its sustaining character in the heavens? What a cheer it is to the Christian as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, to know that there is One up there on the throne of God, who came down to earth about his sins, and now He is gone up from earth to heaven about his infirmities. Think of the blessedness of that! It was our sins that brought Him to earth; it is our infirmities that He is occupied with in the heavens. He came down about our sins, settled the question of them for ever on the cross, and now, raised up from among the dead, and gone into glory, He sustains, and supports, and He represents us on high; He sustains us in weakness, He cheers us in sorrow, He sympathises with us in all our trials and distresses, where we feel them aright.

The Lord give our hearts a better, a more divine sense of what we owe to the all-prevailing priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ, His unceasing intercession. Oh! how blessed to

think of those hands ever lifted up, those unwearied hands of intercession, those hands that do not grow weary like Moses' hands. Poor Moses! his hands failed and fainted; he was a poor weak man, like ourselves, though while those hands were lifted up Israel got the victory, but Moses had not divine continuity, and his hands failed. The hands of Him who continueth for ever never grow weary, blessed be His name; His hands are ever uplifted, His heart is eternally interested in the objects of His love, and that is supreme comfort for our souls as belonging to Him. We are not only borne on the breastplate of judgment upon His heart, but we are borne upon the strength of His shoulders. We are borne on His affections, and we are borne on His strength. Just as the High Priest bore the names of Israel on the breastplate of judgment, ever on his heart when he went in before the Lord continually, and bore them, too, upon his shoulders, so Christ has got the names of all His people indelibly recorded on His heart, and on His shoulders; the Lord be praised for such cheer!

I commend those three subjects to your prayerful, earnest consideration, so that you may receive the full blessing that God would give each of you individually through them—the grace of God in its unfailing character, the blood

of Christ in its unchanging blessedness, and the intercession of Christ in its eternal continuity And, oh, may the Lord give our hearts to be fully encouraged and comforted by those blessed realities, and increasingly, too, for His name's sake.

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THE REVELATION OF GOD AND FROM GOD.

JOHN I. 14-17, 28-43.

IN order that we might truly and really know God and the Father, there was a twofold kind of revelation necessary—not only one kind, but two kinds. That is to say, we needed a revelation *of* God, as really as we needed a revelation *from* God. We need both. A revelation from God we have in all its precious blessedness in the written word, which we call the scriptures; but the revelation of God we have in the incarnate Word, the Lord Jesus Christ. And therefore it is that no one can really know God or the Father except in the Son. To be without the Son is to be without the Father.. (See 1 John ii. 23.) And that is a very solemn reflection for our hearts, an immense thing in a certain way, because it meets at once all the ideas in the minds of men, who would speak of the knowledge of God or the understanding of God, without Christ.

It is a very striking, precious, searching word, too, that the Spirit of God writes in the second epistle, when He says, "He that abideth not in the doctrine of Christ hath not God." (2 John 9.) There is no question of human reasoning about it; it is a simple divine statement of fact—he that hath not, he that refuses, the Christ, the anointed One of God, God's own beloved Son, has not God. Very solemn! And my object in bringing this scripture before you for a few moments is this, that what we have here, is the first subject that I desire to interest your hearts in; no subject more blessed, more soul invigorating, none more full of deep and holy joy for the heart that knows His love, than this precious revelation of God in Christ.

There were communications from God previously, there were words from God, assuredly there was a communication of His mind in the manner in which it was conveyed before from God. There were Moses and the prophets, there were the writings of Moses and the writings of the prophets; "holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost;" but there never had been previously a revelation of God in One who, whilst He became a Man, was ever and always God, until Christ came. And hence, we have that blessed simple utterance of the Holy Ghost in the verse that we began to read from,

here this evening, "The Word was made flesh: mark! "the Word," that blessed Word of whom He speaks in the first verse of the chapter; "In the beginning the Word was, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God;" that is to say, He was in His existence eternal, in His nature divine, in His Person distinct, and lest there should be any mistake about it, it is said, "the same was in the beginning with God," and also He "was God." Now that blessed Word, who ever existed—for we are carried into eternity here in the gospel, just as we are brought into time in the epistle—became a man; "the Word was made flesh." What a thought for adoring hearts to bow down and worship and adore, as they dwell upon it!

It is of great moment and interest too, that we should rightly understand the value of the words "in the beginning" and "from the beginning." "In the beginning" in the gospel connects us, as we have seen, with eternity; "from the beginning" in the epistle, brings us into time. But then, whilst it is so, the connection is most precious, beloved friends, for our souls; for He who was "from the beginning" in time, was also "in the beginning;" the One that was "from the beginning" was "in the beginning." And that brings us at once to that fourteenth verse, "The Word was made flesh." Now we have got

into time. "In the beginning" in the first verse we are before time, we are in eternity. In verse 14 He has come down and become a man, He who was the Word and with God has become a Man; "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt [tabernacled] amongst us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of an only-begotten with a Father, full of grace and truth"—the fulness of grace, and truth.

Well now, how blessed, beloved friends, to have all this as food for our souls, because it is a subject really for our souls; it is not a subject for our minds or our intellects, it is a theme specially for our consciences and hearts. What a blessed thing if you think of it, and just dwell upon it for a moment, that God should be pleased to come down and reveal Himself in the Person of His own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ; that He should come so near to us, that He should come to where we were; He Himself, apart in the intrinsic nature of His holiness and perfection, from everything, yet as truly did He come down to where we were. And hence it is, that we read in that verse, so full of comfort as well as so precious in itself, suited in every way to comfort our poor hearts within us, and raise our thoughts to the height and blessedness of God's own love. "The life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life

which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us."

Now mark that verse well, and connect with it the first verse of the same chapter—"That which was from the beginning;" that is, from the date of His manifestation in time as a Man down here. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon," or contemplated, because, observe, it was not a passing sight, so to speak, just as we would say that we saw something in a passing way; it is most blessed to think of how they dwelt upon Him in contemplation; they looked upon Him, "which we have contemplated." And, be assured, there is a great difference, beloved friends, between merely looking at something, that is most blessed and wonderful in itself, and the soul being so entirely detained, engrossed, occupied with that precious Object that is worthy to engage it. "We have contemplated Him," we have dwelt upon Him. How blessed to think of that; and all this is, through grace, just what we are privileged to enjoy and know now to-day. It is not a mere passing look at Christ, a mere passing glance at Christ, but it is a fixed contemplation, the whole soul detained, and engaged, and engrossed, and filled by a Person who is entirely worthy to satisfy it, an object that has so perfectly satisfied

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and delighted the heart of God the Father, that His good pleasure is to turn our poor eyes to rest where His alone could find rest.

How blessed to think of that. And, moreover, here, beloved friends, I am persuaded is the need, the pressing need, of the present moment, even that Christ, before all other sights and sounds in this world, and apart from all the things that relate to Him, that relate even to His blessed interests, that Christ Himself should be before our souls; the very revelation of God in His own blessed Person down here, that that blessed One should fill every gaze of our souls, and that continually. What a wonderful reality it is when you think of it, the attractive power and spiritual delight that is in it, and in addition to all, the expulsive power of the affection that springs from it! How entirely carried outside of, as well as, above everything the affections are, when Christ really fills the vision of the soul! And that which promotes it, is set forth here in the first chapter of the Epistle of John—they contemplated, they looked upon, they dwelt upon the glory of His Person; the intrinsic worth of that blessed One was the object that riveted every power of their souls. "Our hands have handled of the word of life." Think of Him coming down to earth to be the revelation of God in His own blessed Person as a Man among men;

not loving, as has been said, at a distance, but coming down to us where we were, so that poor eyes like yours and mine looked on Him, and poor ears heard Him, and poor hands touched Him and handled Him.

Oh, the blessed grace of the Lord Jesus Christ as *the revelation* of God, to come down into this poor world, and to place Himself at the disposal, so to speak, of poor, wretched things like you and me, that we might really see in His very Person, "God manifest in flesh." "The Word was made flesh;" and it does not say visited us, but lived and dwelt amongst us, tabernacled amongst us, took a tent as a passing stranger, if we may use a familiar expression, yet being as no one ever was, a stranger all through the scene here, yet taking for the time being a temporary resting-place; and in no sense was He a visitor; "He dwelt amongst us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of an only-begotten with a Father, full [the fulness] of grace and truth."

Well, now, in speaking of this revelation of God, for a moment, there was a double character in it, as it presents itself to me, and I would simply touch the points, leaving you to fill up the details, as the Lord may help each of us, for our own hearts' comfort, and edification too. There was a double character, if I may so convey myself, in this revelation of God. God was

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revealed, in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ here, in a twofold way: He was revealed as light, and as love, the two things that God is said to be in His own nature. He is light: "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." And, beloved friends, it is very important for our souls to take in that "message" heard of God, because, not only was He revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ as light and love, but that is the order, the divine order, in which the conscience and heart are made acquainted with that revelation, and that is a deeply important point for every one of us, the divine order in which the revelation reaches us—the revelation of God I am speaking of now. Let us dwell for a little on the order of that revelation, as it reaches our hearts through our consciences. Ponder well this order, that "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all:" *that* is our first acquaintance with truth and with Christ, who is the truth; and, moreover, it is our first acquaintance with God, who is revealed in the Person of His own Son down here in this world. We first of all have to do with God, who is light, through our consciences, and it is in this way that our affections come into play because it is through the conscience that the affection is reached. Well, when our consciences are brought up, as it were, and acted upon by this blessed revelation, it is in all the convicting power of

light. And that is very blessed, because there is then, not merely the exposing of all that we are in our nature—for we were sometime darkness, not merely in darkness. Remember that word, “Ye were once *darkness*.” Quite true, we were in darkness, but we were darkness itself: “Ye were sometime”—not in darkness, but—“darkness (*σκότος*), but now are ye light (*φῶς*) in the Lord; walk as children of light.” And then He goes on to speak, not exactly of the fruit of the Spirit, but the fruit of light; but we were darkness.

Well now, being darkness in ourselves, yet, coming in contact, through our consciences, with God, who is light, then you get everything judged, and that is the blessedness of it; you find the whole man detected, the whole history is manifested, the whole course comes out, just as introducing light into a dark room brings out everything that is contrary to the nature of light. “God is light.” Oh, beloved friends what a reality it is for our souls to know Him in that way, to have to do with God in that character, that God in whom is no darkness at all, and therefore everything that is contrary to God’s nature all brought into open day, as it were. For we were the perfect contrast in our nature to what God is in His nature. “God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all;” and we

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were darkness, and not a bit of light in us, in our nature. Observe the marvellous effect of the conscience coming into contact with this great revelation of God, which the Lord Jesus Christ was Himself, because He was "the Light of the world." And you will find Him bringing that out in this Gospel of John. Look at chapter viii., and you will see the subject all through, is, that Christ, as Light, was the manifestation of God down here in this world. He brings out everything, He exposes everything, He detects everything; and nothing ever came out truly, and really, and clearly in its own nature, until Christ Himself was here. Christ was Himself the great manifestation, not only of God, but of everything of man and of the world, that was contrary to God. The law did not do that. The law did not manifest what man really was; it declared what he had done, but it did not manifest what he was. It shewed, in the breach of its requirements, the shortness and failure of man as a creature subject to the claims of God, the Law-giver; as a creature under responsibility, it brought him in guilty, it exhibited him as short of the holy requirements of God, but it never brought out into the light and manifested either what God was, or what man was. The Lord Jesus Christ did; Christ was the great manifestor of man, because He brought out what was

in man, "He needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man."

And in the second chapter of John, which ends in that way, you have Him bringing it out, exposing man. How solemn the words, "did not commit Himself unto them." He *exposed* man, but He was the revelation of God. He revealed God in His own blessed nature and character, and He exposed man in his vileness and corruption. And this it is that makes those verses so exceedingly important—the last few verses of the second chapter, and the opening verses of the third chapter of John; for, whilst in the end of the second chapter, though there were those "in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, that gave credence to His words, and believed on Him, when they saw the miracles—for man, as man, may be affected by miracles—something outward, that addresses itself to his senses, yet the Lord did not commit Himself to the people that so believed on His name, in the feast-day at Jerusalem. "He needed not that any should testify of man, for He knew what was in man."

Then the third chapter begins with this: there must be a *new* birth, another order of man; "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." There must be a new order and generation altogether. But then Christ was

the One who brought all that out. I desire earnestly to speak now of that first great revelation of God in His own Person, and that is, that "God is light." And, oh! what an immense thing it is for our souls to have to do with a God that is light. And this is a real want in every one of us, even a break-down of conscience before God. That is a present, pressing want, and every day makes the necessity plainer, it is the great want of the hour. It is the light of God, as displayed in Christ, entering into the conscience that is the immense power for bringing us into the presence of God.

It is deeply important for us all to ponder solemnly, one most arresting fact—the Lord give us to weigh it. The proof of the conscience not being reached by the light, is, that the mind is active in judging and reasoning. When the mind is thus employed, or the reason is at work, conscience is not in exercise, it is not reached. When the conscience is reached—and it is only light that can reach it—the whole man is judged. There is a very great difference between those two things, between a man judging in his mind and reasoning in his intellect, and God, in His own light, shining into the conscience, so that the man is judged, and is down in his true place before God, and thus an avenue is made through his conscience to his affections. And, no doubt,

the reason why there is so little real divine affection for the Lord Jesus Christ, is, because the conscience is so little in exercise, beloved friends.

We often say to one another that there is a want of more devotedness to Christ. You will never find it where conscience is not reached; because conscience is the avenue to the affections, and the true way by which an opening is made to the soul, and it is in that way that the depths of the affections and the soul are acted upon.

Now, the Lord helping me, let me endeavour to shew how the second revelation comes in here; because if the light which Christ Himself was in His own blessed Person, and which God was—when that light detects us, judges us, as it does, when it reveals things as God sees them, not as we see them, or others see them, the light of God thus entering into the conscience, morally compels me to take cognisance of the thing as before God, then the way is prepared for the other revelation; and remember, not only is God light, “but God is love,” and Christ is the great revelation of that. Just as He was the revelation of God who is light, He was also the revelation of God who is love. And look at the blessedness of it. When the bottom of the soul is got at through the conscience—and oh! what wounds and smarting, for there are no wounds like those of conscience, there is no sorrow

like the sorrow of conscience, that real "godly sorrow which worketh repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of"—when there is all that, when the man is thus subdued and broken down, the full sense of his condition seen in the light of God, not mere surface work, but what is at the root, as it were, the thing that is really down deep there, unseen by all but One, unmeasured by all but One; then look how blessedly the other revelation comes in; because the revelation of love is the revelation of that which can remove and put away everything that the light has manifested. And thus it is they work together. The one makes manifest the unsuitability of man as he is, to God; the other makes manifest the divine love which ever was in the heart of God, but which awaited the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, to righteously gratify itself in removing all that His light detects. And Christ came for this purpose. Thus we have the two parts of His blessed life.

We see in His life down here upon earth, in His public ministry amongst men, a testing of all that man was. Hence a living Christ was a testing Christ: man was thus exposed as far from God, alienated and an enemy in his mind by wicked works. True, that in His life, there was a most perfect manifestation of God in His own Person, yet at the same time there was a detection and exposing

of all that was in man's heart towards God, as well as towards Christ. But a dead Christ is One who has wrought atonement, and from whose riven side, *as dead*, the blood came, to remove everything that the light reveals as unsuitable to Him; and thus it is we see both things in His blessed life, very vividly set before us in this way. We have God manifested in His own Person down here as a Man, and we have man exposed in all his vileness before God; when the conscience is reached through that light, then there is for it the revelation of God in His own character, as love. And, oh! what a revelation of it we have in Christ, the Christ of God, the Son of the Father, the Son of the bosom; how blessed thus to wait on His glories! And thus it is we have in this very Gospel, "The only-begotten Son, who is in the Father's bosom," not "*who was* in the Father's bosom," for He never left it. "The only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared him"—declared Him in all the affection, in all the love, in all the heat, in all the very truth of that bosom; Christ, the Son of the bosom, revealed and manifested the Father in all that pertained to Him in that relationship. Now these are two great things that meet us in these verses from the fourteenth verse of the first of John.

And now let me pause, and ask all our hearts,—

How far do we know God in these characters? How far really have you and I been made acquainted with God in the Lord Jesus Christ, as light and love down here in this world? In what character do we know Him? Have we been brought to Him, so that we can say, we do know Him in that way? Can you say that the bottom of your soul has been reached by the light? And, observe, it does not refer merely to the first moment of conversion, when that light reached us as poor wretched sinners, but refers as much to what comes afterwards, in all our course as Christians down here in this world; we are brought into the light, that is to say, we are brought into this full manifestation of God. That is our Christian place, our Christian position before God. We are in the light. It is not a question of walking according to the light; of course, we ought; that is perfectly true; but we are brought into the light, we are set in a distinct position before God, which is expressed in these words, "in the light;" that is, we are before the eyes of God, and our walk should be before the eyes of God, enlightened by the full revelation of what He is.

Now you will judge what a solemn thing that is; it is a most blessed position to be in the light, but it is a most solemn one: and, remember, if we are in the light, then everything about us

must be suitable to that light. The position we are in, defines the character of the conduct that suits it. Thus it is we are led to discover all kinds of things, and if the conscience is really sensitive as before God, (and the Lord give us to have sensitive consciences about everything) if the light of truth by the Word is making it sensitive, then is the judgment according to God, of all that will not suit the light. If it were a mere question of our getting through the world, or picking our steps through the ruin of the church the best way we could, we might perhaps get on and make a miserable kind of pass through; but if it be the genuine desire to be suitable to God, and suitable to the light that we are brought into, and that everything about us is to be sustained according to the character of the position His grace has set us in, it is a very solemn and searching matter, and thus it is that we are kept in continual exercise of conscience and soul. I cannot believe there is any real, true progress of soul, unless it is so. I quite admit there may be a great deal of sentiment, and that, alas! is abounding on every side, a vast amount of sentiment, but very little conscience.

Now what is the value of sentiment? The sentiment of the truth is not the truth; there is a great difference between these two things. The sentiment of the truth can tolerate, and in fact,

does tolerate, that which at best is merely the honey of nature; but salt is truth, in power. It is the preservative element, and is applied to us, even to our conscience; and the conscience in a healthy state takes cognisance as a witness. Truth is that power which acts upon the conscience; and when it is so acted upon by the truth, then it is a truthful witness for God, and for all that is suitable to God there; but if the conscience is not in this state, then it is the most blinding, dangerous thing that can be. And, hence, you may often hear the remark, "Oh! I have done nothing against my conscience." Well, that is all well so far, but what is acting on your conscience? How solemn to remember that Saul of Tarsus persecuted Jesus in the glory, thinking in himself that he ought to do so: "I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." Therefore, it is vain for any to plead in a wrong cause, "My conscience does not reprove me;" the reply is, if you were walking in the light, that is, if you were walking before God's eyes, enlightened by the full revelation of what He is, your conscience would undoubtedly accuse you.

It is an easy matter for any one to assert, "My conscience does not reprove me, or convict me," or, "I have got a clear conscience;" but *the* whole question is, What is the rule of your conscience?

Is it the Word of God, or is it the blinding influence of your own will? Is it the truth of God that is acting upon it? Is it the light that is upon it? If it be, then the soul is before God in His judgment and estimate of the matter. If it be not this light, then it is the blinding power of self; and there is nothing amongst men so blinding and deceiving as that. Conscience without truth upon it and without light acting upon it, is one of the most dangerous tools of Satan: thus it is the adversary gets hold of souls, and deceives them, and blinds them, turning their conscience into weapons to his hand. I do not know anything worse than this, that men should exalt the conscience into the place of scripture; it is thus the conscience becomes enslaved and degraded; it *appears* to rule and guide, but is in reality, enslaved and ruled by the will of the flesh. No; there must be the truth of God, there must be the light of God shining upon the conscience, working upon the conscience; thus it is in healthy exercise, but before God; and His Word, operative and active as light upon it, in divine power, so that it gives a true *witness* according to God and according to His truth. It is no guide at all; it never was intended to be a guide; God never gave to man a conscience as a *guide* in any sense. That conscience was to be in him as a witness, to be illuminated by the

truth, and to be manifested by light and the Word of God shining in upon it, is true; the Word of God, that blessed Word, which reveals things according to God and according to God's thoughts. And, beloved friends, how very solemn it is to think how little any of us thus submit ourselves to this action of the living Word of our God.

And then let me say one word further as to this; it is of great importance to note it, that when the conscience, thus illuminated by light (for I have only spoken of light as yet), when the conscience bears its witness as the result of the light and truth of God acting upon it, when it gives its verdict, its testimony, and if there has been departure, as *light* would measure and mark it—"for God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all"—it matters not in how small a measure the departure may be, departure is departure, failure is failure, turning aside is turning aside; granted, it may be but in the measure of a hair's breadth; still, let us ever hold fast it *is* a hair's breadth of turning aside; there is on our side but one way back, beloved friends, and that is by *confession*; only one way of restoration, really and happily, and that is by confession—a thing that is greatly dreaded in these days, greatly shunned, and greatly avoided. Oh, what a comfort for the soul that loves light! Suppose I have missed the heavenly road; it matters not,

as I have said, how little it is, still, I have missed it. Well, who could over-estimate the blessed comfort for the soul, to be able, with the light shining upon the conscience, to go right to God, and to have the whole thing out with Him. It is the true way of getting back—in fact there is no other way. And it is what we shall find increasingly in our own souls, that the way of getting back is by that path which makes little of us, and that is the very thing we do not like that is what we try to avoid, that is what we, alas! dread. It reminds us of the word of Saul to Samuel, “Honour me now before my people.” Alas! poor wretched, small man. It is the littleness of our nature that is humiliating, and it is the littleness of these wretched hearts of ours: “Honour me now before my people.” Oh, how often have these words been repeated in our ways! Be assured, it is only true greatness, the effect of the light of God upon the soul, that can afford to go down, and take its true place before God or man: Saul could not. And that is exactly what we may often observe. And I cannot believe that any person that has ever missed any part of the path—I care not what it is—I am assured that man never can be happy in his own soul and conscience, until he owns the thing before God. I could not be persuaded to the contrary. I believe that there is a want, a vacuum,

in that man's soul, well expressed too in the words of the poet, in the hymn:—

“ What peaceful hours I once enjoy'd,
How sweet their memory still;
But they have left an aching void,
The world can never fill.”

Oh, how true that is of a soul, in the pressure which confession can alone remove, there is a gnawing and a dis-satisfaction, not to speak of the reserve and distance, which must be felt, and almost intolerable, until confession disperse the dark cloud. “ *When I kept silence*, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me, my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah. I *acknowledged* my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will *confess* my transgression unto the Lord.”

The Lord give our hearts a true sense of this wonderful revelation of God in Christ. This first great part of it I have spoken of to-night—the light. “God is light.” Christ is the great exposition, the great manifestation of it. Then there is the other part of the revelation, namely, that “God is love.” The delight of that blessed love is to remove all that the light manifests. And oh, the comfort of that for our souls! God is love, and therefore He says, I will remove

everything from you that the light detects; everything that the light exposes, I will remove it all. I will reveal it as light, but I will remove it as love: how wonderful the comfort for our souls. I will not leave a stain or a spot or a sign of it upon you; and not merely judicially—most blessed to see the judicial removal of it in the death of the cross, the blood-shedding of the Lamb of God, the atoning efficacy of His work to remove the sin judicially—but it is removed practically as well. And this makes that thirteenth chapter of John so exceedingly precious. Because, look at the manifestation of that love, practically, in that chapter, and the practical removal by feet washing; it was not in any sense, judicial dealing with it; it was the manifestation of the Lord's unchanging love in the removal of moral distance by the water, the application of the Word of God. Mark how it opens: "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." I love you so well, that I will not have a stain upon you; I will not have a soil between you and myself in that bright scene I am about to enter. Oh, blessed love, blessed grace of Christ! and this all made known by Himself to them, as that hour was just upon them. Permit me to ask you, if your hearts have taken in, or been taken in, by such a blessed kind of love as this? It was on

the cross the work was finished, here it is the practical application, by the Lord Himself, of the Word to the feet of His poor disciples. Well, I must leave the details of it with you, to go over them in His own blessed presence and company.

I come now to one other subject here, which I desire to dwell upon to-night, and reserve what follows, if the Lord will, to another time. Now that one other subject brought out in this first chapter of John, is the two parts of Christ's great work. We have had before us the revelation of God as light and love, and then we have the two parts of the Saviour's great work; those two parts are expressed in the twenty-ninth and following verses. "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptising with water. And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptise with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on him, the same is he which baptiseth with the Holy Ghost."

Now here are the two great parts of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Just as in the other part, we have the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, in His double manifestation of God as light and love—the Word made flesh, and dwelling among us—so here you have the parts of the work of Him who was the Word made flesh. And the first part was that He was the Lamb of God ; that is, He was the One who came from God's side to restore the foundations of the world's relations with God. He is set forth here not as Messiah, but according to the whole extent of His work. He was the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world. It sets the work before us in its fullest and widest extent. He was God's own Lamb, the One whom God alone could furnish ; He was for God, and in every respect according to His mind. It is not here, how we get the good of the work. We do not learn, from this verse in John, how a poor sinner can lay hold upon Christ. Here it is the unfolding of the precious work that he can get the good of. But let us ever distinguish what God distinguishes. There is a great difference between the work that was done, and how we get the good of it.

Now, as to how we get the good of it, we have most plainly set forth in scripture ; but here is the great work that was done, unfolded too in its divine worth. And what was that great work ?

That He taketh away the sin of the world—observe it well, sin—in its widest and largest sense, so much so, that there will be new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness will dwell. It is very blessed to dwell on this glory of Christ set forth in that way. He was God's Lamb; He came from God, He offered Himself without spot to God through the eternal Spirit, the Lamb without blemish and without spot, to restore the foundations of the relations of the world with God; sin had entered into the world, and death by sin. He was God's Lamb to do this work; but *the work* by which He did it, was that blessed work of the cross, and He did it by giving Himself up, upon the cross, bearing the whole judgment of God there; Himself made sin, He who knew no sin, on that cross; bearing the whole of God's righteous judgment against sin, becoming the sacrifice for sin, so as to accomplish, and that perfectly, that work; and so He was glorified according to all the blessed appreciation of God, and according to God's own infinite estimate of the value and fulness of that work. God was glorified by that work of Christ, and the effect of that work is boundless in all its blessed application.

But there is the other part of it, which I can but merely glance at this evening, in the lateness of the hour. The other part of the work of the

Lord Jesus Christ is set forth in the words, "baptiseth with the Holy Ghost;" this was consequent on His having gone up into the heaven as the ascended, glorified Man. God come down in flesh, *He was*; but Man gone up in righteousness and ascension glory, *He is*; in incarnation, it was God come down in flesh; in ascension glory, it is Man gone up in righteousness: and having gone up in righteousness, and being as man, exalted to the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, He sends down the Holy Ghost; He is the One who baptises with the Holy Ghost. And this baptising with the Holy Ghost implies not merely a negative blessing, but it implies an entirely new thing, it is characteristic of an entirely new heavenly status and position before God. It is not merely the negative clearing away of our guilt, but it is the introduction into the entirely new blessings and privileges of the heavenly position before God, of which the Holy Ghost is the seal and witness. Oh, how blessed it is to think of it! How blessed to be made acquainted with the negative and positive sides of this work of the Lord Jesus Christ, to know how perfectly and completely and for ever, He has cleared everything away as God's Lamb, for God; so that for you and me to-night the whole thing is settled, once for all. As Christians, all our sins are gone in virtue of

that work, which He did as the Lamb. Our souls have known the application of it to our individual needs and wants, to the circumstances of our cases ; thank God, we can say, Our sins are gone in virtue of that work of "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." It does not say the *sins* of the world, but the *sin* of the world.

But you and I can say, as we adoringly behold that precious aspect, that of the work of His cross, we can say, all our sins are gone in virtue of that work ; individually we can say, that it was the purgation of our sins ; and more than that, the Lord Jesus Christ in accomplishing that work, bore His people's sins "in His own body on the tree," and therefore they are all gone—our sins are for ever buried and gone. But then, thank God, we have more than that. We have been baptised with the Holy Ghost, that is to say, we have been brought, not merely out of darkness, not merely out of the distance we were in, but we have been brought into a new positive position in all its blessedness before God, *in the Christ* who shed His blood ; we are set in this position *by redemption*, and the Holy Ghost is the characteristic seal and pledge. So that it is a totally new thing ; it is a heavenly position, because we are in a heavenly Christ. We are not standing in Christ as He was incarnate, we

are standing in Christ as He is in ascended glory in the heavens; that is our position before God; we are in the ascended, glorified Christ before God, in all the fragrance and in all the acceptability and blessedness of that Christ who is before Him. And the Holy Ghost, who dwells in our bodies—for Christ was the baptiser with the Holy Ghost—the Holy Ghost dwelling in our bodies is the seal and witness of that new magnificent status that God has set us in, in that risen and glorified Christ. Oh, the blessedness of these glories! What a thing it is, to be assured from God of the blessed footing He has set us on, and that He has set us there according to all His own thoughts, having shewn Himself to us as light and love, in Christ. He Himself has done it, and He Himself has brought us—through that which has perfectly glorified Him, and met as well the need of our consciences—He has brought us through that, to stand in all the perfection of this wonderful footing, on which He has set us in that blessed One before Himself; in the acceptability and fragrance of that precious, blessed One who is in His presence.

The Lord give our hearts to enter into it more!—and better still, the Lord grant that it may enter into us, and then we shall truly enter into it; sure I am that is the truth of the whole matter;

when it enters into us, and His blessed Spirit can give it an entrance into us—then, and then alone it is, that we enter into it. The Lord grant it may be so, through His own Word this evening. I feel assured none ever have so much the sense of their poverty, as when they are seeking divinely to set forth the truth of God. Any other theme is, as it were, within our reach naturally, but oh! this is so immensely beyond us, and yet so blessedly for us; so infinitely above us, and yet so perfectly and divinely suited to us in all its parts. The Lord suit it to us to-night, giving us, by His Spirit in His grace, such receptiveness as will take in what He Himself would place there, and keep there, through Jesus Christ our Lord.



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THE DIVINE OBJECT.

JOHN I. 35-51.

THERE is one thing peculiar to Christianity, in contrast with God's previous dealings with men under law, which is set forth here in its own exceeding beauty and preciousness. The law came with all the force of claim upon man as a creature. It was the expression of exaction and demand; and because man, who came under it as a claim, was a sinner and lost, it became to him a ministry of death and condemnation. He was unable to answer to the claim, and spiritual bankruptcy was the consequence, so that it was the rule of death really to man. But then, observe, what it did not furnish, and what it had not in it as a system at all (apart even from the contrast that it presents to grace), was just what peculiarly marks Christianity; and that is, an object outside of man altogether. The Holy Ghost, who dwells not merely in the individual Christian's body, but in the whole house of God upon earth, which is His dwelling-place, is the great power for the enjoyment of the object; but

Christ is the object. And just as Christ ever was the delight of the heart of God, was ever before Him, even from eternity the nursling of His love, and the object of all His infinite satisfaction and joy, so God ministers Him to us, to be to us in our poor measure, what His heart has found, in all its infinite satisfaction and ineffable delight, in Him.

It is most blessed grace to think of, that our Father God, in the delight of His nature, should turn these poor hearts and eyes of ours, to Him in whom His own have found their unceasing delight. Wonderful subject to dwell on, beloved friends ; the same object, the same Christ, the same Saviour, in all His intrinsic excellences, Person, worth, and blessedness—He who fills the whole heart of God, delights every part of His nature, over whom He could open the heavens, once and again, when He was upon earth, and say, “This is my beloved Son, in whom is all my good pleasure”—is ministered now by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, and that, too, in the gospel, both to sinners and to saints, as the object. And, therefore, if the preaching of the gospel be in question, there is nothing so effectual as the presentation, to the hearts of sinners, of an object worthy of the confidence of their hearts. And I often fear, whether we do not leave that a little too much out, in our thoughts.

The conscience must have the work of Christ, to make it perfect before God. It is impossible

to have a perfect conscience, except by the application to it, of the precious finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is that, which puts us on a divine footing before God as to conscience, and gives what Scripture calls "a perfect conscience." A perfect conscience is one that has not the smallest fear of either death or judgment, but a divine fitness through the blood of Christ, for being in the presence of God, in the light, where God is; not a single misgiving as to God, in virtue of the blood of Christ. But then the heart needs an object, if the conscience wants clearance; and that is the value, beloved friends, both of Christ and of His work. The gospel presents both. Both are set forth in Scripture; the work for the conscience, and the Person for the affections. And that is the reason, no doubt, why we find too many, who may be clear perhaps as to their conscience, no fear or doubt as to their acceptance through the work of Christ, but yet, have not heart satisfaction; they have not heart rest or repose, and why? even because they have not as yet found one who can meet their hearts, not as yet been acquainted with one who can satisfy their hearts. And this very often accounts for what you may see with regard to those who have been cleared by the work of Christ as to their conscience, viz., the world has inducements for them; the age has attractions for them; there are things down here that bid for them; the suitors are found in the world who bid

for the affections of their hearts, and the heart is not safe until it is pre-engaged, until it is pre-occupied, until there is another there that is worthy to fill it, and not only worthy to fill it, but able to fill it. For there is no one and nothing that can fill these hearts of ours but Christ. The world is too small, the things down here are too little; your hearts are a great deal larger than the world, far too large for the world to fill them; all that is in the world, whatever it be, has nothing in it that can really fill your heart; your heart is too big for it, but Christ can fill it. And herein is the blessedness of having an Object set before us perfectly capable, perfectly worthy, perfectly able to fill every longing, every desire, to satisfy every craving, to meet every desire of the affections and of the heart. Christ can do it, and moreover, it is His great delight.

Now this is the first subject presented here in these Scriptures this evening—a perfect object. Because, observe, this is no part of John's ministry as such. John's ministry we might say had closed, so far as that is concerned, when He testified to Jesus, as "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." There you get his ministry, and he speaks, as we have seen, of the work of Christ in its large and full extent. But this is not his ministry here; it is not addressed to any one. This verse 35 is not spoken to any one. The verse previously, where Christ is set forth in His work, is. Just look at

the 29th to the 34th verses for a moment. There, in verse 29, is John's ministry, setting forth Christ in the two parts of His work—these we had before us last week—"the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world," and the One who "baptiseth with the Holy Ghost." Now, that was distinctly addressed to persons, just as ministry is addressed to persons, having persons in its view for edification, and instruction, and comfort, and building up; and such here was John's ministry. It was about Christ; it was for persons. Christ was the subject of the ministry; but individuals were those to whom Christ was thus ministered, in this double application, the two-fold nature of His work. But this is not ministry we are looking at to-night. When he looked at Jesus as He walked, he did not say to the people that were around him, "Behold the Lamb of God;" it was the delight that his own heart had found in Christ; he is entranced with that blessed object as He stood before him, and everything is displaced in John's affections, and soul, and mind, and thoughts, as Christ is there before him. "Behold the Lamb of God." His eye rested on Jesus.

And oh! beloved brethren, what a moment it is for us, what a moment of abstraction, and what a moment of occupation, and supreme satisfaction and delight, when every other object is gone from our gaze but Christ. Have you, as yet, travelled into that moment, when Christ, and only Christ,

was before your soul's vision? What a moment! A moment in time, that has all the elements of eternity, and the delight of heaven connected with it. For what will be heaven? This, beloved brethren, that we are with the Lord; "so shall we ever be with the Lord;" or as the verse of the little hymn so sweetly expresses it:—

"To see Him still before me."

Never to be conscious of a moment when Christ is not there still before us. Again I say, what a moment! And that, remember, in all its blessedness, underlies all true testimony (though I do not go into that now), but that, I repeat, underlies all true testimony and witness for Christ upon earth. It is the secret of all understanding of His mind, and of being able to walk in His mind when it is understood; do remember these two things. The only way really to know the mind of Christ is to be in divine intimacy with Himself. You cannot know His mind in any other way. There is no royal road to the understanding of what is suitable to Christ, except the knowledge of Himself.

Some one has said (it is most precious true in every sense) that "the knowledge of Jesus is the most excellent of all sciences." And it is the real secret of knowing all divine science; all true, divine knowledge is reached by that road. If I know Him, I know what is suitable to Him;

I know what becomes Him. It is vain to attempt to produce it, you cannot; it is not as a matter of fact possible to produce. Suitability to Christ is only learnt by intimacy with Christ, and the company of Christ. We never can be suitable to Christ, if we do not know Him and enjoy His company. We never can know what becomes His mind, unless we are intimate with Him. It is even so on earth, and amongst men. Intimacy with a person gives you a knowledge of the ways, and of the mind, and of the desires of that person. You must be intimate with a person to know what he desires; to know what would please him you must know *him*, you must be in intimacy with him. So it is as to our blessed Lord Jesus Christ.

Now this is exactly what we find here in its objective blessedness. John was perfectly entranced with this precious object that ministers to the whole delight of heaven. He looked on Jesus as He walked, and his heart utters its expression, its own simple expression of delight; "Behold the Lamb of God!" It is the heart's adoring contemplation of all the preciousness and perfection of its object. How blessed it is!

What a moment for a poor thing like you and me upon earth! to come to anchor, as it were; and we never really come to anchor in our heart's affections until Christ fill them—never. There is an aching void in your heart that the world can

never fill. There is an unsatisfied longing of the heart where Christ is not, that nothing but Christ can ever satisfy.

Now permit me to point out to you, two or three instances in Scripture, in proof of this ; and there is nothing like the Scripture, whether in preaching the gospel or speaking to the Lord's people. There is nothing like letting the Word of God speak.

The Lord make our hearts to know the blessedness of that, more than ever in these last days—the power of the Word. I have felt what a thing it is to stand behind the Word of God and just let it speak, let the living voice of God, in this precious word, leave its own impress and mark upon the hearts of God's people.

Look at one or two instances now of the power of an object in scripture. I will take the most opposite instances from the word of God. I will take the lowest conceivable type of degradation of humanity. Look at the poor woman in the fourth of John. What was the moment that settled everything for that poor wretched woman? When He stood before her as the very One that she expressed, in her own words, she was looking for ; she says, "I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ." Says Jesus, "I that speak unto thee am He." That settled everything for her. She left her waterpot and she went her way into the city, and says to the men whom she would not have faced for dreaded shame pre-

viously, she goes to those men and says, "Come, see a man," mark, a Man—how I love those words—"come, see a man." And, beloved, this object that I am speaking to you about, is about a Man in heaven; as truly as He was God come down in flesh, He is a Man gone up in righteousness into glory. And it is in that character, as Man exalted in righteousness into glory, that He is set before us as the object. Here He was, no doubt, as down upon earth, a Man amongst men, the most accessible of men. I say it with all reverence, there was nothing repulsive about Christ, there was no harshness, there was no reserve about Him that repelled any one; He was the most accessible of men, any one might come to Him. Blessed be His name, He is the same to-night, for heaven has not changed Him, the glory has not changed Him. What a wonderful thing it is to think that down here upon earth, you may look up and speak to Him. And that is what I long we should get a deeper sense of, in our own souls, to know that I can speak to Him, that He is not far from me, that I can have intercourse with Him, that He delights to hear my voice, and that I should be engaged with Him, that I should know the power of that object in occupying every single part of my whole being.

Look at that poor woman. She left her water-pot, and she went her way into the city; she has but one theme, because she has but one

object, she has but one text, but one sermon; she has but one thought, and that is expressed in—"Come, see a man who told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?"

Now, there is the very lowest specimen of humanity, so to speak, but look at the power of the object in that poor woman. When He Himself was before her as the object, that had an effect upon her which nothing beside could effect. He had spoken to her about the living water, about the streams of this world being unsatisfying, and about the satisfaction there was in the water that He would give; He had touched her conscience: but now her heart is reached, as He Himself stood before her, the Object who was worthy and able to fill it all—now she is abstracted and engrossed.

Now I will take another instance, the very opposite to this, for a person might say, There was a poor wretched creature, and no doubt it was a wonderful thing for her to find one who could speak to her as He did, being such as He was, and she, such as she was. Wonderful that there was One, who, sinner though she was, and holy though He was, yet He would thus speak to her, and she made a good exchange from misery and wretchedness, when she had to do with such an One as Jesus. But take another instance; not a poor wretched sinner at Sychar's well, but a man full of the Holy Ghost—the

martyr Stephen. Look at the power of an object to that man, in a moment of inconceivable terror to one naturally. A most tremendous moment for Stephen was that moment. And what was it kept him, and sustained him, and gave him superiority, as well as power, for testimony? He looked up into heaven and saw Jesus, the Son of man, standing at the right hand of God. "Full of the Holy Ghost, he looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God," and could lay down his life here, in all the calmness, and peace, and quietness of a man, who was perfect master of the circumstances he was passing through, instead of being mastered by them.

Thus you find in the most opposite characters, it is the same object; it is Christ: it is the Man in the glory. And it is very precious, and wonderfully comforting, when you think of it; no doubt it is perfectly true, as it has been said, that the effect of looking at this blessed Object, this same precious, blessed Object, in different positions, has different effects upon the soul. Look at Him in humiliation. Look at Him in His unwearied service of love down here, through this wretched world. Look at Him in the way in which He went about doing good. Look at Him wiping widow's tears, and raising the dead to life. Look at all that lowly path of Christ down here, in His marvellous humiliation, and you will get your heart broken down. It is a humbled Christ

which breaks and wins your heart ; but still, it is a humbled Christ, in His lowly grace, as humbled, that breaks the hard heart. Think of all that love, and kindness, and wonderful goodness amongst men. Was ever such love, ever such known, ever such grace, ever such mercy seen, as in His own blessed Person—God manifest among men—and to poor creatures like us ? But then, look at the other side of it. In glory, He satisfies our heart's affections. He wins the heart as humbled ; as glorified, He satisfies it. Stephen saw Him glorified ; he saw the Son of man standing at the right hand of God ; and in the power of that Object, and in the preciousness and blessedness of it, he could give his life up, and could become a martyr. He prays, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge:" and he commits his spirit to Jesus, and falls asleep.

Now, I will take one other instance, and it is neither a poor sinner nor a martyr ; but an apostle. And it is the same thing, whether it be a sinner, martyr, or apostle. Look at Paul in the third of Philippians. There is one little word there of exceeding beauty and sweetness. He says, in the seventh verse, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ." There you have the power of the Object in his *past* history, unfolded by himself in his experience of it. The things that were gain to him as a man down here—they were religious things, they were not what would be understood as worldly things ;

they were religious advantages, fleshly advantages connected with religious status down here in this world ; carnal, earthly religion, that a man would pride himself upon, that he would consider gain to him, as a man—the “ things that were gain to me, those I *counted* loss for Christ.” When he saw Him on the road to Damascus, that blessed, wonderful Lord in glory, everything was turned out of his heart and affections. His heart was won, and satisfied too. The whole thing was changed for him. It was a turning moment, when that blessed One was revealed in his heart down here, and he really saw Him, and heard Him ; so much so, that he says that those that journeyed with him saw the light, that is to say, they saw the outward display of glory, the attendant circumstances, as it were, by which Saul was arrested, on this terrible course of slaughter and death—“ they that journeyed with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid ” (because they saw nothing but what was external, and addressed itself to their senses), “ but they heard not the voice of Him that spake to me ;”—the personal dealings, personal transactions between that living Lord in heaven, and that poor, wretched persecutor down here upon earth. Himself before him as an object, “ What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.” And that was the moment that determined the value of them. They were all estimated and measured according to their value in reference to

Christ; because nothing in this world has what we call an intrinsic value; everything has a *relative* value; it is most important to bear this in our thoughts and minds.

Now, what is the greatest or best in relation to Christ—what is the value of everything else, then? You might think things very valuable in this world, property very valuable, position very valuable, status very valuable, and all that kind of thing, you may attach great importance to it all; but then, look at the thing relatively, bring in Christ; it is all worthless, yea, worse than worthless; he uses a stronger word too, for he calls it “dung,” the very refuse of the earth. A thing that would be valuable in itself, if you bring in Christ, all is changed. He says, I counted these things loss for Christ. Now between that verse, mark, in the third of Philippians and the next that follows it, the eighth, there is a considerable parenthesis, remember, of time. Those two verses do not come together historically. “The things that *were* gain to me, those I *counted* loss for Christ.” Now, mark, this was his past, and it connects itself with the wonderful interference of God, in long-suffering grace to him. But look at this eighth verse, “Yea, doubtless, and I count *all things* but loss.” He has held on wonderfully on his way, in the power of his object. It is not that the circle of loss has become diminished; but it has been increased now. It is not that other

things were now more valuable to him than they were, but he counts "all things loss." I feel, I assure you, oftentimes in my own heart—and one has to go down before the Lord, and look at things in our own hearts and consciences before Him—how very little one holds on one's way in the apprehension of the valued preciousness of Christ, to displace everything else.

In the first moments of our conversion, or of our heart opening out to these wonderful things, and when we first got a view of Christ and His preciousness and His love, how little everything appeared to us. Have we held on our way? Can we now take in "all things," and say, "I count all things loss?" It was only "things" at the beginning, but the circle has widened out to everything now, in the magnificence of this object that commanded every single part of his moral being—"I count all things loss," I count them all loss—for what? "For the excellency of the knowledge," the super-excellency, the surpassing excellency of the knowledge "of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may have Christ for my gain;" but then, there is more than that; he not only holds on his road, as it were, in such wonderful energy of soul, but he further says, "I do not count myself to have apprehended," I do not reckon I have reached the goal or gained the prize, and that there I stand, looking down upon, and judging, every

one else. Oh, how different to it all are the words, "I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, I press toward the mark for the prize." He, the blessed One, is the Object; and there is, oh, such power in this Object. Thus we have the expulsive power of this new affection, and the attractive power of it as well. There is an attractive power in the Christ, which draws the affections up to Him; and there is an expulsive power in Him, which weans them from everything down here. But then, observe, it must be a living Person; and it is this blessed living Man in heaven.

Well, now let us turn to one more instance; and it is not that of an individual, but I could not omit to call attention to it, because of the deep interest attaching to it. We have seen the effect upon a poor wretched sinner, upon a noble martyr, and also upon an apostle; all being entranced with a common object, lifted by it out of their various circumstances, by the divine and living power of it. Now look at the third chapter of the book of Revelation for a moment, and we shall find the same true, not only of individuals, but also of the church. See how the Lord Himself commends—see how precious He commends this power of an object there. He says, speaking to the church in Philadelphia, "I know thy works; behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it; for thou hast little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast

not denied my name." Now, beloved friends, what a blessed testimony from Christ Himself, that is! He was their object. His word, that is, His testimony; and His name means that which sets forth Himself in all His own infinite blessedness; His testimony and His name, He says, were everything to them.

Well now, contrast with that for a moment (and it is a very striking contrast) the assembly at Ephesus. Here, we may say, is the church's start in its pristine beauty and loveliness. And, note well, how that the Lord does give full credit for all the long roll of laborious service that was there, He passes over nothing commendable. He says, "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil"—you are intolerant of evil—"and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars; and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted." Just think of all that. Why, there is not a single company upon earth that could now command such a commendation from the Lord Jesus Christ. There is not an individual upon earth, I care not how laborious, nor a company of people, no matter how assiduous, who are worthy of such commendation; yet, notwithstanding all, He says, you do not meet my heart, "I have against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." I am not the object. You are doing the works, and you

are labouring assiduously, and earnestly, and continuously, but they are not connected with Me as the object: all the works you are doing, works too, in themselves admirable, so that I give you full credit for them, they do not spring from Me, as object; you have left your first love; you have got away from your first love. Now that is very solemn; precious though it be to dwell upon the power of the object, it is intensely solemn to think that there may be all kinds of service at our hands, but if Christ is not the centre, and the spring, and the source, it is of no value whatever, in His eyes. And it is not only positive labour; it may be even the judgment of evil. I think it is well, we should have all these things plainly and clearly, in the fulness of truth, before our souls. There may be judgment of evil, and Christ not its object, in the heart. And why should He, the blessed lover of His own, care for all that, if He is not the object? How could it ever meet His heart? "If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned." (Cant. viii. 7.) Do you think it could ever satisfy the longings of His heart, if He is not the object? Oh, never for a moment! He must be the spring, and the source, and the outgoing, and the power, of everything about His own, individually and collectively. He must be *the One* who commands every movement, and awakens every motive of the breast. If it be not so, all is vain. And

that is what I understand the Lord Jesus Christ to mean, by those very touching and very solemn words, "Thou hast left thy first love." I do not understand the first love to be their love, because their love was a created thing. You have left your first love, you have left that which is the spring of all loyalty and affection; you have left the love of Christ.

And I believe it is the same with ourselves. Look at the history of any departure or declension, and you will ever find this, that departure or declension begins inside, in the heart; not outside, in the feet. It may be very slow, but it is like some diseases, slow but sure; unless God, in His wonderful mercy, arrest it; but declension begins inside. I never knew it otherwise, nor was I ever made conscious in my own soul, of coldness, and distance, and darkness, and dullness, that it was not so. Oh, those seasons and times, when the wheels of the soul, as it were, drag heavily! What is the secret of it? Christ is not the *all* of the soul! Christ is not filling the vision of the soul; Christ's love, Christ's affection, Christ's thoughts, Christ's heart, Christ's yearnings, yea, all that Christ Himself is, in His blessedness—Oh, *that* is the secret. Is it any wonder, if you go away from the fire, that you should feel cold? And is it any wonder, if you go away from the warmth of His blessed heart, into the cold icy regions of your own, that you should feel benumbed in

your affections ? Be assured, brethren, the secret lies here. It is getting away from Christ and from His love. And I believe it is a more easy matter than is often thought. Because, if you begin to think of your affection, and your love, and your devotedness, and your work, and your service, Christ is practically displaced : it is yourself that is before your own eyes, and not Christ. It was so with Peter, he trusted his own heart's affection for Christ, and you know the result. If it be work or service for the Lord, oh, let it be connected with the Christ ; we get the measure and value of everything when we bring in Christ. Connect everything with Christ, by bringing in Christ.

Take, for instance, the things that agitate our hearts in every-day life, which relate to ourselves individually, to our domestic circles, or our businesses, or professions ; for be assured, this is a most eminently practical subject ; for instance, we have a very difficult matter before us, we really do not know how to act ; if a number of paths lie before us, and we do not know which to take ; some new course presents itself to us and we know not what to do ; or, it may be hedged up in business matters, and we know not how to act ; bring in Christ, and the whole thing is simple. But you say, If I bring in Christ it will involve suffering ; how true, and shall we also say, how blessed to have found for ourselves in this world, an object worthy of all suffering, shame, and loss ;

and because it is so, to esteem the path of suffering, a real glory.

And it is to be feared we have all been shrinking from this path. Is it not just the very one thing we have kept out of our calculations? And do we not go any way round to avoid it? But, if Christ is before you, it is the very thing you cannot escape; and if you make Christ your object, you must suffer; if you make Christ the object of your heart's affections, you must have loss. "Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake." It is given to you; it is part of His royal bounty, so to speak, to you. What a blessed new way to look at it; it is part of His own heart's dowry to His people to give them to suffer for Him; "If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." "For, verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation." Would to God that it was more suffering for His sake! Alas! we suffer too often for our own follies, for our foolishness, our shortcomings, our waywardness, our going out of the narrow path. But oh! to suffer for His sake; there is a sweetness when you do suffer for Christ's sake; it is tinged with all the divine love that comes from His heart, when you suffer for His sake; there is a peculiar preciousness, in suffering for the sake of such a Master, and such a Lord: there is no bitterness attached to it. When we suffer as the

consequence of our own ways, there is bitterness in it.

If we have to bow our heads down, and own the government of God, and our Father's dealings with us, there is no doubt a measure of rest about it, to say, Lord, You are right in putting that upon me; I justify You in all Your ways, I justify You in the stripes and in the strokes I have received: I have deserved it, and You are holy and loving in doing it: but then, there is a want of the joy about that, which is found in the other. But in suffering for Christ's sake, there is a sweetness, and a consolation, and cheer peculiar to itself; like the apostles when beaten, and then let go, "and they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name."

But all this was found in this church, though they were poor feeble things: what a cheer to the heart it is to think of it; and it moreover shews it is not great numbers, nor great strength, as men would say, nor great power. He says to them, "Thou hast little strength." You have nothing to boast of, you are but a feeble folk, despicable in the eyes of men; you have nothing to shew, nothing in fact to accredit you, but I am enshrined in your heart's affections; your thoughts centre in me, my word is everything to you; my name is everything to you; it is that which controls you, this it is that originates everything in your thoughts, which rules you, and forms the

motives in your soul. How blessed it is when the motives, the spring of the whole moral being, are formed positively by such an object as Himself, in everything!

“Thou hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name,” and further as well, “thou hast kept the word of my patience.” Is there anything more precious, more sweet to the heart than such approval? But here is set forth, in all its parts, the power of this blessed object in its attractive fulness, and blessedness; and in its expulsive power.

Let me further supply you with an illustration of this, which will shew how much there is of preservation in the Object as well. I believe not only are our affections and hearts governed by true and right motives, but I am assured we are also preserved. Ten thousand things, that are snares to people, would not be snares at all, if Christ as our object were before the soul. Do I hear it said, Oh! we have to go through this great world with all its attractions, its folly and tinsel, and giddy show, and all the allurements of Satan? I admit it fully, and in all its force, but look, for instance, at yonder anxious mother. There she is, a poor heart-broken thing, hurrying along the most attractive thoroughfare of the West End, with every conceivable thing there, that appeals to, as well as ministers to all the strength of evil in the human heart, “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of

life." Is she attracted by it? Not in the least. That woman presses on, nothing daunts her; she does not stop to look at anything, she is not detained by anything; she is hurrying on as if she were the only person in that crowded street. Why? Her little, darling, precious child has been run over in that street. That is her object, and there is the power of that object. The affections of that woman are riveted upon her child, her own child, and she is perfectly blind and deaf, to every sight and sound, and presses on to reach that object. And so should it be with us, if Christ were, in all His blessedness and power, the object of our souls. And though we were going along through this poor wretched world, with all its allurements and pitfalls, if Christ were only before us objectively, if His matchless beauty were only filling our gaze, if His intrinsic worth were only occupying our affections, and commanding our souls—how different! Well may we sing—

"O fix our earnest gaze so wholly, Lord, on Thee."

And now, mark, there is one thing further, and that is the last point I shall dwell upon this evening. Not merely is there preservation—the preservation is just as I have shewn you—but there is something further, there is a power to act upon others. I am sure there is one thing that ought to exercise all our hearts increasingly,

and that is, our little ability to influence people—I mean morally. I esteem as utterly without value all mere natural influence. Indeed, I believe it is pernicious; I do not believe in any influence as being of any real worth, save divine influence. I am speaking, observe, entirely of divine things. I do now refer to people getting power over others, in a natural way; there is such a thing, and you will always find grief and sorrow as the almost invariable result of it: but what I now speak of, is our being divinely able to influence one another. Now, mark it here, John's whole affection, his whole heart, his whole soul, is fixed upon this Lamb of God, "Behold the Lamb of God," this was the object commanding every part of his being. And look at the effect. "The two disciples heard him speak;" and what did they do? Followed John? Alas, that is what is so common on all sides. People have thus followed their favourite teachers and leaders. Let us, beloved brethren, be increasingly on our guard, as to all that kind of thing. What is it all worth? What is the good of it all? I do not find persons who are thus attracted, in any remarkable way devoted to Christ; they may be devoted to the poor instrument, to the poor vessel, attached to the poor voice, but what is the value of it? What service is there in it for Christ? What glory to Him, and His truth? "The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus." The attractiveness, the power that attaches souls to Christ, that is the

thing to seek after. That has the value of eternity about it; that is what is grateful to the heart of Christ. "The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus." There was a drawing of wonderful blessedness. There was the attractive power of Christ coming out through the man, whose whole soul was set upon that object; this, beloved friends, left its own mark upon those who were around, who witnessed it, and looked on it. "They followed Jesus."

And permit me to say this affectionately to you: God knows how deep the longings, and how oft expressed are the desires in each of our hearts, but here is the power to long for, here is the influence to pray for, and these are the effects to be produced. Let us carefully remember, it was not the ministry of the word at all, and yet that ministry is very like it. It was not addressed to them. John was not trying to influence them; he was not seeking to win them, and yet they were won; but they were won for Christ. They were not won for John; they were not won for his cause, or his interest, or his person; but they were won for Christ. "The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus." And why did they follow Him? What was their object? Well, I can readily conceive how they must have said to themselves, That must be a wonderful Christ, that must be a wonderful object, that must be a wonderful portion, that fills that poor man's heart; that must be a

wonderful Jesus that fills the outgoings and incomings of that man's affections ; and thus they were attracted to Jesus. And is not, in reality, that true ministry ? This was not ministry, properly so called, and yet what ministry like it ? It reminds one of what the apostle says to the Thessalonians (1. Thess. i. 5), " Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." There was the true and real power. It is the power of a Person who has displaced everything in one's affections, and filled every longing of one's heart. Oh, what a Person, what a Power !

The Lord give us to know more of that kind of influence, this passive kind of influence. I remember it was once said to me by another, " Well, I like to be in the company of that dear servant of God, even if he never says a word ; it is a joy to be in his company." I said, " Why ?" The reply came at once : " I never get into that person's company, that he does not always connect me with Christ." Oh ! that is the kind of influence, beloved friends. That is true, divine influence upon the souls and affections of one another down here ; an influence that will connect you practically with Christ. And it is not at all, I may say, words. It is easy to have plenty of words, ready expressions, and exalted utterances, but you will find they are little more than *sentiment*. And what is the good of senti-

ment? It is no sooner there than gone; there is no substantiality in it. But, oh! it is delightful to see a heart whom Christ has satisfied, whom Christ has met; to see an affection which Christ has filled. And that is the real power, that is the true influence, a person who can turn his back upon everything here, and to whom everything is of little consequence, of little moment, but Christ. "The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus."

And now, one word more, and then I have finished for this night. When Jesus saw them following, He said to them, "What seek ye?" And they, in all the eagerness of their hearts, "Where dwellest thou?" The point with them was a continuance with Him. And we hear no more of John, it is all Jesus now. The voice is gone; the One, who was its all, remains. Oh, how blessed! The voice is all hushed; and the Person, of whom it testified, remains. That very voice, that cried in the wilderness, is now still. Where do you dwell? "Come and see," He says. He is the most accessible of all. How very different it is, beloved brethren, as to us. What a contrast to all, even the best, of His own beloved saints, in this world; how little accessible we are, what reserve there is about us, what distance, what coldness, what harshness even, and severity. Have you not often heard, "Well, nothing would induce me to apply to that person, in any emergency?" Why? Alas! I fear the answer would

be everything reflecting upon the person, it would be said, There is so much repelling about him. That was not Christ.

“Come and see.” “They came and saw where he dwelt”—a humble place, I believe, nothing attractive about it, none of the furniture of this world about it, none of the greatness of this world about it—but how precious it was, “They abode with him.” It was the company, and not the place; “they abode with him.” It was not the comfort. As some one has said, “Company is greater than comfort.” It was the company; “they abode with him;” they looked out for a continuance with Him; it was not a mere passing visit; it was not merely to see what sort of a place—without name, and without title, and without anything here—it was His company they were seeking for. They were won for Him, drawn to Him, attracted to Him, and they abode with Him. That is the real contact.

I commend this subject to you, this wonderful objective power of Christianity, the wonderful power of an object, this blessed, precious, living Christ up there, at God’s right hand, in heavenly glory, there filling every out-going feeling, every desire, the one object, I am bold to say to-night, the one object that interests every created intelligence there—a Man in heaven. Never was such an object of interest in heaven, a Man in heaven, and such a Man. I like that verse of Hart’s hymn:

“A Man there is, a real Man:”

A Man in heaven, a living Man, up there, upon the throne of God, exalted, glorified, to whom we can speak, to whom we can come, whom we can hear, whom we can address ourselves to, whom we can have companionship with. And, oh ! what a comfort to think that there is One there, who is worthy of losing everything for, on earth ! What a comfort ! He is worthy of all that can be endured. Thus one is repaid ; we are no losers ; there is what is called loss, and yet it is not loss, it is the gain of a precious Christ, filling every affection.

The Lord, by His Spirit, give our souls to taste it increasingly :—His own intrinsic beauty and blessedness ; for the little while we remain here, to hear His voice. It is but a little moment, and we shall hear that voice, and taste afresh that love. But, oh ! beloved, whilst we wait to hear that voice, may we find everything in Him, and so press on after Him increasingly. The Lord grant it, beloved friends, and make His own Son increasingly precious to us, for His blessed name's sake.



THE DIVINE CENTRE.

JOHN I. 38-43.

WE were dwelling last week, beloved brethren, on the divine object, which was found in the blessed One. He was John's object, and it was the delight and personal satisfaction of his heart, in Christ Himself, that was the power of attracting others to Christ. That was the subject which occupied us, when we were together this night week. And now, there is another subject in this same chapter, which is closely connected with it, which is greatly on my heart to bring before you this evening, namely, that the same Christ who is the divine object to faith, is also the only divine centre. He is the centre, as He is the object. And there is a further glory of His too, to which I would hope to call your attention, another time, and that is, that He is the divine path. For He is, blessed for ever be His name, all three things. He is the true object, He is the true centre, and He is the true path. And think of all the blessedness summed up in those three things that we find in Him—even in Himself. And observe, that changing times, and events, and circumstances on earth, can never, in the least, interfere with all the substantial reality of

these things. We may change, we do, as a matter of fact, alter; we may deteriorate, and our hearts may get cold, and our feet may get off the line, and off the path; but the path is there, the line is there, all the same. And here, I doubt not, is how the mistake is made so very frequently, that when the poor, wandering, wayward feet, do get off the path and get off the line, Satan tempts the straying one to think that the centre is gone, and the line is gone, and the path is gone. It is just one of his wiles and snares, that when he has succeeded in dislodging our poor feet from off it, he would fain persuade us that the whole thing is broken up, whilst, in reality, we have turned aside. We have left it, if you like, we may have given it up; but this abides, Christ is there, the thing that we left is there, unchanged, and unaltered, and unalterable for ever.

Now, it is on this blessed subject of Christ as the true centre, that I desire to speak; because He was the centre here, the centre of the gathering of this remnant. I quite admit that historically this remnant found here, did not, in their apprehension of Christ, go beyond the fact of His Messiahship; they were gathered to Him (speaking now of what the exposition of the scripture really is) as the Messiah, that is, they owned Him in His Messiahship. That is very clear. But then, there is a great principle of grace here, a great comfort for our hearts, which has a peculiar

cheer also for us, namely, that, if we accept Christ, we accept all that is in Christ, and we have all that is in Christ, although we ourselves may perceive but the very smallest part of His glory, and take in but the very least part of His glory; still, if we have Christ at all, if Christ is our centre, if we have accepted Him as such, we have accepted all that Christ is. We may not apprehend it, but it is impossible to take away from the fulness that is in Christ, and in having Christ, we have all that Christ is. That, I repeat, is an immense comfort for the soul, an immense solace for us all. So we may say here, though this little feeble remnant, which they were, only apprehended Him in what we may call the less part of His glory, that is to say, in His Messiahship, still they accepted Christ, and were gathered to Christ as their centre; and all that Christ was, blessed be His name, was there for them.

But there is more than that in it—Christ accepted this place. And think what a comfort that is, beloved friends, that He was pleased, in His grace, to accept it. It was not only that they were brought there, gathered there; for in truth, John attached them to Him, and it was the effect of John's ministry that did gather them to Him; it was the supreme delight of his heart in Christ Himself, that did attach them to Him, but Christ accepted the place of centre. And you find His acceptance of it, in those sweet and

blessed words which He spoke, when they came to Him. Mark the question. They asked Him a most interesting question; they say to Him, "Where dwellest thou?" not, where do you pass by? or, where may you be seen, or, where may we catch a passing glimpse of you? but, where do you abide, where is your settled abode, where do you dwell? He says, "Come and see." He accepts it, observe. That was His assent, His own blessed and precious acceptance of the fact, that they were looking out for a continuance with Him; it was not a mere passing moment of His company they wanted, but the longing desire to abide with Him, and they did abide with Him; when they came and saw where He dwelt, "they abode with him." Of course they did, we may say with all affection and reverence; He detained them. Could He do anything else, than detain the heart that came to Him and asked to see where His abode was? They remained with Him; He was their centre, He was the One that was before them as such; and He was the One who accepted that place of centre too, through His wonderful grace; He assents to that place, and accepts it. There is nothing said about the place itself. I believe it was a place without name or title; or anything that could distinguish it. As to His own surroundings, we know what His own blessed path down here in this world was—that He was a stranger in the scene, He had

not a place where to lay His head. A manger when He was born, a cross between two felons at His death; and between the two, no place to lay His head; He had nothing. A most affecting reality for our hearts. I have often thought of it lately, and dwelt upon it in wonder, even that the poorest of His sheep, the poorest of Christ's own in this world, have more than He had. There was none upon earth, neither was there amongst the sons of men, any who was in circumstances of strangership, and pilgrimage, and poverty, as He was; alone, we may say, both in His life and in His death; in His birth, in His life, and in His death, "the Lord of glory" was alone. And therefore, as to the outward circumstances of His path and place here, there was nothing in them, save lowliness and poverty; there was nothing of man or earth to distinguish them; but there was a precious attractiveness about the Person whose circumstances they were:

They abode with him;" He was everything. He kept them, as He drew them; He detained them, as He both won their hearts and attracted them; He engaged their affections, and He delighted their souls, and there they stayed. But it does not go beyond that. I think it well we should carefully note and observe the true meaning of each passage; here it does not go beyond, in the literal unfolding of the passage, the remnant's acceptance of the Messiahship of Jesus. That

was the character of the testimony, and that was the nature of the reception they gave Him. And therefore, observe, I am only using the scriptures now, in order to set forth in scriptural illustration, that which is very distinctly brought out in other scriptures.

Now I will ask you to turn with me to a scripture or two, so as to bring this great truth, of a divine centre, down to ourselves now. And the first scripture that I will ask you to turn to, for a moment, is in Matthew xvi. 13-16, "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist; some Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Now mark, beloved friends, how far we have got beyond the truth of the Messiahship of the Lord Jesus Christ, precious and wonderful as the grace and the glory connected with His office as Messiah are; but we have got far beyond that now in this scripture. If we have come to the Christ, the Son of the living God—and that revelation made known by the Father, and not reached or attained by any mental process of man, or reasoning of man, but a divine revelation from heaven concerning His Person—see how much we have advanced.

And look at the moment this was brought out

too, for it is all important. There were all kinds of curious speculations afloat, about the Lord Jesus Christ, at this time. Men were debating about Him, disputing about Him, reasoning about Him and speculating about Him. The speculations that were in the minds of men about Christ, are in minds about the truth to-day ; there is nothing new in these things. Men always speculated, and always reasoned. If they reason about Christ, they will reason about His truth. If they speculated about Christ, they will speculate about His truth ; there is no difference. Men reasoned about Christ in His day, and speculated and talked about Him, just as they do about the truth of God now ; they reason about it and speculate about it. It is just the same, there is no difference. And if the holiest of all subjects, even Himself, did not prevent that rude intellectuality which marked man then, neither does His precious truth ; it is not safe now, any more than His own Person then. It is just the same thing. One said one thing, and one another ; and very little was there in any heart, of care as to who He was. Because I suppose it is not too much to say, whether it be Christ, or the truth of God, in proportion as either His Person or His word becomes a mere subject upon which the mental process of our minds is allowed to work, the preciousness and the soul-delight of it are gone. There is no surer way to destroy everything like

real soul-enjoyment of, and feeding upon Christ, and upon the word of God, than to subject it to the microscopic process of our own poor, wretched, miserable brains ; it is destructive of everything like real profit by, and comfort of, the scriptures. What a profoundly blessed moment when we sit down, with the precious word of God and truth of God, to feed on it ! What a different thing that is to merely occupying our carnal minds by scrutinising it, or examining it, or treating it as a subject to be looked at, as it were, with a microscope, just as a person would investigate science—but to sit down really to be fed by it, what a different thing ! and this too in the need of our souls, yea, in their deep need. Now you see there is not anything of that here ; as to the blessed One Himself, it was all nothing but speculation and curious inquiry.

Now it is very precious to the heart, and comforting too, that the Lord says this ; it is the Lord who raises the question, observe ; it is not Peter's question. It is not Peter who asks the Lord anything, or that Andrew asks Him anything ; not one of them ; but the Lord proposes the question Himself—"Whom do men say that I the Son of man am ?" It is a blessed thing to hear Christ Himself beginning to bring out all these things, but it is Christ who does it ; it is not man who brings them out, it is the Lord. And therefore, He it is who proposes the question

in the bringing of them out, "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" He must have it out is the secret of this question of the Lord, "He could not be hid;" blessed, precious reality! It was as if He said, I will initiate it, I will propose it. Just as the blessed God did in the case of Job; it was not Satan began with Job at all. God said to Satan, "Hast thou considered my servant Job?" It was God who proposed the subject, just as Christ proposes the subject here. And that question elicited just where they all were. There was curious inquiry, and speculation, and reasoning, and gossip, even about Him.

And now mark further, He says, "But whom do ye say that I am?" He brings it home then to the narrow circle of the disciples. It was not merely the wide circle of men generally, but He brings it home now to the personal circle with Himself—"Whom do *ye* say?" How solemn that is! Think of it. The Lord would have this out, and have it out from us too,—"Whom do ye say that I am?" And then you get from the man that was taught from heaven, taught of God, by a revelation from the Father, those precious words, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Oh, what a confession of His Person and glory! what a foundation too, and centre of this great superstructure that He Himself was about to raise, was that! Before He says a word, mark you,

before there is a hint even about that, before He gives a single utterance as to what was the eternal purpose, and what He was about to do now, the centre of it all, the foundation of it all, in His own blessed Person, stands out so blessedly here—"The Christ, the Son of the living God." How blessed, beloved friends, to look at such a centre as that. Oh, what a comfort for us to think, that such an One as Himself is the centre, that He is the foundation. The foundation of what? I suppose we should all own, gladly and willingly own, that He is the foundation of our souls' hopes for time and eternity; but here it is the foundation, beloved friends, not of an individual, but of the church. He is not merely the foundation of our souls' hopes—thank God, He is that, and a great deal more beside, for who could say all He is?—but it is here the foundation of the church, the foundation of the assembly; that upon which the assembly, His body, the church, rests; He is the divine basis upon which the whole superstructure, that He rears, stands. I say, what a comfort that is! I think it an unspeakable comfort in these moments, when everybody is looking at the outward building, and looking at it too, as it is crumbling in the hands of men, to be free enough in spirit to turn and look at the foundation. Oh, let us dwell much upon the foundation; and not only let us see the eternal stability of the foundation, but let us think of that building

upon which no man's hand is lifted up, but which Christ builds.

What a mercy, in any degree, it is to get our consciences, hearts, and souls filled with this divine centre, and this divine superstructure. I quite admit the existence of that which man builds; I quite admit that solemn evidence of failing responsibility, and nothing shews man's utter failure as a builder more than the present state of the house of God; *that* was indeed committed in responsibility to man as a builder, but any one who ever thought or imagined that anything, but failure, could come out of his operations, must have but a poor scriptural knowledge of what man is; in very truth, man never touched anything, man never put his finger upon anything yet, that he did not leave upon it the mark of the incompetency of the being that touched it. There never was anything that God ever set up, upon this earth, and committed to the responsibility of man, in any measure, or any way, that man did not utterly break down, and fail in respect of it; and whether you take the church now, or anything that formerly was committed to human responsibility, you will find the same thing. There is nothing new. What is said in this world, as to history, is true as to the history of man. You have, no doubt, often heard it said that "history repeats itself:" man, I say, repeats himself; man also repeats his ways; nothing is

more sure than this, beloved brethren, that man is ever the same. The history of the ages declares plainly the solemn fact, in relation to every part of the responsibility, with which man has been entrusted by God. You will always find it is the same sad issue—failure, failure all the way.

Take, for instance, the creation. Before sin entered at all into this world, when God made everything, and delighted in what He had made, and rested in what He had made, and looked upon all that He had made, “and behold it was very good,” God could rest in that creation then, the fruit of His own skill and handiwork—and now, that very creation is groaning. Why? Man has been in it; creation groans because man has been at work in it. He was entrusted with headship there, it was placed under him in headship and responsibility, and all creation groans. Mark that passage—a most instructive passage for our souls, that: “The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.” And why? It was made subject to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of him who hath subjected it, that is, Adam; Adam subjected God’s creation to vanity; Adam was the head of this creation, and was placed in responsibility in, and headship over it, and the whole scene partakes of the consequences of his failure. Hence we find it groaning, and it is groaning now. It is the same thing in regard to all else. If the church

is committed, as a responsible testimony and witness, to man, and he is placed as a builder in it, it is the same thing—incompetency, inability, failure, break-down—just the same sad story. But then, what a rich comfort for the heart is this, that there is a sphere in which he is not allowed to enter at all ; there is a sphere in which he builds nothing ; there is a sphere in which he does not add one stone to the superstructure. That is what Christ builds, not only what Christ builds, but there is the foundation upon which Christ builds, and there is the centre of that which Christ builds, which He Himself is—and that is what we have here. Before ever He speaks of the building, He reveals—and from heaven too—the foundation and the centre. “Thou art the Christ.” Peter was taught of God, a revelation from the Father ; not a development of his own mind, not an evolution of his own mind, but a distinct revelation from the Father in heaven ; a heavenly revelation from God to Peter. It is that which Peter confesses. How magnificent it is : “Thou art the Christ,” thou art God’s anointed One—“the Son of the living God.”

And now, mark, beloved friends, further, for a moment. Just look, in reference to this centre, and this foundation, at verse 17 : “Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona ; for flesh and blood hath not

revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." "Flesh and blood." Some people think that flesh and blood can do anything, that flesh and blood is competent for anything, that flesh and blood is equal to anything. Flesh and blood has not revealed it to thee ; as if He said, This communication is outside the range of flesh and blood. "Flesh and blood," of course, means man as he is constituted down here in his present state and form : he is not competent to take in God's revelation, he cannot unravel it, he cannot know it. (Compare 1 Cor. ii. 11-16.) And more than that, though I do not dwell upon it now, not merely is there this revelation from God Himself, but, if you will carefully look at the scripture, you will find there is the Holy Ghost that dwells in us, to give us power to understand the revelation ; not only is there the revelation, that God Himself has been pleased to make of His mind, in this precious book, but the Holy Ghost dwells in us, in order that we may know the things that are freely given to us of God. Scholarship will not do it, the most acute perception of the mind of man, the clearest head, cannot reach God's revelation. If it could, it would not be God's revelation. If God's revelation were within the range and scope of the natural faculties and power of the human mind, it would cease to be the revelation of God. Being the revelation of God, it must be understood by Him who is God. Just as He is the

communicator of it, He is the One by whom alone we can understand it. I know this is not palatable to this reason-loving age; people do not like that which makes nothing of them. Man does not like that which puts him outside altogether, and makes him merely a recipient; but it is the truth of God, and the meek will say, with all their hearts, Thank God, it is so. The true heart, that is taught of Him, glories in it, delights in it; adores God for the perfection of His grace and wisdom in the whole matter.

Now further, mark this, in connection with our subject, not only was the centre outside of the range of human ken and human thought, but observe these words: "I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church." Here we have the superstructure, the building, and Christ the builder, and the revelation of what He was about to do. Here is the church mentioned for the first time: "Upon this rock I will build my assembly, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." How blessed to think of that! Such was the nature of the foundation, such the nature of the centre, such the nature of the corner-stone, such the nature of the whole of this marvellous and wonderful building that He was about to rear,—no power of man could attain to the knowledge of it, and no power of hell could prevail, in anywise, against it, so as to destroy the superstructure in the

smallest or the least degree. What a wonderful and blessed reality !

And though I do not like here to refer to a subject, now causing so much agitation, still, at the same time, it is almost impossible for one's ears not to hear the sounds that fill the air through which we pass at the present moment ; why, men are agitated, to the very depths of their souls, about all the things that are coming on the earth, and all the things that are likely to happen, and the upheavings and projected over-turnings of everything that is constituted ; and what may yet be, none can tell : the confiscation of property, the disestablishment of what is called the church. Oh, beloved brethren, what a reality to be able to look at what cannot be dis-established, and what cannot be disendowed, and to be connected practically with what neither devil nor man can touch ! Think of that. Think of the immense comfort to the soul that is, to be connected with a divine thing of which a divine Person is the foundation, and a divine Person is the centre, and which derives all the strength, and all the power, and all the durability that belong to it, from that upon which it rests. What a comfort that is ! Could anything be more blessed for the soul, could anything be more comforting for the soul, than to know that ? Mark it well ; here is that which nothing can touch ; the gates of hell, the power of man, the intrigues of

Satan, all the effort, and all the contrivance that is peculiar to devils, or that is found even in men—earth or hell, devils or men, cannot prevail against it.

Now mark, a moment further, as to this centre. We have had the revelation of the centre ; and we have had the revelation of the future building, of which He was to be the centre ; and the foundation as well, in His own blessed Person ; but now look at how this is brought about. Observe the twenty-first verse of Matthew xvi., "From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day." Now this sets forth His death, as the basis, on which the blessed Lord would build this wonderful assembly of His. The foundation was to be His own Person. He was to be both centre and foundation of the building, but was to pass through death ; it was not a living Christ, the church was not built upon a living Christ, the assembly was not to be founded upon a living Christ, but upon a Christ who should go through death, who should rise again, and ascend into the heavens ; His sufferings and glory were to be the firm foundation of the church ; it was to be a dead, risen, ascended, and glorified Christ. And, beloved friends, for ourselves individually,—oh, let me speak affectionately to you for a moment as to

this—it is just the same for our souls individually, as for that which is corporate. What was a living Christ down here upon earth, in all His blessed, gracious ways among men? He was the perfect manifestation of God in all His wondrous kindness and goodness. Never was there such grace, never such kindness, never such tenderness, never such mercy, as was seen in the Lord Jesus Christ, as a man down here in this world. But all the worse for you and me *as sinners!* Why, there was not a single answer in man's heart to it. They condemned that blessed One, spotless, and precious, and holy as He was, in all His ways down here, and they nailed Him to a cross. "For my love they are my adversaries," He says (Ps. cix. 4.) Man hated Him for His goodness, and therefore a living Christ, a Christ on earth blessed and perfect though He was, the very incarnation of goodness, was a *testing* Christ. Man was tested. All men stood out in their true character before Him, as He was here in this world. His very goodness exposed all the villainess, and all the hatred, and all the enmity that was in man's heart. But then, mark! a dead Christ, a Christ who has endured death, a Christ who bears the judgment, a Christ who meets all the holy, righteous requirements of a holy God upon the cross, who drank that dreadful cup, who goes through it all, and endures it all, and rises again from the dead, He is the One who

has wrought atonement; atonement was there wrought by Him; propitiation and substitution also flow from this atonement which has been wrought. Here then, beloved friends, is the grand basis of our footing before God, the true and only foundation of our soul's hopes; we need no other, could have no other. The assembly, too, is built upon His Person, as the One who died and rose again. Let me ask you, if Christ had not died and risen again, what would become of you and me? what hope should we have? Harken to the words of the Spirit, through the apostle: "If Christ be not risen you are yet in your sins:" "if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable;" if He has not risen from among the dead, there is no foundation for our souls. It would be impossible to overestimate the deep importance of the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord brings in here, in a most distinct way, His death and His resurrection, in connection with the unfolding of this magnificent superstructure He was about to build, and of which He was to be the centre and the foundation. The moment He speaks of it, He announces His death and rising again, and tells His disciples from that time, He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Suffering, killed, rising again; observe how every-

thing here is in relation to the blessed, precious foundation, of the assembly He was about to build.

And now there is one other subject here, before we pass from this chapter, which connects itself with what has been before us ; it is exceedingly solemn for us all, I mean for all who are Christians here. Look at that twenty-fourth verse : " Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." There we have discipleship brought in, but discipleship brought in, in connection with what ? In connection with a living Christ ? No, beloved friends. In connection with a testing Christ ? No ; but in connection with a hated, rejected, killed, crucified Christ. And observe, it is not exactly martyrdom here, it is the reality of being in Christ's path of rejection and shame ; it is indeed the following a Christ, who was the rejected One, the hated, and scorned, and crucified One down here, by all in this world. How striking, and how remarkable, that this question of discipleship should connect itself, at once, with His precious death. He never says a word about discipleship until He unfolds His death. The moment He introduces His death, the treatment He was to receive at the hands of men, His rising again from the dead or being raised up by the glory of the Father, then it is He announces the disciples' path ; then He says to His own, if any one will follow me, " if any man will

come after me ;" if it be in very truth a following of this Christ, of cleaving to Him, of regarding Him so as properly to form the hope and expectation of the heart, that path is the only way. Beloved, are we really set on this? Are we up to it? Are we seeking to follow a scorned, rejected, hated, crucified Christ? Is that the constant aim and purpose of our hearts? Alas, how little the world or men can see it in us; how little does it seem to be before our hearts and minds as Christians, in the true and real sense of the word! Is it a joy to us to receive the same thing that He has received? Is it an honour to us to have the treatment that was given Him, given us? Oh, how different from all our natural thoughts, how widely different! How it crosses all the purely natural thoughts of our hearts; how we shrink from the contumely, shame, scorn, rejection, hatred, despising, at the hands of the world, just as Christ received it, in His own blessed, precious ways down here. And yet, this is His path. The Lord connects discipleship with His own rejection, His own death, His own refusal at the hands of man.

Now let me call your attention, for a few moments more, to another chapter in this same gospel, which will bring the subject more directly to ourselves. In Matthew xviii. (19, 20), which, you will find, is connected distinctly with this, He says, in reference to prayer—shall I say prayer in

divine concert?—"If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father, which is in heaven. For, "observe the reason," where two or three are gathered together unto my name, there am I in the midst of them." Now here we have the blessedness of this centre, and that, too, contemplating the very lowest conceivable state of the church's history on earth. For I suppose, beloved friends, we cannot conceive anything smaller in the eyes of men than two people. "What is two?" "Why there are only two!" The Lord contemplates the very weakest, He provides for the very lowest, the most abject condition of the assembly's history, in the world. He comes down to two; if there be but two. And now, think of the blessedness of that for a moment. It would be hardly possible to conceive of anything less than two poor, wretched, feeble things of the earth. Two poor weak things, what could they do? Oh, beloved, it is that very weakness which brings out the divine preciousness of those words, "There am I." The power is in, "There am I." The vitality is in, "There am I." The competency for everything is in, "There am I." The sufficiency for every moment is in, "There am I." And, strange to say, precious as it is, that truth is just the very one we are in danger of letting slip! The very thing we are in danger of parting with; Lord, keep it in

our hearts ! Lord, enshrine in our affections, the blessed fact of the presence of the One, who is the centre ; in the midst of two or three gathered together to His name. And you will find frequently and constantly, how little even it is in the thoughts of the saints.

If there be a difficulty to be undertaken, if there be a question to be faced, or a danger to be undergone, the thought oftener is, who is a wise counsellor amongst men that can help ? Where is the prudent, longheaded man, that can bring to bear on the difficulty, his power of reason and his foresight ? How little is the thought, " There am I," if there are but two or three gathered together to my name. And, beloved brethren, in that thought, at this moment, there is to my own soul unspeakable comfort. There is nothing that I know of so outrageous, no greater affront to His name, no greater disparagement to His glory, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and to the ages of ages, than to think that, because these times are days of darkness, and difficulty, and upheaving upon all sides, Christ is not the same ! Oh, may such a thought be forbidden entrance into our minds, may such a slight upon Christ be resented by us with all our earnestness. None but a traitor could entertain the idea of turning away from the truth to individuality, because the days are dark and difficult ; none but a traitor, I repeat, would surrender the very foundation of

the whole thing, and give up the preciousness and reality of the name of Christ even for the weakest and lowest condition of the church's history upon earth ;—I cannot conceive a heart loyal to Christ, adopting such a creed as that— or pleading as an excuse, darkness and difficulty, for turning aside to wretched, selfish individuality, which, after all, is only contemptible, miserable pride, self-sufficient pride. Oh ! thank God for the unspeakable resource of “There am I,” a divine resource, contemplating too days of ruin, contemplating the break-up of everything outward, of everything that was once committed to human responsibility and trust ; deeply solemn, as it is, at this present moment ; yet there remains the unalterable power and sufficiency—for the darkest days and brightest days alike ; for times of storm and tempest, as of calm—of the divine promise, “There am I.” I admit that faith is needed to profit by it ; but, may I ask, what part of God's revealed will and truth, as set forth in His own word, is of any profit, save as there is faith, so as to get the good of it ? Of course, there must be faith—“the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith ”—there is not a truth of God we either apprehend, or use, or enjoy, except by faith. But then, thank God, there is something to have faith in ; thank God, there is an unchanging stability in that promise, as there is an unchanging stability in the Person

who makes it. There is the resource of faith. Tell me when that was ever revoked ; shew me when He ever withdrew that ; shew me, in the living word of God, in the New Testament scriptures, any such revocation !

Search as we may, through it—into the epistles, which describe the state of the church in the latter times and last days, where the history is brought down to the very moment we are in—and point out, if you can, a single line of scripture that calls back that precious promise and leaves us now without it. There is none, beloved friends ; it remains in all its force, and in all its fulness, and it remains through all time. And, therefore, because He Himself in giving the promise, contemplates the lowest and most abject state of the church, all the sufficiency is unfolded in His own words, words which set forth His sufficiency : “ Where two or three are gathered together unto my name, there am I.” Yes, as the centre, as the foundation, as the competency, as the wisdom, as the power : “ there am I ” for discernment ; “ there am I ” for understanding ; “ there am I ” for action ; “ there am I ” for everything.

The Lord give us more faith, true faith, in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, more faith in the One that says He is there amongst those gathered to His name.

And I desire earnestly to call your attention to another point ; it is important that every word

should get its full and clear place. He does not say, Where two or three gather to my name—that is a very different thing. He does not say, Where two or three are met in my name. He does not say, Where two or three come in my name. That would make the whole thing different: and I will tell you why; because that would connect practically the preciousness of this sufficiency, with man's will—and it is man's will that is distinctly shut out. He does say, "Where two or three are gathered together unto my name." And just on this account, that as there is a centre, and as there is a foundation, and as there is an object—and He who is the centre is both object and foundation—so there is a *gatherer*, and the gatherer is as divine as the Person to whom He thus gathers. It is so blessed to see man's will shut out. Man is ever the intruder; there is no room left for his wretched will at all; man has ever sought to intrude into the most sacred things of God. Vain man, proud and foolish man would assert himself, he would like to have a door left open for him, I may come, or any one may come."

No, beloved friends, where two or three *are gathered*, that is, by the Holy Ghost, to that blessed, precious name, there Christ is. And faith sees Him and adores Him; faith, too, knows His sufficiency, and faith rejoices in His sufficiency, and faith refuses everything that does not emanate from Him, that does not proceed from Him.

Now nothing could be more blessed for our souls than all that; and instead of difficult moments interfering with it, they are just the moments to prove the reality of it. But then, alas! it too often happens that difficulties, and pressure and trial, and all that kind of testing, bring out how little faith we have in Christ's resources, how little confidence there is in Himself. Just so we find it individually in our difficulties. I suppose there is not a child of God in this company here to-night that would not own the truth of this—that when you are exposed individually to difficulty, and danger, and trial, it just tests how much you have confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ, and how much He really is before your soul, as the stay of your heart.

Yes, beloved friends, the danger of the church is the danger of the individual: they are precisely the same. I know many a one who has gone on smoothly, whilst as yet there has been no difficulty, or stormy trial, or pressures, nothing, in fact, to cause them uneasiness, and nothing to cause them anxiety or care in their path; but the storm arose, and the wind blew, and then comes the question, how far the soul is trusting in Christ, and having the word of Christ as the stay. Oh, be assured, it is just these very difficulties that bring out the faith and confidence of your heart in that blessed Person. And so it is collectively.

I believe, and therefore I confidently speak to you this evening, that the darkest moment, of the history of God's professing church upon this earth, is the fitting opportunity for proving, and also shewing the sufficiency of Christ, to the two or three that are gathered to His name; that it is not the bright moments that shew it, so much as the dark moments, the difficult moments. The difficulties, and the perplexities, and the exercises are just the very atmosphere to be assured of the reality, and the preciousness of that blessed presence in the midst.

One little word further with regard to this blessed Person here, this centre, this foundation. It is found in another scripture to which I will hardly more than refer, in the book of Revelation, in order to shew you how the Lord unfolds Himself in that character to a very feeble company, a feeble few, those whom He speaks of, to the church in Philadelphia. (Rev. iii.) He speaks of them in the character of few, feeble, and little; but look at the way He addresses them. He sets Himself before them, and it is exceedingly interesting for our hearts to see the manner in which He sets Himself before that feeble company in Revelation iii. He says, "These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth."

Now, think of the competency expressed in

that communication and revelation of Himself. Look at the divine fulness set forth in that word. There is every kind of competency in that revelation of His own blessed Person, to that poor feeble company, whom He appreciated in their devotedness to Himself. But the point here is, who is the One that is before them, and in what character is this foundation and centre set before them? "He that is holy;" it is a holy centre, it is a holy foundation; it is a true centre, it is a true foundation. I do not know anything of a more searching nature to the soul than that. It is not merely that He is a blessed, and sure, and unchanging centre; but, He is a holy centre, and therefore you must have the holiness that becomes the One around whom you are—"He that is holy." You must have holiness and truth; you must have a moral fitness and suitability to Him, in keeping with that revelation of His name. Where, may I ask, is this suitability maintained? Where is that to be found which is in keeping with His name? He, the holy One, and He, the true One, and as such He is the competency, and sufficiency, and power for everything; "He opens, and no man shuts; and shuts, and no man opens." He has got power; He can open doors as He pleases. You may say, "the doors will be all closed and shut." I reply, Christ can open them. He can open; and if He open, who can close? and if He shut, who can open? Some, vainly,

for ever try to open all kinds of doors, and all sorts of opportunities for themselves.

How different it is to travel in company with this foundation and centre, and watch for the doors that Christ opens! "He opens and no man shuts, and shuts, and no man opens."

The Lord, in the riches of His grace, give every heart to walk, in faith, round this precious centre, and this divine foundation, in all its fulness this evening, and see what there is, as to it, in the scriptures; see what there is in Christ, see what you can find, individually, in Him; see what is there for the church in its weakest moments, in the days of its greatest difficulty, in the moment of its greatest trial; see what Christ is, and can be; our resource on earth, our treasure up there in heaven. The Lord give every heart here to taste it. He can, beloved friends; if there is the least interest in any heart here for Him, if there is the smallest desire to be found in His ways, if there is the faintest, feeblest echo to His own heart's affection in any heart here, He can open your eyes to see the magnificence of that centre, to see the fulness and sufficiency there is in Himself for every occasion, according to His precious words, "There am I."

The Lord command His blessing on His own word, and may it reach every heart and conscience here, for Jesus Christ's sake.

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THE DIVINE PATH.

JOHN I. 43; XII. 23-26; XXI. 18, 19. LUKE IX. 57-62.

PHILIPPIANS III. 12-14.

THE subject here—one of those precious subjects in this first chapter of John, in addition to what we have had before us—is the great fact, that there is a divine path through the maze and intricacies of this world; a distinctly divine path, so that we are not left to ourselves in any way to make out the road. It is not our own understanding of how we could pick our steps through the tangled labyrinth, if I may so describe it, which this world really presents, in its present alienated state; but there is a path, a very defined path through it all, for faith. A wonderful cheer for our souls it is even to contemplate that, for a moment; the *existence* of such a path, even supposing we have not as yet found it; but the

fact that it is there to be found, what a comfort to the soul. Not only is there an object divine, and a centre divine—for these are the subjects we have had before us—but, blessed be God, there is also a divine path, a path that His own blessed feet have marked out for us, through the desert sands of this world, and which faith can penetrate, and discern, and reach, and rejoice in being permitted to walk in, even Christ's path.

Now the first thing with regard to this subject, is—and I will ask you to look at a scripture which shews it—how entirely and completely it is a path of faith, and that it is only faith that can tread it, as it is only faith that can discover it. It is only by faith that we can see what it is, and it is only by faith that we can estimate the good of it. Turn with me to Job xxviii. 7, 8: it is a remarkable scripture: "There is a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen; the lion's whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it." You will observe, it is presented here, in figure, by the Holy Ghost as entirely outside the keenest perception of nature. That is the thought which the Spirit of God would leave on our hearts with regard to this path. It is divinely far above the keenest sight or discernment of the creature. The most powerful agent in nature, the most far-sighted and keen-visioned cannot

make it out. "No fowl knoweth." There is no eye, no sight, like that of the vulture for keenness, for quickness of perception, for far-seeing. "There is a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen;" untrodden by even the lion's whelps, or the fierce lion. No sight of nature, nor power of nature, can either discern or walk in this path. Well, you will admit, beloved friends, that this puts it very simply for us, through God's grace. It cannot be discerned nor trodden by human power; further there is nothing to shew. And that is where the difficulty oftentimes is. Those who, through grace and faith, have God-given eyes, can see the path, and, thank God, walk in it too; but it is not only difficult, it is impossible, to shew this path to another; and even more difficult still, to give others the power to walk in it, even if you could shew it to them. If you doubt this, try, and you will assuredly find out the truth of it for yourselves. Be assured, it is for yourself, when God gives you eyes to see it. I mean, of course, spiritual eyes; eyes by the teaching of His Spirit, through His word too; His Spirit and His word enlightening the eyes of the heart. It is thus, too, that the apostle prays, in Ephesians i., even that "the eyes of your heart, being enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of

his inheritance in the saints." He asks for opening and enlightening in the eyes of their hearts, in the seat of their affections; thus you will at once understand the intimate connection between the affections being in exercise, and thereby knowledge of the mind of God.

What a wonderful thing, to be illuminated in the heart's eyes; not the mind, not the reason, but the heart, the eyes of your heart being enlightened, the enlightening power of His Spirit in the affections of our souls. And, beloved friends, there is no other way to know, but this. You cannot see God's path, and you cannot tread God's path, in any other way than faith in God Himself, the living God. So that the value, the blessedness, of this word at the start, is that it puts the finding of this path, outside of everything that is merely connected with man, as man. No man of himself, or by any power that he has, can possibly discern this path; it is true he may be an exceedingly able man, a man of great parts, as we say; of great faculties, great discernment, great wisdom, great foresight, and all that, but this reckons not here; what we are speaking of lies entirely outside and beyond the greatest of men. And, beloved friends, we cannot insist upon that too much, we cannot press it upon our own hearts too earnestly, because you must perceive how the tendency with

us is to think that we can, by sense or sight, discern the things of God. He has to teach us, in His wonderful grace, that we never really see anything according to Him, until we become fools. "If any man will be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise." He has really to come down from all that fancied ability and power in himself, and the false idea that he is possessed of any sight, or any clearness, or any power ; to see these things, or unravel them, or discern them, he must give all that up : and when a man comes down to be a little child, then, there is found before the Lord the proper, true, right condition of soul, in which to exercise living faith in that which is of God, and which is made known to faith. It is to faith it is made known ; not to reason, nor to sense. Sense and reason hinder and deceive ; all the whole power of nature is misleading.

Now this clears the ground immensely, and then comes the comfort, that "there is a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen."

I would, further, ask you to look at another scripture, but not on that point, because that is settled, once and for all.

It is to be noted well, how everything of God is seen in the same way. There is no power of man that gives him an understanding of *any-*

thing of God. As the apostle, by the Holy Ghost, writes in 1 Corinthians ii., and which is the very mind of God, in relation to understanding all given us of God: "What man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so, the things of God knoweth no man." "No man"—remarkable words. That is to say, no man, *as a man*, knows the things of the Spirit of God. You cannot tell what is passing in my mind, and I cannot tell what is passing in yours. Even so, you cannot discern the things of God, save as He, by His Spirit, makes them known to you; as surely as God is the author of the revelation, so surely it cannot be either known or received, but by the Spirit of God. This, then, beloved friends, is solemn and searching. But, observe, there is the positive side also—I merely quote it—"Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." So that it is not only that there are things given to us of God, but there is power by the Holy Ghost to know them, and there is a capacity in the new man to receive them: further, it is written, "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he

himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ." It is, then, by the Holy Ghost, we know the things that are freely given to us of God, but no man, as man, can know them: the simplest truth of God, no man, as man, can understand; for instance, take creation, though I do not desire to dwell long upon it, only to illustrate the point: how do we know as to creation? Why, "by faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God." How simple that is! "by faith." And so it is with regard to everything else—it is the mind of God, that He has been pleased to reveal in His own word to faith, and faith must be in exercise. And, blessed be His name, faith is that which is found in us, as new creatures in Christ. Faith in the testimony of God, and the Holy Ghost to make that testimony known to us, in all its blessedness and power, are the alone way to the understanding and knowing anything about it.

We shall now turn to the scripture, another scripture, for a little, in order to shew you, as the Lord may help, how this path was trodden by the Lord Himself; and this we shall find most blessed. Turn to Psalm xvi. 11, "Thou wilt shew me the path of life." Now this is the language of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, in His place

B

of dependence and trust, as a man, before Jehovah. He comes down and takes the place of a man, in confidence and trust in God. This it is, that gives this Psalm (xvi.) such a precious interest for our hearts, because it is His own blessed path down here in this world. God everything to Him, in His perfection as man before God, perfect in His confidence, perfect in His trust, perfect in His dependence, "Preserve me, O God, for in thee do I put my trust." And then, further, "Jehovah is the portion of mine inheritance, and of my cup; thou maintainest my lot. The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage." Again, "I have set Jehovah always before me; because he is at my right hand I shall not be moved." It is all the path and place of the Lord Jesus Christ, as a man down here in this world, as before God; in the perfection of the confidence, trust, and dependence, that marked Him, in His perfection, in the place He had taken. And then, how precious to see Him, as going through that path, the path of life, and to hear Him saying these words, "Thou wilt shew me the path of life; in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." And that was the path in which He walked across this world, meeting death, because we never could walk along that path until Christ had gone before in it; we are not going along a

way, that has never been trodden, and which we address ourselves to, for the first time. Christ has walked in that path, He has walked the whole path of faith; and this it is which gives such preciousness and value to that scripture in the epistle to the Hebrews, where He is spoken of as the beginner and finisher of faith; that is to say, He walks the whole road; that in which we find each of the worthies of old, filling up their part, namely, Abraham, Joseph, Enoch, and so on, each of them filled up their part in this path, but Christ goes the whole path; He was the beginner and He was the finisher, "the author and finisher of faith," the path or road of faith as a whole; and then meeting death, and taking out of death all that, that stood in our way, so as to hinder us walking in that path; meeting everything that was involved in that death, as the blessed One did, and looking beyond it to resurrection, as the perfect answer of God to His victory and triumph. "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption. Thou wilt shew me the path of life." Walking in that path, having in grace identified Himself in it with those who were quickened by the Spirit, those who had confessed their sins, *not keepers of law*, but quickened souls who, having owned their sins, had turned to God; He could be there, blessed

be His name, and He did, fulfilling all righteousness, identify Himself with them, the excellent in the earth, "in whom is all my delight." He has met everything, and defined what that path is.

Now, that is an immense comfort to the soul. Dwell upon it, beloved friends, Christ has gone the whole way. And therefore it is, that He can, and does, blessed be His name, call us to follow Him. And further, mark this, it gives a very distinct character to it; Christ Himself is the way, the road. A person may say, But what is that road, what is that path? Christ Himself; that is the path; "I am the way." "We know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way?" He replies, "I am the way." And, beloved, think how blessed it is; because it sets that blessed One before the eyes. It is none less than that precious, living, blessed Christ, before the eyes of the soul; that makes the path as distinct and simple as anything can be. Christ is the way. I am to follow Christ, I have to watch Christ, I have to keep my eyes on Christ; and it moreover clears up so many difficulties, it takes so many things out of the way at once; it is not considering how and where we could escape from dangers here, and how we could make the best of our way through difficulties; far from it. Have you reflected on this? There are, in that path which is the opposite to that of faith, quite

as many difficulties, yet unbelief is ever ready to take that road; but there is not with those who walk that way, the power of God to sustain: this solemn fact I commend to your consideration.

Be assured of it, beloved friends, in reality the difficulties in the path of faith serve to draw out dependence in us, and to display that power of God, which is above everything; and this is an immense gain and blessing; further, you have not the company of Christ with you in the one, but you have in the other. You will have to meet constant and hard pressing difficulties, you will have to encounter severely trying hindrances and obstacles, but you cannot have Christ with you, and you will not enjoy that sweet and blessed assurance in your soul, that Christ went that road before you, so that you could discern, if you were with Him, as it were the very tracks of His blessed feet, in the desert sands. Whereas, if your eyes are on Him, not on difficulties, but on Him, how comforting—the road is plain before you, the light is on your path at once. If your eyes are on Christ, if it is Christ, who is simply the road, as He says Himself, “I am the way,” if it is Christ simply before you, the whole way is clear as light; it can be said truly,

“Light divine surrounds Thy going.”

The path is simple and defined before you.

B 2

Suffering, no doubt, but that is part of the blessedness of the path. Instead of being a part of the trials and difficulties of it, it is part of the blessedness of it. Ah, it is a very different thing from suffering, merely where it is connected with our own deserts. A person may suffer because of his own folly and his own waywardness, and there is a bitterness, and rightly, too, in that; but the suffering that belongs to that precious path, which His own feet have walked in, and the road which is marked out as His own, is sweet beyond all description. Alas, how little we have tasted it! How little we have partaken of that suffering which is connected with Himself, and with the path which He has trodden down here; yet we often sing,

“ There is but that one in the waste,
Which His footsteps have marked as His own;
And I follow in diligent haste,
To the seats where He's put on His crown.”

There is a bitterness about the other suffering, and pain attached to it, as well; but in that which is connected with Christ, there is real sweetness, there is true joy. Just like the apostles, when they went out from the presence of the council, it is said, they “rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.” They were beaten, but it was the comfort of their

hearts that they had suffered for Christ, had walked with Christ. And so it should be with us, if we were found, through grace, walking in His path, following Him.

This brings us to those other scriptures read at the beginning of this meeting, and we shall see how they tell one upon another. In the first of John, we start distinctly with the Lord's own blessed word, "Follow me." That is the divine path, and I have tried to shew you how He Himself constituted it, and walked in it first, and thus made a way for us to follow Him.

Now for a moment turn to the twelfth chapter of John. This gives the true character of this path, and shews what it is. The Lord says here, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me." Now, there we have the distinct nature, the positive character of this path of faith through this world; it is a suffering path: it is nothing less than death; it is loss. Observe how here the Lord is on His road *to the cross*; and what makes it so much more solemn is this, that the whole glory of the kingdom passed before Him there in figure; the kingdom in figure is there before

Him, Israel accepts Him for the time being, the Greeks come up and say, "We would see Jesus." The whole scene is one of deep and solemn interest. Just think what that moment was to Jesus, how at that moment, Isaiah xlix. 6 was present to His mind; but then death was in the road for Christ. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone." He could have taken the kingdom alone. There was no necessity for Him, as to Himself, blessed be His name, to suffer, but if He did take the kingdom, it must have been *alone*. He might have remained alone; He could have abode alone, for, except it "fall into the ground and die, it abides alone, but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." But then observe the words connected with it, "If it die;" and oh, I often wonder if our hearts take in the depth, the intense solemnity that is connected with those little words, "*If it die.*" Think of what His death involves, think of what is connected with it; it was not only the solemn reality of meeting the judgment of God with reference to sin; no doubt that was all involved in it, as well as the meeting the whole power of Satan, and destroying him that had the power of death, that is the devil—who could or indeed would underrate the judgment of a holy God in relation to sin? But oh! beloved friends, see what it defined for the followers of that dying Saviour, see how dis-

tinctly it marked out the nature and character of the path, for every one that would serve Him, "If any man serve me, let him follow me." "Follow me"—where? To death. Death it must be, because that was what was in the road; that was the immediate thing before His mind; it was that which the alabaster box of Mary had brought so distinctly before the mind, when she anointed His body for the burying.

The deep significance of that alabaster box was there to the soul of Jesus upon earth, at that moment, "If any man serve me, let him follow me." And more than that, you will remember how the Lord Himself had said, "If any man will come after me," which is following as well, "let him deny himself"—think of that—and further, "take up his cross;" which does not mean that each person has his particular trial and special difficulty; that is the way it is wont to be spoken of at times, even that each person has his own special trial and difficulty; as one would say, "That is my cross," and something else is another person's cross. That is not the meaning of this scripture at all. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself." And mark, denying yourself is a greater thing by far than self-denial. There is oftentimes a great deal of self-denial, where there is no denying of self, at all. Denying yourself is a most deeply searching reality, the positive

abnegation and refusal, even to death, of everything connected with yourself. "Let him deny himself." Self-denial is very frequently made an opportunity of ministering to self. Very often, acts of self-denial are positively a ministration to self. But think of what a reality it is to deny yourself, the abnegation to death of every principle connected with yourself. Oh, to refuse that! And further, not only what is bad, but what is good; what is naturally beautiful, naturally amiable, naturally attractive, naturally lovely, on this to bring and bear the cross. "Let him deny himself, and take up his cross;" that is to say, he has to accept the death that lies in the path; not each person's particular trial and particular difficulty, but to take up his cross, even death that is in the road; the denial of yourself, the abnegation of yourself to death, and all else beside, that lies in that path; and for what? Even to "Follow me." Wonderful reality, beloved friends, but wonderfully searching and deeply solemn truth for our souls it is. And if you will just connect that with service, as the Lord does here, "If any man serve me, let him follow me," how different it is from our thoughts of service; how different from the ideas of service prevailing at the present moment. Serving the Lord is, very oftentimes, really ministration to oneself; very oftentimes toleration of self, anything and

everything but the death which stands in the path and in the road. "If any man serve me, let him follow me."

Let us now further connect with this, that scripture in the ninth of Luke, and see how near to each other they are. A man comes to the Lord, who evidently has not at all measured the deep significance of this path, nor weighed at all what is involved in following Christ. This man addresses Him and says, "Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." What words the Lord addresses in reply! How touching are those words! How searching to the soul! What does He say? "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." Are we up to that kind of following, beloved? "I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." How little did he take in who it was, and what His position was, whom he thus confidently proposed to follow. Think of those words. Think of following such an One as that! Think of such a path as His! We all need to have our conscience and our heart searched, as to this. It is true that there is every kind of blessedness in it, but let us have the due weight of it in our souls; let the full solemnity of it rest on our souls. Do not let it be a sentimental thing with us. One dreads the sentiment. The sentiment of the truth is not the truth. The

sentiment of the truth very often saps out the real power of the truth in our souls. But the deep reality of it, the immense significance of that path, is most affecting: a destitute Christ, a Man here who had not a place where to lay His head; a solitary, isolated Man, who was poorer than the creatures of His own hand in His own creation; what could more appeal to our hearts than a rejected Saviour, who had not a place "where to lay his head"?

It brings very forcibly to mind that touching scene in the close of the eighth, and beginning of the ninth chapters of John: there was a division among the people because of Him, one urging one thing and another somewhat else, but as to Himself, the testimony forced from unwilling witnesses, "never man spake like this man;" and in confusion and uncertainty all depart, "every man went unto his own house;" but as to Jesus, it is written, "Jesus went unto the mount of Olives." Mark it well, all had their own house, but He had none; "the Son of man hath not where to lay his head."

Now look at the next verse or two, "And he said unto another, Follow me." I think these differences of dealing with souls, are most deeply instructive in scripture, the way in which the blessed Lord, the tender, and yet solemn way in which He corrects the mistaken thought of

following Him, by pressing the path in all its full solemnity before one; and then on another His distinct and immediate claim. His word now is, "Follow me." Observe the reply, "Let me first go and bury my father." Then the Lord says to him, "Let the dead bury their dead." And then, another, apparently of himself, says to Christ, "Lord, I will follow thee, but let me first go bid them farewell which are at home at my house." Now here we have, in the first instance, one who had not weighed the significance of the path, one who looked, as it were, lightly on following Christ, regarded it as an easy thing to follow Him; upon this man's spirit, the Lord brings the full weight of the deep solemnity of the path. With the others, it was the case of those who put something else as having a prior claim to following Christ, and that is the meaning of the Lord's reply. The first great thing, the pre-eminent thing, the paramount thing is to follow Christ. There is great force in that little word "first." "Let me *first* go and bury my father." "Let me *first* go bid them farewell which are at home at my house." "First!" The Lord says, I must be first, and last too; Christ must be first, and Christ must be last. There can be no first, and there can be no last, but Christ. Blessed be His name, He is first and He is last, but He must be first and last *with us*, as

He is first and last in Himself. And more than that, He is the indispensable One as well. How often our hearts have used those words, "the indispensable"—what is the indispensable? Jesus. I know no other indispensable; nothing else that cannot be done without, but Jesus. We cannot do without Christ. We can do without everything else but Him. Oh! you say, that is very extreme. Very extreme? I say, it is very blessed; you surely will not call blessed things extreme; may the Lord teach us how blessed it is!

Do not your hearts like to give Him that place, and say that He can be everything to you, yea all things, food, and meat, and drink, and shelter? Would you not like to exalt Him into such a position as that, to let Him be everything? Hearken to the words which the Lord Himself addressed to His disciples, "When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes." Oh, many a time have I thought of those words; these are what we call the indispensables of life, what would be called the absolute necessities; what would you think of a man going without purse, or scrip, or shoes, now? Yet He says, "When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye anything?" What did they say? "Nothing." Why, beloved friends? Because they had Him.

And was not that the lesson that He taught

them in the boat? There they were, in distress and perturbation, because they had not brought bread. He says, Am not I better than bread? Have you not all, in having me? Are you distressed because you have not taken bread, when you have me in the boat? Oh, the comfort for the heart in finding Christ everything, and everything in Christ: Christ the path, and Christ the sufficiency for the path; Christ the way, and Christ the competency for the way; Christ the road, and Christ the power to walk in that road. "Christ is all." And that is the reason why the Lord brings it out there, the paramount claims of Himself upon those who propose to follow Him • it must be Himself absolutely, first and last.

Further, there is one other little word to which I will call your attention, before I speak of the last scripture, and that is in the twenty-first of John; and in this scripture, the subject is exceedingly beautiful; here it is the restored soul. In the first of John, it is what we might call the beginning of life, it is the first moments of acquaintance with Him. The Lord finds Peter and Andrew, and says, "Follow me." Now in the twenty-first of John, it is Peter after he was brought back, after he was restored, and there is only one point I would call your attention specially to, in this part of our subject. Peter is broken down and restored in conscience.

in the twenty-second of Luke. In the force of his nature and the strength of his will, do you remember what he said? "Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison and to death. And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me." And if you search the history a little further on, you find that when the Lord was taken and all the disciples forsook Him and fled, then it is said of Peter, remarkable words, "Peter *followed afar off*;" he followed at a distance. And there is great force, I am assured, in those words, "*followed afar off*." Because you must know, if you are distant from a person, every turn of the road will hide him from your view; every little obstacle that comes in the way screens him from your sight. "Peter followed afar off." I do not trace the history further, for I take it we are all familiar with it, and we know what the denial was, we know how he essayed to follow Christ, in the power of his flesh and will, and how terrible was the break-down, trusting his love instead of trusting Christ's.

And now I refer to the twenty-first of John, for the purpose of shewing you, that after the Lord has probed him, and reached the *depths* of his failure and break-down, and suggested by His questions his denial, when He re-instates Peter in his position of shepherd and martyr, He says to

him in that eighteenth verse, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me." Beautiful words are these; the contrast between Peter in the youthful unbroken energy of his will, in the force and strength of the trust that he had in his own affections, as expressed in the words of the blessed Lord, "When thou wast young," and Peter's matured and mellowed condition afterwards, when subjected and broken down, he could be described as one aged and experienced, in such words as, "but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not," is exceedingly blessed. Then observe how that twenty-first of John leaves Peter and John following; that is the happy place it leaves them in. It closes on them following; Peter says to Jesus, "Lord, and what shall this man do?" "If I will that he tarry till I come," says the Lord, with reference to John, "what is that to thee?" Here is the path, the main business, the wonderful precious occupation,

"Follow thou me." The way the Lord brings that out before the restored soul, as He presents it to the soul in the first moments, so to speak of its life down here, is to me exceedingly beautiful and blessed, beyond all expression.

And now, there is only one other scripture to which I would invite your attention, it is Philippians iii. As has been so often said, Philippians is the normal life of a Christian, in the power of the Holy Ghost; the normal life of a heavenly man down here in this world, in the energy of the Spirit. So in the third chapter, behold the apostle, as the divine energy—which his soul was filled with from the glorified man at God's right hand—fixed his eye upon that precious Object there in heaven, and engaged all the affections of his heart with that Saviour in glory; that very Saviour whose brightness shone upon his path, as he was pursuing his mission of death and destruction; hearken to him now, as he says: "I follow after;" "I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do. . . . *I press* toward the mark for the prize;" as if he had said, I have not yet laid hold upon that for which I have been laid hold of, but one controlling object engrosses me, one thing governs, one thing fills my soul in its incomings and outgoings, "I follow after," "I press toward the mark for the prize;" my eye is on that mark, and my heart is

on that prize ; and we may well say, what a mark, and what a prize ; and Christ is the prize, and Christ is the gain ; I press toward that mark—"I follow after," and "I press." Beautiful words, wonderful words ! The energy of the soul filled with a heavenly Christ, a glorified Christ. The streams of light, and life, and glory flowing down from the Man at God's right hand, fill the vessel here upon earth, so that it rises to reach the source whence the power that set it in motion came. The power came from heaven, and the vessel, as filled with that power, rises to reach the Christ, in the scene of His glory ! My soul delights to linger in divine admiration of such a sight. It was not that he had attained to anything or reached anything, it was not that he was already perfect ; that is, he had not as yet reached up to the standard of conformity to Christ in glory, that is what he means by being perfect ; he had not reached up to that standard of perfection, the only divine standard ; but "one thing I do," he says, "I follow." My feet are down here in His blessed footsteps, my poor trembling feet, but that Object up there in all His beauty, is filling the whole range and vision of my soul.

"O fix our earnest gaze
So wholly, Lord, on Thee,
That with Thy beauty occupied,
We elsewhere none can see."

Well, beloved friends, there is nothing more comforting to the heart than that there is such a path. The Lord give us increasingly to have our poor feet in that path, which no power of nature can tread ; no power of man can discern ; which is above and beyond the keenest perception of the eye of the creature, or the wisdom of the wise. "The lion's whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it." This is the language of the Holy Ghost, in describing how impossible it is for the keenest vision or power of nature to either find out or walk in the divine path ; but there is such a path, and Christ has walked in it, and faith knows it and faith can walk in it, and the power comes from the One at God's right hand to carry us all the way through.

May every heart here realise this blessedness for Christ's sake.



London: G. MORRISH, 20, Paternoster Square, E.C.

THE COMING OF THE LORD,

IN RELATION TO

THE SAVED AND UNSAVED.

1 THESSALONIANS IV. 13-17; 1 CORINTHIANS XV. 51-57;

1 THESSALONIANS V. 1-10; 2 PETER III. 10-13.

THE first two scriptures, beloved brethren, bear upon the first subject which I have on my heart to speak to you about, this evening; namely, the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ *for* His saints. I might refer you to a great many other scriptures on the second part of the subject, because I may remind you, that the day of the Lord is a subject that is not peculiar to the New Testament, but that it is found as well in the Old Testament, as in the New; but that the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in the air *for* His saints is only to be found in the New Testament, and only in

those parts which we have read this evening, where it is propounded by the Holy Ghost, as a special revelation not previously known. "This I say unto you by the word of the Lord," is a fresh revelation of a truth, not up to that moment communicated. And "Behold I shew you a mystery," in 1 Corinthians xv., is also indicative of a fresh revelation of the same truth.

Now I am not purposing to speak to-night on the doctrine of the Lord's coming at all. What I am anxious, and pressed in my own heart, to occupy your time with, is its practical bearing on every class. As to the doctrine, it has been often set before us, in great clearness and distinctness; but the practical effects of it, and the practical issues of it on our consciences and in our souls, is that which we need to be continually reminded of. This side of the truth is greatly pressing on my heart, to speak to you about this evening.

And now, as to the first part of it, namely, the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ for His saints, His own beloved ones; let us remember how it will terminate the present state of things, as regards the saints in this world. Is it not well, that we should know exactly where we are? Is it not well, that we should have the divine sense in our souls of our present position? We are really between two great judgments.

We are between the past judgment of the cross, and the judgment that awaits both the living and the dead. We are between these two ; and we are, beloved friends, on the very eve of that bright and blessed moment which will precede the latter. In order to shew you more plainly from scripture—and it is scripture I am anxious to bring before you—I will read one or two passages which describe the present state of things in this world, which has developed to what it is, since the cross and rejection of our Lord Jesus Christ. I would say, it is of great moment to remember this—that the world as it is at the present moment, what we call the world, or better still, the age, is the result of Christ's rejection ; and the state of things found in it after His rejection, the 'age' in reality, is what the devil has made, out of the murder of God's Son, by the wicked hands of men. When we speak of the world, we do not mean the *literal* world: the literal world God made, though it partakes of the *consequences* of Adam's sin, and groans ; "the whole creation groaneth," but the literal world on which we stand was made by God: there is nothing in it that He did not make, nothing that did not reflect His handiwork, the skilled power of His hand ; not a blade of grass, not a leaf of the trees, not a part of that creation, that is not a proof of the skill and power of the Creator—spoiled,

tarnished, because of man's sin, and involved in the miseries of its federal head, it is yet destined in His grace, to be delivered out of the bondage of corruption, into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. But the age is a different subject altogether. When we speak of the world, meaning thereby the age (what scripture calls the age), we speak of that moral order of things that obtains in the world, consequent on the rejection, the crucifixion, the murder of the Christ of God. We might speak, and we do speak, and thank God, we *can* speak, of the death of Christ as an atonement for sin, but as far as man is concerned, it is the murder of Christ. And that, with all its momentous issues, rests on the age. That is what God will require in a coming day from the world; that is the ground of God's future dealings with this world—even the murder of His own Son.

Well now, consequent upon that, I will point you to two scriptures, which will shew us exactly where we are at this present moment, and also the state of things which has grown up since the rejection of Christ, and since His murder by the hands of men. The first is 2 Timothy iii. 1-5, and I venture to say, that the most casual reader of the word of God can hardly fail to trace the likeness between the description that is given there, and the very times that we have come to

‘This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall be present’—that is the meaning of the word “come”—“perilous [difficult] times shall be present, for men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, pleasure-lovers more than God-lovers, having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.” Now this is the state of things all around us at the present moment, depicted by the Spirit of God, marked out by the Spirit of God. And, beloved friends, it is so different from all the thoughts of men’s hearts, thoughts that many of us here cherished and cultivated many a day in the past; has it not been taught that the gospel of the grace of God, the good news concerning His Son the Lord Jesus Christ, which has gone out since the death and resurrection and ascension into the heavens of the Lord Jesus Christ, was so to permeate the world, and so to change the whole order of things, that it was assuredly to bring in the millennium? That was the notion many of us held; perhaps too, some of us here hold it still. Many of us held, in other days, that the preaching of the gospel was so to leaven the age, so permeate

the age, and so overlap everything that was here, that evil should be banished by the proclamation of the good, and every blessing introduced in that way, until the whole thing spread universally all over the world. Now that is contrary to the plain declarations of the word of God. Here you find an epistle that comes down to the very days we are in, and describes the times that are upon us; not "the latter times, mark, which were the times of the apostles, but "the last days," which are our own times. Now, observe the difference between these two. There are "the latter times, in 1 Timothy, which describe times to the close of the apostles' lives down here. There are the last days, which are the days we are in; our times are the "last days;" we ourselves are in the last days. And here are the features, the moral features that are being presented by the world in these last days. Every feature in that description in 2 Timothy ii., all that marked the heathen world (see Rom. i.), is reproduced in professing Christendom in the last days. Solemn it is, to think of that, beloved friends. The very vices, the very sins, yea, the enormities of the heathen world are reproduced under the sham profession of the name of Christ; "having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof;" it is all shell, but no reality, no kernel whatever; and that

condition of things goes on, and will not be ameliorated by the gospel, nor by anything else; all will develop into increased evil till the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ for His saints.

Now, one other scripture, in Jude 11, "Woe unto them, for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core." In this epistle, the Holy Ghost describes the condition of things that would be manifested at the end, when apostasy should be rife, when there would be a complete giving up of the truth and Christ, for that is the subject of Jude. Look at these three things—how solemn they are. Cain, Balaam, and Core. You will find in these, all the elements of that system which has grown up into such gigantic proportions at the present day. If ever there was a period that was distinctly characterised by Cain's principles, it is the present moment. What were the two leading features in Cain's history? He founded a religion, and he built a city. Those are the two great things that display themselves in him—he was the inventor of a religion; and what was the nature of that religion? Why, that which is the spirit of all that we see round about us at the present moment—what is it? That *man* as he is in his natural state could approach to God—Cain was the great exalter of man. His

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sacrifice declared that there was no fall with its consequences; that the utter ruin, as well as the guilt of man, was no barrier to him in bringing an offering to God. Cain's religion denied both ruin and guilt; he worked at the ground that had been cursed, and it yielded to his toil, and he brings the fruit of the ground that had been cursed, and places it before God, and it is said "to Cain and his offering, he had not respect." On the other hand, Abel came upon the ground and merits and value, and in all the nearness and dearness and blessedness of Christ *in type*, of which his lamb was the expression; he brought the fat, the personal excellency of the victim, and the blood, that which met the holy, righteous claims of God as to sin. Now, if you will but speak to people, you will see how they are under the influence of Cain's religion, "the way of Can:" religion without sacrifice, religion without blood, religion without the claims, the righteous holy claims of God being met in the only way suitable to His majesty and to His glory, and without the blessed standing of the perfect acceptance and intrinsic worth of the One who met His claims, of which, of course I need not say, Abel's lamb was the picture and type, for it sets forth the Lord Jesus Christ. And therefore it is, that now through His grace, not only are we clear in virtue of that work of Christ, but we

stand before God in all His appreciation of that work, and in all the acceptability of Him who finished it, for the glory of His God and Father; the measure of our acceptance being that of Him whose blood has met all the claims of a holy God, and glorified Him as well; we get both things—and that is what Cain's religion denies.

Then as to what is said about Balaam. Why, Balaam was just the type of a person using religion to get on in the world. And is not that what is going on at the present moment? He loved the wages of unrighteousness; he would have cursed Israel right heartily if he could; he was perfectly willing to accept Balak's rewards and money, but he was restrained by the mighty hand of God, yet his heart was after his covetousness. And this we see very distinctly all round about; the very same principle, full-blown and developed, prevails in this Christ rejecting age.

And then we have the gainsaying of Core, which is rebellion against the authority of God, in His true King and Priest.

Now, all this comes to a full head and climax at this present moment. And that will bring me to the first part of the subject—the one bright and blessed pole star of the saint's hope. No preaching of the gospel, however faithful or

earnest, can make the age different; there can be no amelioration of that condition of things by any effort that can be made, even through the testimony of God by the preached Word, at this present moment. I venture to say, that there is not an honest conscience or heart here that will not join me in the truth of this utterance, namely, that the state of the world or the age at the present moment, instead of becoming better, is rapidly developing into the very worst condition of things that can be conceived. And it is not only the testimony of scripture—thank God, there is that most abundantly—but I appeal to your own observation. Look at what is before the eyes of men. They do not know where to turn, all their hopes are frustrated; they expected a sort of universal jubilee; a bringing in of that which was to change and alter the whole condition of the world; and instead of this, it is all getting worse, and is all going down. The whole course of things, on every side and in every department of society, in every branch of human life down here, is becoming worse and worse. What is to terminate it for the believer? It can never be better. “Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived,” says the Spirit of God. But what is to bring it to a close for the saints? Our hope; thank God for it! And what is that? Why,

this blessed, immediate coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, I want to occupy your affections and heart for a moment with that, in its practical bearings upon us. I desire to put a question affectionately to you, and to myself as much as to you. I have often said to myself, as I sat in my own room, Do you believe He is coming? Do you *really* believe it? Do you believe that at any moment the shout of the Lord Jesus Christ might be heard? Do you, in your heart of hearts, sincerely believe that? It is so searching. Alas! I believe, and yet I do not believe it. I must say, I believe it profoundly, and yet in another sense, when I reflect upon it, and think of it, how little I do believe it! Because, do you think, that if in our affections and hearts, there were this one blessed, living reality, that the next moment, the next hour, I do not put it the next year or the next month, but before we actually leave this room to-night, that blessed One might come; do you think we should be found clinging to all the things we are mixed up with? If this hope were in the depths of our affections, if it were not merely an event we were waiting for, as we talk about believing the Second Advent, but the expected return of One "whom, not having seen we love" and watch for, oh, how different then it all would be! How blessed to

wait for that living, glorified Christ, up there at God's right hand; He who is the stay of our hearts to-day, and the one bright prospect before our souls; His glory cheering our hearts at this present moment, united to Him where He is. It is a heavenly hope; not in any sense an earthly hope; and I believe that those who are not heavenly in their ways and conduct down here, have not the power of that hope in their souls. And why? Because it is a heavenly lift out of all below; and that in such power, that all here is distanced; it is not an earthly hope, it is not Christ coming to the earth, it is not Christ coming to set things right here, to bring in the millennium, and to establish an order of things suitable to Himself. It is Christ coming to take His own blood-bought ones, and to take them into the Father's house, that they should follow Him in there. It is for heaven; and hence the apostle says in Phil. iii., "the state to which we belong," (which is the meaning of the word "conversation"), has its existence in the heavens, from whence we await the Lord Jesus as Saviour." We are permitted to be there now, blessed be His name, in faith and spirit too, and we await the One who is there, to come forth from that blessed place, and to take us into it, that He may have His own joy and delight in having us with Himself.

Now let me entreat of you to put this question to your own souls to-night—Is that the next thing before my heart? Think of this one day,—How much has it been before your souls and affections to-day? It is very searching if you sit down and put it to yourself, as in the Lord's presence. And do not suppose this to be self-occupation; it is conviction by the power of the word of God. It is not moaning over the feebleness, and weakness, and wretchedness of your own heart; the great things you *would* do, and the little you have done. It is not this kind of torture, this is most wretched and miserable self-occupation; but it is sitting down face to face with this living word of God, to see how far these things are mere matters of doctrine that we firmly believe in our minds; or, whether they are living realities which are shaping and forming us in everything we have to do with? A person said to me lately, If I really believed in the Lord's coming in that way, I do not know how I could go on as I do now with my business. Well, what is it going to be? Are you going to give up the Lord Jesus Christ, to give up the hope of Christianity, in order to adhere to the wretched things that are here in this world? I perfectly admit that it does cut like a knife, all round on every side, and that it does test us as to everything, it finds us out as to everything. But that is just the very blessedness of it, wher

it comes as a living power before our consciences and affections, that the Lord Jesus Christ is coming, and coming quickly, according to His own word, "He which testifieth these things, saith, Surely I come quickly." And why? Because, that is what is in His heart. He does tarry; but what is in His heart is that He is coming quickly. Love is always quick in its movements, swift in its footsteps, always beforehand in its activities. In the desires of His heart, He says, "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly." There is no delay in that heart; no slowness in His own deep affection—He does tarry in His ways, but not in His heart; He makes us know how He longs to have us with Him. Oh, what a poor response that blessed love of His receives from these poor hearts of ours! Oh, what grace and love! Christ longing to have us with Himself!

I was reading the other day, that chapter of chapters, the 17th of John, and those words of the blessed Lord came with renewed power before me, when He expresses this very demand of His heart, "Father, I will"—it is the claim as it were, of His heart—"Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am."

Think of that! As if He had said, I could never be there without them; I could never have

my joys there without them ; I must have them with me where I am. How little there is of a desire in our poor hearts to be with Him where He is ! How little we reciprocate His love !

It is in this way the truth works, in its practical operation upon us, and finds us out. Alas, that we have to own how correct we may be in doctrine, and yet so earthly in practice ! May we know the truth, in the love of it, better in our souls. I could never say what I have heard from others, namely, wish that they did not know so much : on the contrary, I should say, I wish I knew more, but in power, in the Holy Ghost.

Let me refer you to one other scripture, in order to shew the force and power of it in that connection. You remember how the Lord Jesus Christ in the gospels, when He is speaking of, and illustrating His coming in that wide and general way, in which it is there set forth, says, "If that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming." Now mark what follows, "and begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken." Observe what results flow from putting off, in the heart, the Lord's coming. What is it makes a servant smite his fellow-servants, and eat and drink with the drunken ? What leads to violence and self-assertion over his fellows, as well as to

association with a drunken world, "to eat and drink with the drunken"? Is it not clearly and plainly the heart letting go this hope as a present and immediate prospect before it?

How solemn, to defer in the affections the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord does not say, "If that servant shall say with his lips," but "if he shall say in his *heart*." And have you never said in your heart, "He will not come to-night"? Have you never said in your heart, "Well, I do not think the Lord is coming exactly just now, I do not think He is coming exactly this year"?

Oh, friends, these are the ways in which this truth searches us; "If that servant shall say *in his heart*," mark it well, IN HIS HEART. I have thought of it in connection with that wondrous verse of the Psalm, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God," not in his head, he knows right well in his head there is, but he has said it in his heart; he does not want God; in the case of the servant, it is the secret of the affections which comes out.

Then there is another scripture which presents this in its practical bearings on us who are His own saints here, and that is the Lord's own words in Luke xii. 35, a scripture beyond all others, bringing out the practical nature of the Lord's coming in relation to every detail of our life.

“Let your loins be girded about and your lights burning;” “girded about,” that is, there is to be no relaxation of watchfulness. It is like that word “sober;” it does not mean abstaining from one thing that is likely to take away your senses, but it is the general condition becoming those who have such a prospect before them—we are to be sober. And if ever there was a time that we are called upon to be thus in everything, it is this present moment. The very thing that characterises the age in which we live is a want of sobriety in everything, a want of girdedness in everything. Now this quality is pressed earnestly here, “Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning.” You are going through a defiled world, and you are going through a dark world, and you need the girdle because of the defilement, and you need the light because of the darkness. “And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord.” How searching that is. It is not merely to say, we wait for Him, but there is to be everything about us that betokens His coming; we are to be the living exponents of the fact that He is coming, we are to be “*like* men that wait for their Lord.” Do you think one who is really waiting for the Lord from heaven would be grasping after present things, would be seeking to enlarge their borders and advance their interests in this world?

Never let us allow such a thought in our hearts. "Ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord." Let things go; "sell," is the word, not "get." Get—that is the word of the day—amass, hold, get, that is the world's principle. "*Sell*," part with, "*give*," that is what God says. "Sell that ye have and give alms: provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

And then He goes on to say, "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord." Now let me call your attention to this word, "that when he cometh and knocketh they may open unto him immediately," that is, that there may be no delay. There is the expectancy that looks for Him, watches for Him, that enters into what He says, "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when he cometh shall find"—What? Doing? Not first, but "watching." He does speak of doing afterwards. Some people have not an idea of anything but doing; nothing ever enters into their minds but doing, they are not at rest unless they are doing; they have no peace unless they are doing; there is no comfort of heart except they are doing; it must be one constant

Do with them for comfort or quietness. But oh ! beloved friends, there is something more than that ; blessed as it is to do in company with the Lord, and in communion with His mind. Do not suppose that I would say a word in any degree to depreciate, or to underrate the value of earnest spiritual service ; but I do say there is as great failure in one who is out of fellowship with the Lord's mind, though in continual doing and working, as in one who is out of fellowship with the Lord's mind, and therefore never does anything. We must seek to be even, and in the mind of God as to things. Nothing can be more blessed than to work for the Lord, in the Lord's way and in company with the Lord, and in the power and energy of the Spirit. But there is something more blessed than that, precious and wonderful as it is. And what is that ? "*Watching*" ! Oh the blessedness of this watching ! You may have seen a mother sitting by the bedside of her little child, how she watches ; what are the hours of the night to her as she keeps vigil by that bedside ? Or to any one keeping watch by the bedside of one near and dear to them in this world, what are the hours of the night ? It is affection which is on watch, you cannot sleep if your affections are on the stretch ; you cannot sleep if your heart is drawn out : sleep leaves your eyes, and slumber your eyelids : no, you cannot

sleep; ah! it is impossible, if there is an object that commands all the affections of your heart on that sick bed. Sleep is gone, yea, fled far from you.

And look at it here, "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching;" that is, looking out for Him, expecting Him, just as you would if you expected, after long absence, one who was near and dear to you. How long and weary would that absence be! How would you not go to the door or to the window to listen, so as to catch the first sounds of their return? Watching: oh, what a reality! I do not know anything, that so brings that blessed One in all His own living intrinsic worth before our souls, as those words, "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when he cometh shall find watching."

How affecting to have it thus put in that way! I leave it with you, most earnestly entreating you, in the Lord's name, to take this great truth of the Lord's immediate speedy coming for us, to your consciences and affections this night: let us learn to judge everything we are connected with by it. Would you like the Lord to come and find you in that association? Would you like the Lord to come and find you in that company? Would you like the Lord to come and find you in that business? These are the questions—Should I

like Him to come and find me there? Would it please Him to find me in that association, in that connection, in that business, in that occupation? Is it true that I would like Him to come and find me so? These are the ways, it is intended to work upon us.

The Lord give to each one of His own here, by the power of His word and Spirit, a true estimate of how they stand in affection and heart, in relation to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And now let me turn to the other subject, for a moment or two. I do not know anything that ought to affect us more, on the other side, than this; namely, that the eternal blessedness of the saint is the doom of the sinner. No heart can conceive anything like the grace of His coming to the air, of His coming to fulfil the last service He owes to His Father and to us, to take us home to the Father's house; He just owes that one service to Him. But reflect a moment, if the Lord were to come an hour hence for His saints, if He were to come to take up all that are His—all His own blood-bought ones, for whom He gave Himself, in this great city and throughout the whole earth, would be all caught up together; the dead raised and the living changed in the twinkling of an eye; not a solitary one left

behind, no grave of His own unopened, the sea retaining none, the ashes of the martyrs all brought back again by His own power, all caught up together to meet the Lord in the air. But think of this, I entreat you, think of what it will be for the unsaved, think of what it will be for those that are not Christ's, think of the awful closing of that door, think of what it will be to be shut out for ever, for those that are not Christ's! Now, beloved friends, that is what makes it so solemn. And let us bring it home to our own circles. We are all of us here, I suppose, in some relationship of life, in some way or other; husbands or wives, fathers or mothers, brothers or sisters, or children or friends.

Now there is where the subject comes in, when we think of our husbands, or wives, or children, or of our brothers, or sisters, or friends. This is that which imparts to the moment a solemnity, it is not possible to overrate. Yes, that which is the one precious, living, unspeakable comfort of the heart, the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ for us, that blessed Saviour now in heaven, that terminates all hope for the unsaved, it terminates for them every prospect, but judgment; it shuts the door of mercy for ever upon all in this professing christian country, who have turned their backs upon that blessed Lord Jesus Christ. And think of what they are left behind for. Left for

what? They are left for one of two things. I will ask you to look at two scriptures, because I desire the living mighty word of God should speak to conscience and heart. The first scripture is in Revelation xix. 11-16, which is the book of judgment, remember. "I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns [diadems]; and he had a name written that no man knew but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called the Word of God. . . . And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords."

That is the judgment of the living, the judgment of the living lost, the judgment of those who are alive, who, having rejected the Lord Jesus Christ in His day of grace, await judgment. If they are alive when He comes, that is what is before them, left behind for judgment, left behind for all the indignation of the fierceness and wrath of God, when judgment will

be the rule, as mercy is the rule to-day. It is mercy and grace to-day, and, beloved friends, it is mercy and grace for the last time. Is there an unsaved sinner here to-night in this company? Is there one who is not washed in the precious blood of Christ? Is there one who has not fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before him? If Christ were to come to-night, think of what awaits you. If Christ were to come to-night, the door of mercy is closed against you for ever; nothing for you but judgment, wrath, eternal banishment from God's presence, eternal destruction for ever from the presence of God. Mark the words, solemn words, "Who shall be punished," says the Holy Ghost in the second Epistle to the Thessalonians, "who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe."

But there is another issue, if you die now rejecting Christ, if, notwithstanding all the grace, the mercy that is lavished on you, notwithstanding the preaching of the loving-kindness and tenderness, and goodness of God in the Lord Jesus Christ you still despise, and you still refuse, and you still reject, saying, like Felix of old, "Go thy way for this

time; when I have a convenient season, I will send for thee" (not just now, not yet); if, I say, you die in your sins—oh, think of what awaits you. Think of a man dying in his sins, of a man dying unwashed, of a man dying outside the shelter of the blood of Christ, dying without the acceptance that is, for the vilest sinner, in the Lord Jesus Christ. Beloved friends, I do not like to ring the changes on the awfulness of it, but one is bound to be persuasive, knowing the terror of the Lord. Oh, think of what it would be to be wrapped in a Christless shroud, to be put into a Christless coffin, to be laid in a Christless grave, and to sleep a Christless sleep; and then to wake up for the great white throne, to have part in the resurrection of the damned, to have part in the resurrection of the unjust, to be raised up for judgment, to be raised for banishment.

Oh, mark the words, read them, and may God write them on your consciences. (Rev. xx. 12-14.) "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them, and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell

were cast into the *lake of fire*. This is the second death.”—Yes, raised for the second death, brought out of your Christless grave for the second death ; awaked out of your Christless sleep, for the second death.

O friends, this is what remains for you, if you die rejecting Christ. If you live on, rejecting Christ, until He come, the prospect for you is the 19th chapter ; if you die rejecting Christ, no trumpet blast of resurrection shall blow over your grave, the rapture of the saints will not affect you, the opened graves of His own will not affect you—it will be for them as it was for Christ, a resurrection out from among the dead—but you will sleep on, if you die out of Christ ; your body, I mean, will sleep on in your Christless grave ; but oh ! when this resurrection comes, when this great white throne is set, and when the dead, small and great, stand before Him there, when the books are opened and men are judged according to their works : oh ! that is eternal banishment from God’s presence, that will be everlasting woe.

Oh let me entreat of you to-night, if I speak to one who is not saved in this company, let me point you to that past judgment that I spoke of at the beginning, let me point you to Calvary, let me point you to that blessed One who is upon the throne, but who was there upon the cross, He

who bore the judgment of God upon that tree, let me point you to Him. Indeed, everything seems to point to Him ; past, present, and future, with one great voice seem to point to Him, and the echo answers from opening graves as it points to Him, the wail of the damned points to Him, and the song of the redeemed points to Him; I point you to Him to-night. He is on the throne, He is there at God's right hand, having finished the work He is raised from the dead, and He is in heaven, His face radiant with the glory of God, the face that man spat upon, the visage that was more marred than any man's, is now glorified; and every ray of that glory that shines from the face of that Saviour, speaks of the completeness of that work that He finished on the cross. I do not say to you, Look at Him on the cross, for He is not on the cross; if He were, there were no gospel, no mercy, no hope. There is one thing that my soul revolts from, as a most hateful denial of the truth of God, a denial of the gospel, and that is a crucifix; a crucifix is the most solemn denial of the whole truth of God. Though Protestants in this country would not make a crucifix, and perhaps in their Protestantism would abhor a crucifix, yet if you think of Christ as on the cross, what are you, but in your thoughts cherishing a living crucifix before your eyes? And what is that better than if you had the thing sub-

stantially there in tangible shape and form before you? Oh, no, He is on the throne; He *was* on the cross, He *is* on the Father's throne; and very soon, He will come to the air for His own. I point you to Him in heaven; I point you to Him in the fulness and completeness of that work which He finished, the work of Him who was on the cross. The Lord, in His wondrous grace, His infinite grace, His present grace, but grace now acting for the last time, give to every heart here that knows Him not, to look to Him; the Lord give you to see the solemnity of this to-night, and bring it in power before your consciences.

And, beloved brethren in the Lord Jesus Christ, one word more, and then we separate. *He is coming.* We may never meet here again; we shall never meet again as we have been constituted to-night, that is evident; this company will never be repeated here again—I do not mean to say that there may not be a great many more meetings, but never one as constituted this evening. In future meetings, if He tarry, some here this evening will have passed away, and others have gone to different lands—but oh, friends, He is coming, and He is coming quickly. Are you ready? Child of God, are you ready? Sinner, are you ready? I address both classes to-night, are you ready? Are you ready in title? Are

you ready in affection? Are you watching?
Are you waiting?

The Lord, in His grace, bring His coming before
all our consciences, all our hearts, in its own
living, practical power, and to His name shall
be the praise, through Jesus Christ.



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