

# TRUTH FOR THE TIME;

BEING

NOTES OF ADDRESSES AT  
QUEMERFORD,

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# THE NEW PLACE.

ACTS VII. 55, 56.

BELOVED BRETHREN ! I have a very distinct and clear sense before the Lord, as to what is the actual cause of all our feebleness and failure ; it dates from the very beginning of man's history on this earth ; from the moment when man was turned out of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life. From that date to this, man's one and highest thought has been merely to get relief from guilt, and to find himself in easy circumstances in this world, where he is an exile. Look at Genesis iii. 9, "The Lord called unto Adam and said unto him, Where art thou ?" This question is not pursued, but a second is put in verse 13, namely, "What is this that thou hast done ?" and this last is what we are always ready to pursue ; what we have done, is the great thought that fills the exercised conscience ; all right so far, but overlooking the great and solemn fact, as to the place in which we are before God. In the case of Cain and Abel, the sense of distance from God is acknowledged. Abel presents his offering, and it is accepted, but his place is

not changed: and to-day the great lack in souls is, in not apprehending the new place into which the believer is brought. There is no doubt much besides this; but what is at the bottom of all individual and collective failure, is the lack of understanding and appropriating our new place.

In Romans we are saved in hope, we "rejoice in hope of the glory of God," we "abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost." But no new place; though there be newness of life, which necessarily belongs to a new place.

In the case of Enoch, the seventh from Adam, we learn what the full grace of God would accomplish. We are told, "He was not, for God took him." Here is a remarkable manifestation of the blessed fact, that God would have man with Himself.

Turn to Exodus iii. 8, "I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land, and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey," &c. We are all acquainted with the account of the journey of Israel from Egypt to Canaan; but before the journey was begun, as we find from the above passage, the purpose of God is made known; and that takes in two great things—one, the bringing *out* of Egypt; the other, the bringing *into* the land.

The commission was not only to bring them *out*, but to bring them *in*. Beloved! we are not

according to our Father's pleasure, nor are we in simple restfulness as to our acceptance, if we do not enter by faith the new place into which He in His grace has brought us; and a further fact is, that we have *no place but that*; and when we get even a glimpse of it, it alters immensely this place; this world through which we are passing, and all things in it, appear in another colour altogether. Can you say—Heaven is my place, and I have no other place? No doubt, it is a wonderful thing to know that I am a saved sinner on the *way* to heaven. But is that all? No. I am a saved sinner fitted for, and brought into a new place *now*. Delivered from my sins? Yes. From judgment? Yes. From the world—the place under judgment to which I belonged? Yes. Thank God that is all true. But there is more. He brings us into a new place, and fits us for it; and everything He does for us is in keeping with the place into which we are brought. I am made meet for it *now*; it is not I *shall* be, but *now* while I am down here. “Giving thanks unto the Father which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.” Everything here has a different complexion to me, because of that new place into which His grace has brought me. We are brought to God.

To refer again to Israel and the purpose of God to bring them out, and to bring them in. We are told that 600,000 men were brought out, but

how many of that number went in? Only two! And in the history of souls now, how many thousands are brought out, but how many are really brought in? How many taste the reality of being brought in? All have title to the place, but they do not know it—do not value it. Why did so many fail to reach Canaan? The Psalms supply the answer: "They despised the pleasant land" (Ps. cvi. 24); and Psalm lxxxi. shews us that, although they were brought out, they would not go in. "My people would not hearken to my voice," &c. How many Christians are like Israel: they despise the pleasant land and will not go in. Like Lot, if they lose their property they long to get it back, that they may be in easy circumstances here. Lot, no doubt, would thank God that he got back his goods: but what of Abraham? He was refreshed and blessed by Melchisedec.

We cannot shut our eyes to the fact, that few believers are clear as to their new place. When we began first we were Arminian, trying to get it. Now we are Calvinistic. We say, "We have it all, and that will do."

But that is *not* all. The Spirit of God is here to make it good to us. It is all ours. On the cross all was accomplished for us. I can look up the shining way and see it all done; but if we are not in it, if it has not been made good to us by the Spirit of God, there is no



power, no joy, no testimony. The Spirit of God is down here to lead us into the practical reality, the present enjoyment of all that Christ has done for us, to lead our hearts into the apprehension of what we *are*, and what we have in Him, in that place, where He now is. Every man's testimony must be in the power of the Spirit, and the measure and character of that testimony will be in proportion to the measure he occupies of what is really his. In proportion to his acquisition of what is heavenly, is his surrender of this world. If there were more heavenly acquisition, there would be more surrender of things here. And surrender must be a daily thing. It is not to make one great surrender and then stop. That is a fatal thing. It must be daily, and your acquisition too. If your acquisition is daily, your surrender will be daily.

In Exodus and Joshua, we find the two great parts of the work of Christ typified ; the one, by the Red Sea ; the other, by Jordan. In the one we have Christ's dying **FOR** us ; and in the other, our dying **WITH** Him. Where does the crossing of Jordan bring us ? Exodus xv. 17 tells us. "Thou shalt bring them in and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, in the sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established." In the Epistle to the Colossians, the Red Sea and the Jordan coalesce.

We are brought to God, but there is another thing, and one which we have practically to learn, even that we *have died with Him*. In Colossians ii. 20, we are "dead WITH Christ to the rudiments of the world." We have ended our history, and practically we have a new place. His death puts us outside everything. His death *for us* removes all between God and us; our death *with Him* removes all between us and God. At the Red Sea the enemy's power was completely broken. In Jordan I have died with Him, I am free of Satan and the flesh where they both are, and I am introduced into a new scene. There is not a thing against me; all was ended in the cross of Christ; I am clear out of every single thing that barred me from the presence of God. A person says, "I do not feel it;" I am not asking you to feel it, but to believe it. The thief on the cross, a man who was a scandal to the Jew, an off-scouring to society, was taken from the very lowest depths of shame and misery, and put into the brightest and most blessed place in company with Christ that day; he was in the new place that "day."

There is no question about there being a beautiful new place for the Christian, but people limit it to its being theirs when they die. Scripture shews that it is ours *now*! People say, "You get heaven when you die." No such thing. You have it *now*. It is not *your* death that

entitles you to it, but Christ's death. There is not a single shade that was between us and God, but Christ has removed it in His death. No person can be truly happy until he knows that he has a new place now, and that it is where Christ is.

Turn to Luke xv. The Lord is there opening out His grace. What do we find? This: that on the prodigal's reception by the father, he is brought into the house: he is entirely free of old things and has entered the new; there is no break in that scene of enjoyment: the found one is there in all the good pleasure of the father. These two things are connected with the new place: first, I am where I am fully fit for God; second, I am there according to the Father's pleasure. These parables portray what passes to-day between God and the repentant sinner. When the Shepherd found the sheep, His joy was not complete until He brought it "*home*." The real full joy of the Finder was when that spot was reached. And the joy of the Father was when the prodigal was brought into the *house*. *Then* it was he said, "It is meet that we should be merry and be glad;" and the blessed fact is, that we now share in the very joys of God by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.

Peter in his epistle speaks of "joy unspeakable and full of glory." That is not when we get

to heaven, but now. In how many souls is this made good now? How many of your acquaintances are in that joy? It is a wonderful thing to know it down here. But how few rise up to the blissful apprehension of what is theirs! How often is scripture reduced to the level of the thoughts and experiences of man!

In Luke xiv. we have the word, "Bring in *hither* the poor, the halt, the maimed, and the blind." And again, "Compel them to come *in*." Where is "*hither*"? Where is "*in*"? These passages are generally used in reference to bringing the sinner to the Saviour, but observe the point is, "That *my house* may be filled." The feast is there, not in the land now, but in the *house*; and this chapter sets forth the finish of the gospel; that is, to place the sinner in the house. The salvation effected for us by our Lord Jesus Christ as truly gives title and fitness for a place in heaven now, as it delivers from hell. The work that has brought you to heaven is the same work which took you out of hell. You rejoice that you are out of hell, why do not you rejoice that you are in heaven? Why do you not walk about with the sense—"That is my place, and *this* is not my place"? You have as good a title to be in Canaan as to be out of Egypt. In Hebrews xi. 14 we read, "For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country." It is that plainness I want to

see. It is a wonderful thing to find that I have got a place—one of unbounded joy and delight. I am not in it yet, but I have the power of that place down here. Many and great efforts have been made by earnest-minded Christians to be heavenly, and to reach this. They have sought to get rid of earthly things, refusing this thing, and that thing, in order to attain a heavenly state. But that is not the way. Get hold of your place there. Do you think a person can be much occupied with *this* place, if he has the joys of *that* place in his heart? Thank God we *are* heavenly, we *are* brought to that new place; and we have the Holy Ghost on this earth to bring down the joys of that heavenly place to fill our hearts whilst we journey through the old place, to which we belong. No one can be clear of the attractions and pleasures of the old place, without first knowing and tasting the joys of the new. If a man asked me what he should give up in order to be heavenly, I could not tell him; but I could say to him, "If you knew your place there, you would find there are many of these things about you which you would not want." If you get a little taste of heaven, there are many things (not wrong things) that you will be glad to do without; you will lose interest in them. Those who refused the feast (Luke xiv.) were looking for their joys in the wrong place. What was it that hindered the invited

ones coming to the supper? One had bought a piece of ground; another, five yoke of oxen, &c.; the things in themselves are not wrong, but the heart is set on things in the wrong place. And if we look round on the church to-day, what has been her ruin? Is it not from choosing an earthly portion, and not apprehending that her portion is heavenly?

Does she not even teach that if souls are walking in the favour of God, they will be blessed with earthly blessings? Woe betide you if you seek earthly blessings. The truth is, that the more thoroughly we are for Christ, the more thoroughly He will preserve us from the power of earthly blessings. I have to represent the heavenly Man in the place where He has been rejected, and my joys are all in the place where He is.

In the epistle to the Romans, and the epistle of Peter, we have the heavenly hope as a future thing; and in Hebrews we are seen running on to it. It is "the race set before us;" I run on overcoming every obstacle, as in a steeple chase. But how little the reality of this is displayed in our daily path! Were people to ask—"Where are you going?" and we replied, "Going to heaven," would they not often have ground for expressing surprise that we should encumber ourselves with the many weights and hindrances of this passing scene? A racer makes himself as free as he can.

I am looking out to Him who is up at the top, and I run on to that spot. What delights your heart? I believe that when a man has a real understanding that he belongs to that new place, the Spirit of God delights his heart with the things of that place. I used to pity those who are alone in the world; I pity no one now who has a room where he can find himself isolated from every one with the Lord; where he can have his feathers oiled to come out, and face all the roughness here.

In both Hebrews and Numbers we have a people going on to a new place, and with a knowledge of what the house of God is. It is the person who is really going on to the place who enjoys the house of God here; he gets a taste of heaven there. In Hebrews we find three things: 1, a priest to sympathise; 2, I am in the sanctuary with Him where I have a sense of the blessedness of His company; and 3, The race. I am racing, overcoming every obstacle to get to Him up there. I have infirmity, and I get His help. I find Him in the sanctuary; I taste His company there. I am helped out of my infirmity for this, and then I race on to where He is.

So far I have dwelt on the importance to us *individually*, of the new place, where the *Gospel* sets us. If you are not enjoying it—you are not according to the Father's pleasure,

and you are not in simple rest as to yourself. 2ndly. You are not out of the earth—have not given up seeking earthly things. Many are earthly who are not worldly. If you are earthly you are on a dangerous precipice. It is the beginning of a downward road: “earthly, sensual, devilish.” 3rdly. You are not enjoying the house of God here. 4thly. If you do not keep the hope of heaven before you, you do not occupy heavenly ground. You will never progress. You cannot advance in truth, or be educated up to the Head. It is in the new place that Christ is everything and in all. When you have reached that, you know the Head; you have tasted the old corn of the land. In Colossians i. 5 Paul prays for them according to the hope laid up for them in heaven.” We are risen with Christ: and are brought into a position “where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is everything and in all;” and there we find the Head.

Further—It is only in the new place that we can know union, and this brings us to the importance of it to us *corporately*, or as the *church*.

In Ephesians we are raised up together and made to sit together in the heavenlies; and it is there, and when we “Know the exceeding greatness of his power towards us,” that we



understand and enjoy union. Necessarily we cannot be in the power of it if we do not know it. If we are not on heavenly ground, we cannot enjoy the things that are there. If we have not passed over in spirit to the place, we are not in the power of the place; we do not know union. *It is ours*, but we do not *know* it. We are not united on earth, but in heaven. "The Spirit's power has oped the heavenly door." Many pious divines, such as Rutherford and others, adored their Saviour, but had no intelligence or apprehension of union with Christ. Had they known it, they would have been delighted beyond measure. You must enjoy His company before you can know union or appreciate it. If we are in the enjoyment of Christ's company, nothing gives such absolute joy as the fact of our being united to Him: it is the consummation. When we know it, the whole character of our life is altered. When we are in association with Christ in heaven, He dwells in our hearts by faith, as in Ephesians iii. 17. Chapters iv. v. vi. 1-10, is the heavenly practice; and this is to be displayed in the common relationships, and daily pursuits of life. It affects a man in his business (ver. 28); he is to "labour, working with his hands the thing which is good," &c. The fathers are to bring up the children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, &c. A man is to come out in quite a new way on the

earth ; he is to appear in heavenly colours, and in keeping with his heavenly dignity.

In chapter vi. 11 we come to the heavenly warfare ; and for this you must be consciously on heavenly ground, or you cannot use the armour. If you are not on heavenly ground what do you want the armour for ? You do not want it till you face the foe. In Romans you want the armour of light in the midst of darkness : here it is, the armour of God for your maintenance in the place to which you are brought. The *whole* armour of God must be taken up ; the loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness ; feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Above all taking " the shield of faith wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked : and take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." In chapters iv. and v. we are furnished with the finest field of practice, but the moment you seek to carry it out, you meet the most unrelenting foe ; and he will not allow you to advance one inch if he can prevent it. If you want easy times you must sleep, and then as far as you are concerned the devil will sleep ; but if you move on, he will move on, and oppose every movement. If you are valiant for the truth, and standing for it, he will be your unsparing opponent ; his wiles will be unweariedly employed against you ;

he will use every stratagem to displace you from heavenly ground. He works all round in everything; at every turn some wile awaits us; and we must remember that we cannot be invincible unless we are invulnerable.

And what next? "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit; and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; and for me that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds." Victorious over the foe, we are at liberty to give ourselves to prayer for all saints, and for the spread of the testimony.

I will just recapitulate the points which we have been considering, as to the importance to us individually and corporately, of the new place that is given us.

*First*, as to the individual believer.

1. You are not according to your Father's pleasure, nor are you in simple confidence of heart as to your own acceptance, unless you know that the Father's house is now your *home*.
2. As heaven is your home, you are severed from the earth.
3. The more fully heaven is your home, the more you appreciate God's house on the

earth, for there you taste of heavenly things.

4. You grow into the mystery.

*Secondly*, as to the saints corporately—the Church.

1. It is in heaven by the Holy Ghost that we know union with Christ. (Eph. i. 19.)
2. In association with Him there, we learn to be heavenly. He dwells in our hearts by faith.
3. We then display the glory of God here, by Him who “is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.”
4. Then we withstand all the powers of wickedness in the heavenlies.

I cannot convey to you even my own impression of what the apprehension of the new place would be to you. The Lord alone can shew it to you; but I feel comfort in the confidence that He will make it good to you; and thus you will not only have victory over the adversary, but in proportion as you hold on in the power of the Spirit to your heavenly place and portion, your joy and power will be in that proportion, both as an individual and in the church.

He has said, “I go to prepare a place for you,” a place in the Father’s house; and not only does He add, “I will come again and receive you unto

myself:" but—I will send the Comforter—I not only give you a new place, but I send down a divine power from that place to dwell with you in a twofold way, and enable you to be here according to my pleasure.

May we so understand what it is to belong now to heaven—that new place, that we may truly answer to the good pleasure of our God and Father whilst we journey down here.

J. B. S.



# THE PERSON IN THE PLACE.

ACTS XXVI. 13-18. PHILIPPIANS III. 7-21.

I WOULD add one word, beloved brethren : and in doing so turn to these particular scriptures, because they furnish us with the divine instance of a man who apprehended what has been so blessedly set before us this morning.

We must each, I am assured, bow to the fact, that it is the change of *place* that tests us all ; this is really the point, I may say, where the rub comes ; I am confident it is the change of place that tests us all. And we may mark, if we trace the history of the people of God through scripture, that it was always so. This is strikingly seen in the two great parts of Israel's history ; in what followed their passage through the Red Sea, as well as what followed the crossing of Jordan. The desert followed the one, the land the other ; in both cases there was change of place, and it was that which tested them : and though they had been the subjects of God's power in such a wonderful way in their deliverance from Egypt, when they reach the wilderness we find them saying to Moses, "Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast

thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? for it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness." Again, when they crossed the Red Sea, and came to Marah, they murmured against Moses; and again, when the land was before them, it was the sight of that land through the report of the spies that tested them.

There is one thing in passing I would remark upon, and that is, I feel we ought to take to heart our proneness to dissociate ourselves from the state of the whole church of God. We must see and own, that we should be more answering to the mind of God, and of Christ, if we were in the habit of looking at it in its entirety: how the whole is affected by what is passing. If we look around, how unmistakeable it is that a low and earthly character of position has laid hold upon the saints as a whole. If you came in contact with them as some do, not only those connected with national religion and dissent, but those also who are, so to speak, unattached, you would see the utterly earthly nature of the thing they are in. It is with them a *Saviour for earth*; what they possess and support is entirely on the level of things down here. If this were apprehended in its force, we should the more readily see the truth of the words of our brother this morning. It is the condition the church is in, the low ground the church is on. We cannot

dissociate ourselves from the effects of it. May we take it to heart, and in exercise and brokenness of spirit, come within the range of God's voice here to-day.

One thing further came before me whilst listening to the remarks that have been made, that I am sure should be of immense comfort to us, and must be, if we are in the full power of it: and that is in reference to the Person who is in that new place to which we are brought. In these two scriptures which I have read, both Acts and Philippians, this is the grand reality which comes out so prominently and blessedly. In the former, the apostle relates the wonderful appearing of Jesus to him, what He said, and how he was commissioned by Him to be a minister to the Gentiles. In the latter (Phil. iii.) we find the great practical effects of what took place in the apostle's soul. The moment when this marvellous display of grace is made, is the very moment when the full rage and hate of Saul had reached its height. He had gone to the fullest extent to which it is possible for a man to go in the hatred of his heart to the Saviour. In that moment the light came from the place—from heaven! What made the whole change with such rapidity? It was this: as he journeyed on the way to Damascus, a light shone from heaven above the brightness of the sun; far above all created or earthly light; and that



heavenly voice addresses Saul in those words, "Why persecutest thou me?" And all this transpires at the very time when we could least expect it. What a wonderful reality it is that heaven comes in when you least look for it! At the darkest stage in that man's history, this heavenly light, and this voice from heaven, comes in to assert the love of God's own heart to claim that vessel for Himself. Saul of Tarsus is His chosen vessel, and he is fitted and displayed as such, by the revelation in him of this heavenly Saviour. The light and the voice both come from heaven, and the effect and consequence of this is, that ever afterwards he is closely and distinctly connected with heaven, manifestly linked up with that spot from whence the light came. This is the simple history.

But there is another point of great beauty here, of which I would now speak. It is blessed and comforting to notice *when* it was that the apostle got back his natural sight. Under the effect of this heavenly vision he loses it, but he is brought into acquaintance with Jesus in glory. He was the pattern man "to those who should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting;" and therefore, there was a speciality in the display of God's grace to him. The effect of the heavenly vision was that he lost his sight. When we think of his losing his natural sight under such circumstances to reach such immense

gain, we are ready to say, how good a thing it would be for us to lose our natural sight! How often are souls balked and hindered in their perception and enjoyment of heavenly things by what the eye sees here! The attractions, the allurements and sweets of earth. How often earthly things are the real difficulty to heavenly progress! How true it is that there is a marked difference between earth and the world! Numbers are clear of the world—the age, the maxims and ways of the age; but it is the earth that turns them aside. Many a saint would shun the actual pleasures of the world, but for all that, have the heart detained by what is earthly; the natural eye and inward affections are so easily affected by objects down here, and often with an immense loss to the soul.

The apostle lost the power of sight for three days, “and neither did eat nor drink.” But that which is so blessed is the fact, that he gets back his natural sight, in connection with his reception of that heavenly power; the same moment that he gets the Holy Ghost, he receives his sight. What could be a more distinct intimation to him, as it were, from heaven, that, henceforth, Christ and His place were to be his all engrossing object and delight? Ananias comes to him, and in all the tenderness of the grace of the message that had reached his ear, he addresses him, “Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus that appeared unto

thee in the way that thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost." (Acts ix. 17.) What a word for Saul ! Everything here passed from him ! That blessed power which came down from heaven connected him with heaven where it came from, and with the One in heaven.

How true it was in Saul's case, as expressed in the hymn :—

“ And heavenly light makes all things bright,  
Seen in that blissful gaze.”

That blessed power, the Holy Ghost Himself, had come down to dwell in him, and unite him to the Saviour in glory ; and so consciously was his soul ever after filled with the sense of these wondrous realities, that we find from those verses we have read in Philippians iii., that he had counted, and did count, all things loss for Christ. That living Person in glory had so found His way into that man's soul and affections, that everything else was turned out ; all the things he had grasped, up to that time, he let them go. He is severed from the power and attractions of everything here : counts it all dross and dung. Everything now that he has got is in heaven. Manifestly his whole condition and state is there, and he only waits with longing and expectant heart to be brought there. Oh ! how truly he

looked for the Saviour, a *heavenly* Saviour. Saul had known Christ after the flesh, but now, henceforth, he knows Him as such no more, the whole thing is changed, the old things are passed away. Beloved brethren! I would say, are we thus *watching* for the return of a heavenly Saviour? Not only correct as to *waiting*, but, in true affection, *watching*?

I may just mention, that a short time since, in listening to a beloved brother, speaking of the Lord's coming, he related a conversation that he had with an aged sister, who was one of the few now left of the little company, whose hearts God had opened to see the true position of the church, as separated, and watching for the One who is coming. She remembered well when these and kindred truths of God's word were recovered to the saints of God, of course, as found in the blessed Scriptures; how, when they first dawned upon souls in their living power and reality, such was their effect, so really did they look for Christ, that they did not like to take a house even for a year! The positive daily expectation of the return of the Lord Jesus so filled the heart, that the thought of settling down here had no place. It was no mere acceptance of a doctrine, but such a reality, such a living hope, which laid hold of their hearts with such power, that the coming of the Lord Himself was directly before the soul.

Would to God that that truth, and what has

been before us this morning, may lay hold of our souls in that living way to-day. Oh ! that He may lead our hearts into a truer apprehension of our new place, and of our blessed Saviour in that place, by the power of His Spirit down here. True enough it is, our hearts are too large (however much they may cling to things here) to find their satisfaction, rest, or joy here. Things here are all too little to fill our hearts, as the hymn says—

“ No earthly songs can joy afford  
Like heavenly melody.”

May God, by His grace and power, give the truth a firm grasp and hold of our hearts for His blessed Son's sake.

W. T. T.



# THE HINDRANCES TO ENTERING CANAAN.

NUMBERS XIII. 32 ; XIV. 10.

I HAVE read these passages to turn your attention to three direct oppositions and hindrances that were offered to the people of God getting into the land that was before them, and to which they had a full title. In doing this, I have not so much before me the thought of tracing in detail the history of what takes place, but rather that we may see the principles that are set forth ; the distinct and separate principles which each one contains, and which, as we see them, should call forth exercise of soul in us, and thus be helpful to us. It is happier in one sense, to set the direct blessing before souls, but what we want to do is to help one another ; and for this, we must speak of things as they really are. We must see what were the actual difficulties, and also, how they were met. It is not only to point out the difficulties, but to see what helps us in them, and thus to be encouraged.

Chapter xiii. opens with the sending out of the spies, and it might appear from it, that the

thought proceeded from the Lord Himself; but in Deuteronomy i. it is clear that it originated with the people. Moses says in verse 22, "And ye came near unto me every one of you, and said, *We* will send men before us, and they shall search out the land, and bring us word again by what way and into what cities we shall come." Israel having proposed it, Moses accedes to it, and the Lord allows it: but in truth, such a course was equal to questioning whether Jehovah was as good as His word. The devil came to the Lord and said, "Cast thyself down;" but He replies, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." It could not have been the Lord who suggested their sending spies; it proceeded from the unbelief of the people. God permits them to try their own way, but undoubtedly with a view of teaching them lessons; and so He may often suffer us to tread a path of our own making out, but His hand is over every circumstance in it.

Instead of getting encouraged, they got discouraged, through sending the spies. True, they returned with a fine sample of the fruit of the land, but the beautiful bunch of grapes, so great that it could not be carried by one man, did not serve to encourage them to go up and take possession; the report the messengers gave of the giants and walled cities, weighed more strongly with them. We are apt to have all sorts of reasons for not going on.

But there is another side : and now we come to Caleb and Joshua's testimony to the people, and the striking summary they give for going into the land. It is very blessed the way they put it. They (as it were) put the thing into a nutshell ; their words are, " If *the Lord delight in us*, then he will bring us into the land and give it us." Had they believed in the Lord's delight in them, all would have been settled. These two faithful servants were fully assured of God's ability and pleasure to bring them in ; but mark how their words of encouragement are received. They take up stones to stone them. And why ? It was for saying, " If the Lord delight in us, then he will bring us in." But all this transpires under the eye of God ; and what appears at this moment ? The glory of the Lord ! Blessed support for Caleb and Joshua ! Just at the time when they are standing for God, and when the people are taking up stones to stone them, the glory of Jehovah breaks forth in the tabernacle of the congregation before all the children of Israel. What a lesson ! How true it is now, that if we are without the sense of His delight in us, we must fail to enter on our heavenly portion, and be liable to wander, we know not where.

Well, you know the history of Israel and their wanderings. They are left to wander forty years in the wilderness. Caleb and Joshua too,



but in a very different spirit to the rest. And now, passing on to Numbers xxxii. we come to another effort of the enemy to prevent them from *going on*—from entering into the land.

We must always bear in mind, that it is that which the Lord has provided for His people that Satan opposes; he raises opposition, the moment we set our faces to go on to the place the Lord has for us. Here we read in the early verses that the two and a half tribes, the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad, had a very great multitude of cattle, and they saw the land of Jazer, and the land of Gilead, that behold the place was a place for cattle, and they came and spake to Moses and to Eleazar the priest, and unto the princes of the congregation, saying, Ataroth, and Dibon, and Jazer, and Nimrah, and Heshbon, and Elealah, and Shebam, and Nebo, and Beon, even the country which the Lord smote before the congregation of Israel, is a land for cattle, and thy servants have cattle: Wherefore, said they, if we have found grace in thy sight, let this land be given unto thy servants for a possession, and *bring us not over Jordan*.

Now this is a very wily thing; they do not in apparent wilfulness say, we will not go over; but they look at the land, and see that it is one that suits their cattle, and they say, if we have found grace in thy sight—"if so," bring us not over. They plead the grace that was leading

them on to stay in the place that suited them. But the solemn fact behind their plausible argument, was, that they were ready to supplant the provision which God in His love and goodness had made for them, by a provision of their own, for advantages which were nearest to *their* hearts. But what was Canaan, their true and proper portion, to *God's* heart and to His eye? A land the Lord God careth for; His eyes ever on it; they did not want a portion in it, "they despised that pleasant land."

It is important and solemn to see the link between this case and the one we have previously referred to. Here, Moses having heard their desire, connects it at once with that which we have seen arose from a want of the sense of God's delight in them; when they have not that, they take care for themselves. And so it will ever be; when people have not confidence in God, they will always be catering for themselves. Moses' answer which we get in verse 7, is—  
"And wherefore *discourage* ye the hearts of the children of Israel from going over into the land which the Lord hath given them? Thus did your fathers when I sent them from Kadesh-barnea to see the land. For when they went up into the valley of Eshcol, and saw the land, *they discouraged* the heart of the children of Israel, that they should not go into the land which the Lord had given them." Here is brought out the

principle of how we affect one another. These two and a half tribes might have thought and said—it is only a matter for ourselves; but Moses says, “Why do you discourage your *brethren*?” There is not one of our hearts but is ready for this state of things; and we know the effect of it very well, finding an excuse for this sort of settling-down path, because others are in it. How often people are ready to follow in a path of others, which suits them, without any real exercise of heart before God for themselves. It is nearly akin to lacking the sense of the Lord’s delight in us. Many who saw the two and a half tribes seeking a place this side Jordan might like to fall in with them under their shelter. “Make straight paths for your feet, that that which is lame be not turned aside.” (Heb. xii. 13.)

If we pursue the history of these two and a half tribes, we shall find that, just as the Lord gave them the desire of their hearts, so He sends leanness into their souls: and just as they were first in being ready to give up their portion on the other side Jordan, so we learn from the book of Kings (1 Kings xxii. 3), they were the first to lose their portion under the hand of the enemy. (1 Chron. v. 25; 2 Kings x. 33.) After they had gone across Jordan, they came deliberately back to settle on this side Jordan, and they are the first to lose their land.

It is a great thing to see that there is no

ground for us to stand upon, short of the ground the Lord has for us. There is no place where we can count on the Lord's keeping, but the place where He Himself has brought us. People say—if we walk in all the truth of the other side Jordan, if we are to hold to the truth of the church, and of our being dead and risen with Christ, and being seated in Him in the heavenlies, we shall never get on here—in our business, or in our families. Let us be assured, whatever may be said in that way, that the only position we can hold, is that in which the Lord has put us. If we try a path *easier* for ourselves, we soon fail. If we think that we can succeed better by allowing ourselves a little more license because of the present broken state of the church, we shall soon find how all power to walk worthy of the Lord is gone, and close the short and humbling history of the occupation of this self-chosen portion, by being forced out of it, even as these two and a half tribes, and Lot before them. There was another, and a present consequence of this self-chosen position which is worthy of note; another voice of warning making them conscious of what they forfeited by not allowing the Lord to choose out their inheritance for them; but a voice, alas, to be silenced by building on “this side of Jordan a great altar to see to.” “Ed”—a pattern—a substitute, for the altar at Shiloh.

Joshua xxii. records the history of this, and

verse 19 gives the true moral bearing of the act, contrasting "*your* possession" with "*the possession of the Lord*, wherein the Lord's tabernacle dwelleth." The altar of Ed was professedly for the sake of their children, to preserve their link with Israel. What a link !

Joshua iv. 6, 7, speaks of the Lord's thought for their children in the voice of those twelve stones, and how different from the voice of Ed ! "Have not we parents to challenge ourselves as to how far our children, seeing in our lives the effect of the holy atmosphere of Jordan's western bank, and what answers in us morally to those twelve stones, have had such blessed exercise awakened in them, as to prompt the inquiry, "What mean ye by these stones ?"

Another effort of the enemy to hinder God's people going on into the land is through Balaam, hired by Balak. Four times he goes to the Lord to seek to move Him to curse Israel, resulting only in his mouth being opened to tell out "the vision of the Almighty" in those four lovely prophecies, so rich in the Lord's thoughts and purposes of blessing for Israel, His judgment on those who oppose them, and His careful remembrance and appreciation of the smallest kindness to them. But the wickedness of Balaam, and his love of Balak's promised reward is so great, that while he tells Balak how useless is the attempt to get the Lord to curse Israel, yet

he teaches Balak to put a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, betraying them into unholy associations, ecclesiastical and moral, of a character which draws down on the offenders the righteous governmental judgment of the Lord. The faithfulness of Phinehas stays the plague, that the Lord consumed not the children of Israel in His wrath; he earns for himself and his seed "a covenant of peace," an everlasting priesthood; the people are numbered, and again pass on their way, for "I am the Lord, I change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."

Numbers xxii. to xxv. gives us this solemn and instructive history. Revelation ii. 14, discloses the sorrowful picture of Numbers xxv. to be the fruit of Balaam's counsel to Balak; a counsel which in Pergamos had acquired the form of a *doctrine*, held by some among them, not in connection with idolatry, but with the profession of the name of Christ. Alas! in the house of God, where "the doctrine of God our Saviour" (Titus ii.) only should have been held and "adorned," a doctrine essentially characterised by *separation* from evil, as that of Balaam was characterised by an effort to *minge* "the precious and the vile." We know, alas, how successful this leaven too—that of Balaam—has proved in staying the heart and feet of many a saint of God from going on with the Lord into His portion for them.

Have we not to challenge our hearts as to how much we breathe of the bracing air of that holy spot, where are those twelve stones from Jordan's bed, and Gilgal with its new order of passover—where is that old corn, and where the Captain of the Lord's host becomes needful and known? For this is the place of true conflict, and the sanctuary, the combined effect of which produces those moral characteristics, which stamp aright our communion, ministry, and witness—as heavenly citizens, with loins girded, and lights burning, and we ourselves “like unto men that wait for their Lord.” It is one thing to speak of being quickened together with Christ, and raised up together and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; quite another, as those who are “circumcised with the circumcision made without hands,” and “buried with him in baptism,” to always bear about in our body the dying of Jesus, that His life may be manifested in our body. Thus are the life and nature, to which these hindrances address themselves, kept by the power of an ungrieved Spirit, in the place where the cross has put them; and that risen life, to which Christ is everything, free to “seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on at the right hand of God.”

J. B.



# THE THREE OPPOSING POWERS.

EXODUS IV. 29-31.

I THINK, beloved brethren, we must all feel encouraged to-day, that the Lord has given us, in any measure, to feel what our hindrances are. True, we do not want to be occupied with them, but if we really learn what they are, and feel them as before the Lord, I think we may conclude it is a sign that we are on the move. Directly we begin to move we feel the hindrances. The hindrances might exist without our having any sense of them; just as some one has said, if a company of persons were sitting on a form, and, unknowingly, a cord was passed round them, it would not be felt until they began to move. Therefore, if our souls are awakened to feel the hindrances, that indicates we have desire to move on, and we may thank the Lord that He has brought before us this heavenly truth. We have got a little taste, to-day, of the heavenly light, of which we have just been singing. He puts His hand on us, and leads us to count on His power, to free us from every hindrance, and conduct us up that shining way, by that heavenly light. "That way is upward still." That heavenly light



shining down to us will conduct us up to the place it comes from. In the verses I have read, we get the first acceptance of the gospel message to the people of Israel. Our brother was reading, this morning, the Scripture, stating that God had come down not only to deliver His people out of Egypt, but to bring them into Canaan. We find that Moses was to do certain signs, to attest the truth of this message. He and Aaron come to the people, and "Aaron spake all the words which the Lord had spoken unto Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people;" and, for the moment, they believe, and bow their heads and worship. This, we may say, is the first acceptance of the message: they believed and worshipped, though only in an outward way.

Now come the hindrances. First, all the power of Pharaoh is at once put forth to hinder. That, we know, represents the power of Satan. Here, I would just remark, that there is a striking correspondence between the hindrances which are found in connection with the history of Israel, and what we have in the parable of the Sower, recorded in the gospels. The very same powers which are there seen to hinder the first reception of the gospel, hinder us afterwards as we go on. We want to be clear as to the way they are met for us. In the parable of the Sower, the three opposing forces are the devil, the flesh, and the world. We find, in the history of Israel, the

same hindering powers, and their record is for our admonition.

The first opposition is from the power of Satan as seen in Pharaoh. He is determined not to let the people go, and seeks thus to frustrate the purpose of God. How is this met? He who plagued Egypt, and smote all their firstborn, sheltered His own people under the blood of the paschal lamb, and wrought their full deliverance by His own power in the depths of the Red Sea. He who laid low the power of the enemy was Jehovah Himself, but it was by faith that *they* passed through the sea, which the Egyptians assaying to do, were drowned.

In the New Testament, the three Persons of the Trinity are brought in, in connection with the three opposing powers: Opposed to the devil, the Lord Jesus Christ (1 John iii. 8); opposed to the flesh, the Holy Ghost (Gal. v. 17); and, thirdly, opposed to the world, the Father. (1 John ii. 15.) This is no new suggestion, and we shall see how it is borne out as we go on.

The first great thing for the soul to apprehend is, that the whole work of deliverance is finished by Him who came to destroy the works of the Devil. It is not that it *has* to be done, but *it is done*. The blessed Son of God has come, and as a Man in this world, has shed His blood, has died and risen again. The whole work of deliverance is accomplished; the power of Satan,

and, so far, all that would hold the soul in bondage, is entirely met, sins put away, the whole power of Pharaoh, as it were, laid low in the death and resurrection of the Lord. The blood on the doorpost in Egypt, sheltered from judgment, the Red Sea completely delivered from the power of Pharaoh, therefore the youngest believer can know that Satan is a vanquished foe, and no longer able to press death and judgment upon his conscience. We are thus placed on the new ground of redemption, cleared from Egypt, so that there is nothing to bar our progress, according to the word, "Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward," because of the wonderful fact that we have been set free. But that is not the *whole* of liberty, though it is the first great step. Liberty, in its completeness, is not what we are set free *from*, but what we are set free *in*. Being set free, because He has died and risen, we are in *all* the effects of that work before God. We are as free from death and judgment as the Lord, and by that same work brought to God, not now as a people, but as sons, delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of the Son of His love. The world now becomes a wilderness to those who, through grace, are delivered, and who are before God in the liberty of children. If we turn to Deuteronomy viii. 2, 3, we get the purpose of the wilderness. This is God's way to teach us

what the flesh is. The Lord brings us there to shew what sort of people we are that He has loved. It is not to shew *Him* the kind of persons we are. He has no need of discovering anything about us, but the word is, "And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee, these forty years, in the wilderness, to humble *thee*, and to prove *thee* to know what was in *thine* heart." He says, as it were, *I* knew when I began with you what sort of people you were, but I will teach *you* what sort of people I have taken up. Nothing that came out in them could alter one single thing as to the Lord's purpose, but the wilderness was to teach them what they were, about whom He so purposed.

It is an immense comfort to know that all those purposes about us are verified in Him, the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who is the Yea and Amen of the promises of God. "He that stablisheth *us* [the apostles] with *you* [this reaches to the feeblest believer] in Christ . . . . is God." The experience of what we are has no place there. It is useful to teach us what the flesh is, which we recognise as condemned in the cross, but it cannot alter His love or set aside the place in which grace has put us. No! His love never flags, never alters one bit. How could I say, "I love Him," if I had not a sense of His grace who has taken me up? I can say to Him, You have drawn me after yourself. You have cast your

look of love upon me. It is Thou that hast done it. I think Peter came to this, when he said, "Thou knowest all things ; Thou knowest that I love thee." The Lord would have us aware that He knows all, so that there should be no reserve before Him, but the assurance that He has drawn us to Himself, and stablished us in Christ for eternal blessing.

And beloved, it is here we find power and support for the wilderness, in that the Spirit of God brings the sense of His wondrous love into our souls, and so we are sustained and kept.

When Israel began the wilderness, the second opposing power is known. The flesh murmurs and lusts ; then they tempted God by saying, "Is the Lord among us or not ?" Does He care for me ? They were brought into the wilderness to be with God. He was there with them and went before them. Hence, it is said (chap. xvi. 10), that "they looked *toward the wilderness*, and behold the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud." He was taking the way of the wilderness, and they were with Him there.

The moment there comes the call of God, it must be to quit the place we are in ; just as with Abraham, so with us. We were in, and of a scene, opposed to God, where we could not be with Him. He has led us forth, we are now *brought to Him*. Just as Israel said at the outset, "Thou hast guided us in thy strength

unto *thy holy habitation*;" but how soon was that followed by the question, "Is the Lord among us or not?" This is the chiding of the flesh.

The Spirit of God is given to us that we may go through the wilderness, glorying in tribulation (Rom. v. 3-5), "because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost."

The believer now has to go through the wilderness in company with the Holy Ghost, just as Israel had the companionship of Jehovah. Yes, it is a great and blessed fact, that it is our privileged portion to start in the wilderness with the Spirit of God shedding abroad in our hearts God's love, so that there is not a single circumstance in the wilderness that befalls us, which may not be, through the power of the Spirit, an occasion for realising the love of God. It is this which meets the opposing power of the flesh. It is still in us, but the Spirit lusts against it, so that we may not do the things that we would; but whatever we are, the love of God is toward us, and there is this sweet encouragement, that His Spirit dwells in us, to minister this love to our souls, all through the path here, until we are brought right home to Himself, conformed to Christ in glory. The flesh, indeed, cannot please God, and the wilderness being the place where flesh is proved, the professor, who knows not the energy of the Spirit of God, falls there; while it is the supply of the Spirit of Christ Jesus which

enables the believer to—"Rejoice in the Lord always," and to "be careful for nothing."

The third danger is from the world.

If we go back again to what we have been looking at, as typical in the history of Israel, we have, in Numbers xxi., the brazen serpent. At the end of the wilderness the death of the Lord Jesus Christ is set forth in the brazen serpent. Forty years have been passed there, and still the flesh is seen as incurable. Hence, Christ in death is presented, not so much as meeting the judgment of God due to our sins; that was met by the blood on the lintel; but rather sin in its nature, the poison of sin, and that death becomes also the way out of the place where flesh is tested, and puts us in a new place, becoming the door into heavenly things. Hence, what follows the lifting up of the serpent, with its healing and life-giving power, is the springing well. Here, I believe, they get, as it were, the first taste of what belonged to the land. The well belonged, in its nature, to the land, a springing up thing (compare Deut. viii. 7), like the Holy Ghost in us, a well of water springing up to everlasting life, and thus revealing heavenly things. Christ in death not only clears us from judgment, but the Son of man is lifted up to bring us into heavenly association. Hence, in the power of the Spirit of God, as given ("the water that I shall give him"), we possess the life, not of the first man, but of the risen and

heavenly Man who has been lifted up out of the earth in death, but is now beyond it, "For in that he liveth he liveth unto God." This life rises up to, and has its enjoyment in the heavenly things, revealed by the Son. In Him the Father is known in grace, and worshipped.

In connection with our dangers as to the world, I would turn to Luke xii. 29-32. These verses speak for themselves. How cheering are the words, "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." That is very like the word we have been reminded of, "If the Lord delight in us, he will bring us in." He *does* delight in us! Here we can rest assured that we are the objects of His good pleasure. We move on in a scene of danger, where all is not of the Father, a world whose whole lies in the wicked one; but we are the subjects of His unceasing care. Wonderful fact, that He had thoughts about us before the foundation of the world! We need to see what love is, in its own eternal fulness, and we are brought to taste that love. We are, in ourselves, nothing but little items, yet He, in His love, takes us up, that He may bring us into the kingdom of the Father, into that region of affection, into that home, where His own divine affections unhinderedly flow out to us, in and through the Son of His love; and, already, by His Spirit, He conducts our hearts there. If we get into that blissful scene,



if the Spirit brings us there, what is all this poor world to us ! It is not trying to be unworldly. We shall never attain to it thus. If we really know what the love of the Father is, to give us the kingdom, our hearts are there, because we know that we belong there ; it is not trying to *think* about it, but the life of Christ in us rising up to its own proper sphere. Our feet are preserved from the entanglement of the world by the love of the Father getting possession of our souls. If the Spirit of God reveals to us all that the Father is to us, we must bow our heads and worship. Our treasure *is there* ; our attitude is waiting and watching for our Lord, our “loins girded,” and our “lights burning.” Our hearts are in the place where our treasure is. The Spirit conducts us there, and every obstacle is surmounted by the Lord Himself having possession of our souls.

May He grant that we may know better and better what that means.

T. H. R.



# DELIVERANCE AND POWER.

ROMANS VII. 21-25 ; VIII. 1-17.

I DESIRE to say a few words, beloved brethren, on these familiar scriptures ; and before doing so, I would just remark, that I felt much this morning what our brother was saying, that we must all admit how the word rubbed us ; or I may use another expression, how we were hit by the word ; and clearly this must be the effect of true ministry. Ministry, I think you will find, always has two effects : on the one hand it discovers to us the hindrances, on the other it ministers strength. There are two actions—cleansing us from what is defiling, and forming us according to the object presented.

I felt when we were speaking of the earth and the world this morning, that it came home pretty close, and I pray that it may come home more closely. How is it that we are so easily affected or hindered by circumstances ? Why has ministry so often to deal with our consciences, and shew us what we are practically, and where we are defective ? The answer is, we do not walk as those that are dead. It is the old self or

nature which is revived, which is attracted by things below, whether earthly, worldly, or gross evil. The revival of it is so humbling. We *are* dead with Christ, but we are not in practice. The easiest and simplest thing in Christianity is the thing most easily let slip. A dead man is not affected by circumstances. The Christian is a dead man. It is not what he *ought* to be, but what he *is*. It is a pretty sweeping ministry; it cuts all our heads off if we are alive, and makes us see how little we have walked as Christians. We have to look it in the face. Perhaps we have not all accepted the fact. That is what led me to read this chapter. It may appear elementary, but I want to begin at the beginning, in case there should be any one here who has not really accepted the truth that we are dead; and a person who does not know anything of the experience given in Romans vii. has not accepted it.

I get in this experience what I find in myself, what I find in Christ, and what I find in His cross. The result is the knowledge that God condemned sin in the flesh at the cross, and that the power of life is in Christ, and not in myself where the law of sin and death applies. We have four things: first God's statements—God's facts. Then the doctrine that contains them. Then christian experience. Then christian practice. It is impossible to have christian practice

until you have accepted God's facts. Failure in christian practice is owing to failure in the apprehension of christian position, or to not abiding in Christ if it is apprehended. Lower the Christian's place and position in Christ in any way, shape, or form, and down will come everything else; therefore, the christian position and place is of the highest moment. We may fail and come short of it in practice, "In many things we all offend," but having got the true measure, Christ in the presence of God, the light will judge me sooner or later if I trifle with it.

Our brother was in the Old Testament this morning. I began with Romans vii., for this reason: the experience there presented, is of one who is not delivered. It is necessary experience, but not christian experience as such. You will find that there are three things used in the deliverance of a soul. The Spirit, Christ a living Object, and His death. Let us first look at the difficulty.

We have two natures, the old nature being found to be stronger than the new, and the result of this experience as to the power of sin within, is to draw from the quickened soul the cry, "Who shall deliver me from this body of death?" Mark the words, "this body of death." And again, "I know that in me, that is in my flesh, good does not dwell." Now, beloved friends, it is well to make up our minds that

God alone can teach any soul what this lesson is. Many of us know that nothing casts us on God more in dealing with souls than the sense of our incompetency to deliver them from themselves. None but God can teach this lesson. We may teach and preach, and God uses both; but He alone can take the soul into His presence through this experience, so as to bring it to this conclusion about itself, "I know that in me, that is in my flesh, good does not dwell." But go through this we must; established without it, we never can be. Until this is reached there can be no stability, no progress, no proper understanding of relationship; no enjoyment of peace, no entering into the joys and comforts that attend the Christian in his path here. It is imperative that we discover under the teaching of God, that in our flesh good does not dwell. Whatever a soul learns, it has to learn this. To know deliverance fully, the soul must learn what it is to be delivered from itself. If the old nature is the stronger, we must have the tables turned. Now that is what happens here in Romans.

What characterises Romans vii. is, there is self-occupation, but no object, and no power. In the end of the chapter the soul is brought to its extremity, not about its sins, but about itself. It confesses, "I find then a law that when I would do good, evil is present with me." But as

yet, there is no object and no power. The power of sin is too strong, though the mind is renewed and the will is right, and sin is distinguished from the renewed mind. But what follows? "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Deliverance is now reached, and the Object is before the soul. In chapter viii. we see what the power is. There we get not only the blessed fact, "There is therefore, now, no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," but "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death." Power and freedom go together. There is the power of the Spirit of life, the Object, or the Person of Christ, and the cross. Death is brought in on the old nature; and there is the power of life in Christ risen. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus applies now to the believer; the link is formed between the new. I, and the source of life and power, whilst death is applied to the old nature.

Have we accepted that "In me, that is in my flesh, good does not dwell"? If we have come to this conclusion, we have only come to the conclusion that God came to about us 1800 years ago.

Then I come to "condemned sin in the flesh." Its condemnation was a fact in the cross when He who was perfect purity was made sin for us. God's spotless Son was made sin. "God sending

his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." The Spirit of God turns the eye of the soul from itself, to see what God has done with flesh; and relief comes from the fact that it was judged, condemned, and done with before God in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Death is brought in on the old man: "Our old man is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be annulled that henceforth we should not be the slaves of sin." This is the way there is an end of the power of sin within. Where is strength when there is death? And the knowledge of this is brought about in the soul by the power of the Spirit of God, who works in the conscience to this end. Then there is occupation with Christ and liberty in the life of Christ Himself risen from the dead. The Spirit of life that applies in His case, the case of the blessed Lord, applies in the believer's case. I am in Him and He is in me. I am not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God dwells in me.

In Christianity we have a new power, a new principle, a new Object, and a new life. And hence, liberty. And it is interesting to see, when we come to the scriptures that treat of the Christian in his path, that the same principle applies, that the three things which are used for deliverance, the Spirit, Christ the Object, and death, are his power all the way through; for

wherever he is, there must be the application of death.

In 2 Corinthians iv. you find the application of death "always bearing about in the body, the dying of Jesus." Look at it in Colossians. Why does the apostle exhort, "Set your mind on things above"? Because "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." In Romans, where you get the doctrine, the living sinner is brought to death: it is through death he has part in righteousness. He *is* dead to sin, and alive to God in Christ. Now reckon this to be true, "Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord;" and that is a daily and hourly thing. Sin is the evil principle that works in my flesh. The doctrine is I am dead to it, and faith reckons that to be true.

Again, he says to the Colossians, "If ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances?" It is a truth that comes home very close to us, but it is not merely the negative side: there is a defined place where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God, and we are complete in Him who is the head of all principality and power, and in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

Now there are plenty of hindrances, but all hindrances are overcome by walking in the



simple power of the place in which we are set, with death applied continually. Look at Paul in Corinthians. He says, "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed ; we are perplexed, but not in despair ; persecuted, but not forsaken ; always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh ; so then death worketh in us, but life in you." All that comes to the vessel going through this world in connection with the testimony. Nothing of Paul worked out, but he was passed through all these circumstances in the human vessel only to cast him constantly on the power of God.

The flesh which has been judged, condemned, and disposed of in the cross, has to be kept entirely out of court ; but we often admit it into court. If we do, that which was the means of our deliverance from it, is still the only remedy : death, or the practical application of the cross. The start for the Christian is deliverance from himself, and this is not attainment, but the acceptance by faith of what God has done judicially in the cross, though experience may drive me to accept it. The world goes for faith in the same way. We have the Spirit of God dwelling in us, that is our power. The apostle says,

“Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.” The flesh does not cease to exist, and not cease to lust, cannot cease to lust, and therefore death must ever be applied. It is not striving to arrive at something, but holding fast what we have got, holding the thing to be true that is true before God. That is what we have to do. But although we have a new nature and a new place, and have not to get a place, we have practically to learn what we are on our side all along the way, where we need continually the grace and mercy of God.

In Ephesians we are raised up by the power that raised Christ, and made to sit down in heavenly places. In Colossians it is the life that we have got in the Head. They had let slip the Head. It was not that they had not got the Head; but they had let slip the facts of God. They had not to reach up to the Head; they were united to the Head in glory, but they were not holding the Head. So with us; we drop down from the truth, but that does not alter the truth, nor our place. Christ is the only standard, and we should measure everything by Him. If we do not walk in the Spirit, the truth loses its power in our souls; but if we do, we have His power to carry us on victoriously: we are in the power of an ungrieved Spirit, superior to circumstances, and comforted within.

People often ask, “What is the harm of this

or that?" But it is not a question of harm in the thing, but whom is it for? Is it the old man that has disgraced himself, and has been set aside in the cross, that I am gratifying, or the new man? *Is it Christ, or is it not?* solves many a difficulty. Our dangers are things below—earthly things. Any one will admit that murder and stealing are different from unseen selfishness; but though widely different, are they not all the fruit of the old nature, which has been condemned? The allowance of self is what often puts our faces in the dust, and makes us go down to the root of the thing that we have allowed. We have allowed the thing in court, which has been put out of court for ever. And what is the distance to which it has been put out? The distance that Jesus went into for our sins. Can you measure that? The sorrows, sufferings, and shame of that cross, all that Jesus went through there; and as we think of that—what it cost Him, and how we have failed, we may well be ashamed. Nothing is more humbling than the truth, because it shews us our failure, and yet it lifts us up and renews our confidence in God and in His grace.

Alas; we too often forget the place into which we are brought, and we forget the Person in that place—the same One who endured so much for us! It will not do merely to have got rid of the negative thing, we want the power

and enjoyment of the positive thing. It is no good to get rid of the power of the old nature, if we have not something to replace it. But we *are* in possession of a nature which after God is created in righteousness and holiness of truth; a nature in which the Holy Ghost works, and which delights in what God reveals; so that, when we allow the flesh, it is not only that we allow the evil, but we grieve the Holy Spirit of God, which is the power of God within us. Let us remember then, that we have the power of the Holy Ghost, we have an Object, Christ in heaven, on whom the eye is to be fixed. Thus, there is a new Object, a new power, and a new place. And then two other things come in to separate me practically to God, namely, present relationship, and the hope of future glory.

“We have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but we have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” The Spirit of divine relationship. We are brought into present relationship with God, according to His eternal purpose.

Free from the law of sin and death, we have the Holy Ghost as power: we have Christ as our Object; we are brought into present relationship; and now await the full accomplishment of God's purpose, that is, to be conformed in heavenly glory to the image of his Son. In a little moment we shall be for ever like Him who is

now in glory. "It is not yet manifested what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." The Lord give us to understand it better, and to have the hope before us. I press on you, that when the ministry of the word hits us, let us ask the question, What is the cause, and what is the remedy? Why is our walk so low and so defective? Is it not that we have let slip what our present place before God is, and what His present purposes concerning us are, so that the old thing comes into court? The remedy is the truth of God, as to my present place and power with God. It is the want of faith in this, that brings in all the failure.

There never was, never will be, any remedy for the old man, but the unsparing application of death, at all times, and everywhere in our path here, and this can only be done as we walk in the Spirit.

May the Lord give us to know the place, and to hold to the place in which He in His grace has set us. May He help us to walk in communion with Himself, that we may thus be kept from the power of the enemy, having Him as the Object before our souls, with whom we are to be for all eternity.

J. S. O.



# THE LOVE OF GOD.

JOHN III. 16 ; XVII. 26.

THE love of God is the source of all our blessing. It is that love which takes the initiative with us. It starts all for us as we see in John iii. 16, and it ends all as we see in John xvii. 26. It is to that love we have come. The perfection of it is set forth in 1 John iv. Not only has God given His Son that we might live through Him, and that He should make atonement for our sins, but He has given us a place in glory with Him, and "as he is, so are we in this world ;" What we shall be we do not know, it has not yet been manifested, but we do know that when He shall be manifested we shall be like Him.

But the love of God is a holy love. It must be so, because God is holy ; and therefore all God's ways with us must be alike, according to His holiness, and according to His love. If He rebukes or chastens us, it will be according to His holiness, but it must be according to His love. If my child is naughty, and I am obliged to punish him, well, I love him all the same. If he is well-behaved, I give him a prize ; but the prize proves his good conduct ; my love is

equally shewn in the punishment as in the prize; they both come from the same heart, but the heart is independent of them both. Love finds its motive in itself; its manner of shewing itself depends on its object. It has been often said that "love could not allow a spot on the object of that love." It must remove that spot at all cost. How could I see a spot on my wife, or on my child without removing it if I could? In proportion as I loved them, so would I be anxious to beautify them. No greater joy could I have than to see their prosperity, to see them "walking in the truth." And the ministry we have had to-day has been in that spirit; we have felt the keenness of its edge, and we have been "hit" by it. Well, thank God that it is so. Before I come to these meetings I ask the Lord that it may be so; and how disappointed should we feel if it were not so. Shall we despise His correction and refuse it? or shall we faint under it? No. God forbid that we should ever see the day when such a ministry was denied us: or, being given us, that we should fail to profit by it. It is the same love that began with us, that goes on with us, and will never give us up, "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." And then He takes the basin and the towel, and girds Himself to serve them: for He must fit us to have "part" with himself. Such

is His love to us, nothing less could satisfy Him; and such is the fruit of His grace in us, nothing less could satisfy us.

And this brings me to Titus ii. 11, 12. "The grace of God that bringeth salvation, teacheth us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly," &c. We see here what grace *brings*, and then what it *teaches*. But note, *first* it brings salvation, and that point settled, *then* it teaches us, &c. Now, that is where responsibility comes in; and we must not be afraid of the word; we must not put it before grace; but then we must not leave it out after grace. Beautiful in its place, like a well-tuned harp, answering to the hand that plays it, it would be injurious out of place; while its omission altogether would be a mischievous deficiency. No, the grace that saves us, then teaches us. It is all love—the love that promised eternal life in Christ before the world began. This was the original purpose of God; nor will His love be satisfied until we are conformed to the image of His Son in glory. Welcome then everything that comes to us from that love; only let us seek that there be more response in us to it: for whether there be rebuke, or reproof, it is that we need it, and it is the love of God that sends it.

See how this is manifested in 2 Corinthians v. 14, where the apostle says, "The love of Christ



constrains us." Why, in the first epistle it was all reproof and rebuke. He hardly left them, so to speak, a bit of skin on their backs; there was apparently no love in it. "What will ye? Shall I come to you with a rod, or in love, or in the spirit of meekness?" (1 Cor. iv. 21.) "Shall I praise you? I praise you not." But in 2 Corinthians ii. 4 we see "the affliction and anguish of heart" in which he wrote to them, "with many tears." And as the sword had entered into their souls (chap. vii. 11), he tells them here, "The love of Christ constrains us." And have we not felt to-day the cutting edge of the word as it reached us and searched us? I felt it. Surely we all felt it. Well, thank God, I say again for it. It was surely the love of Christ again in the ministry of His Spirit through His servants, a ministry that cannot cease until He has blessed us according to His own thought and love, a love in which alone He can fully rest, when He "sees of the travail of his soul and is satisfied."

The Lord keep our hearts in touch with it.

E. C.



# THE NEW INTEREST AND THE NEW POWER.

MATTHEW XIII. 36-48.

BELOVED brethren, I desire to occupy your hearts with the subject of our New interest on the earth. It is quite clear that we have, first, a New place out of this earth; secondly, a New interest in it; and in connection with the interest, a New power. You will see how it forms us.

There are, as we have often remarked, two distinct ministries in the New Testament; the one, the ministry of the gospel, and the other, the ministry of the church. No one can truly take his place in the church, if he has not learned the gospel.

In the gospel I see what has been done. Matthew xxvii. 50, 51, unfolds it. "Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the Ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain, from the top to the bottom." Here is the gospel of God! It is plain that man had created an immeasurable distance between himself and God. Man could not

remove it, but God has so removed that distance on His own side, to His own satisfaction, that that veil, which hid all the secret things of God, is "rent in twain from the top to the bottom." God no longer dwells in thick darkness. Some might say that the earthquake rent the veil, but any thoughtful person would say that something wonderful must have been done for God to allow the veil to be rent. It was the testimony that God had removed the distance between Himself and man. The Son of God has come that He might destroy the works of the devil—annul his power. Sin brought in death, but God laid help on One that is mighty; and now the thing is done; and the divine testimony is, that God is free to come out to the sinner; every bit of distance is removed. That terrible thing that was brought in by man's sin is removed, God was glorified in the most distant spot. Now the Son of man is glorified; and God's eye rests on the glorified Man. It must be either on the lost man down here, or on the glorified Man up there.

It is a most important thing to get clear about this great fact—*where Christ is*, and *why He is where He is*. He is at the "right hand of the majesty on high," and God's eye rests on the believer there, because Christ has removed everything, according to the will of God. Unless this is known in the soul, there cannot be a true

knowledge of what Christ has done. By rending the veil, He says—I have removed everything from my own eye in the most perfect way. If you do not believe this, you cannot enjoy what He has done. Do our souls grasp the fulness of that wondrous fact, that God has a glorified Man in heaven, on whom His eye ever rests; and not on Him only, but on every believer in Him now?

I turn for a moment to 2 Corinthians iv., which is the consequence of God having a Man glorified in heaven. In verses 4–6 we read, “lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ . . . should shine unto them. . . For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.” Now, if I ask any one in this room where the light comes from, what would be the answer? Do you reply, it comes from God? But I say, from what spot does it descend? It comes from the top, from a glorified Saviour. It is of immense moment to every heart to be clear about this; to know really from whence the light comes. It does not come from a crucified Saviour. No! but from a glorified Saviour, who has removed everything from the eye of God. The gospel of the glory of Christ comes from the top, from the very highest spot; from a glorified Saviour the

light shines down; and the record is, that in its first display, in all its effulgence and splendour, it reaches Saul of Tarsus, a man who is in the very frenzy of hatred to Christ; and it surrounds him, not to repel, as with Isaiah (see Isa. vi.), but to invite. What a wonderful thing! There is a Man in the glory of God. From there the light shines down, and invites you to share in what His work has accomplished for you. If that be the case, I must be in the eye of God, either the lost man in terrible misery, or in the glorified Man in all His delight. All is done for the believer. The power of the enemy is broken, and the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.

In Exodus xxiv. as soon as the blood was sprinkled, the whole body of heaven in its clearness was seen. The moment that the blood was seen, the distance was gone; heaven was visible. I do not think that the blood of any of the sacrifices was for the sinner, except the blood of the Paschal lamb; everywhere else (so far as I know) it has to do with approach. The nearer I approach, the better off I am, because I am approaching the source from which all blessing comes. God has removed everything offensive from His own eye in the cross. I look up, and behold His glory in the face of Jesus Christ, and I am transformed into it. All His glory rests on my Saviour, and as I behold Him there, I am

morally conformed to it. If I go back to the flesh, God has no claim on me for it, but it must be as absolutely removed from me as at the cross. You revive in yourself what God has removed in the distance of the cross. God has no claim now as to sin; but if we *do* sin, and do not judge the flesh, we may be assured that the sin we indulge in and do not judge, for that very sin we shall have a purgatory, not after death, but in this life. The thing you spare in nature will become your scourge. God is a consuming fire, and the form in which you give license to the flesh, that will be your plague. If you judge yourself, God will not judge you. It is on the ground that He *has* removed everything that He deals with you. He looks at the glorified Man, and sees you in all that blessedness, but if you revive what He has removed in the cross, He must judge it, and you must suffer.

So far is the gospel. The first step is, that the ground is cleared; and what marks that step is, that we love to give to the One who has cleared the ground for us. Like Jonathan to David, we would strip ourselves of what is of most value to us for His sake. The ground is cleared, and the One who cleared it occupies my heart. Nor is that all, but we stand in all the excellence and acceptableness of the One who is at God's right hand. Thus we have the magnificence of God's grace displayed. In the scene

of my alienation and degradation I am not only cleared, fit for heaven, but I stand in the acceptance of the glorified Man.

Now the second step is (I am still speaking of what is individual), that I find what the Lord is to me personally in the wilderness. He is indispensable to me, and the way I find that out is in His priesthood. This is Hebrews. Priesthood is for infirmity while we are down here. There are three sorts of infirmities; first, pressure of circumstances, such as poverty, &c. Second, sickness. Third, sorrow; sorrow is what you cannot remedy; there is nothing like sorrow to test souls. Circumstances and sickness may often be remedied, but in sorrow, that is bereavement, there is no remedy. Now it is here I find that I have One who has gone through the path, and upon whose help I can count; that is, if I am on the road to heaven. If I am not travelling to heaven, He will not help me. This may seem severe, but it has the support of Scripture. (See Heb. iv. 11.) "Let us labour therefore to enter that rest, lest any man fall by the same example of unbelief." There we are seen as going to heaven; and we never get His sympathy unless we are on the road. You will get the word to shew you that you are not neglected, but not the sympathy. What is the difference? It is immense. When I get sympathy, I am so supported, that instead

of being occupied with support, I am occupied with the Supporter. Mary of Bethany learned the sympathy in John xi. and passed on to be occupied with the Supporter in chapter xii.

In the gospels we have two women with their alabaster boxes who came to anoint the Lord. The difference between that of Luke vii. and of John xii. is this; the former makes much of Christ for His service, here on earth; the latter anoints Him for His burial; her heart is with Him. She is a follower. He values following more than giving. Many a one would give to Him who would not follow Him. The affection of Ruth to Naomi, exceeded that of Jonathan to David. She says, "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following thee." Following marks devotedness. It flows from attachment between myself and Him, "If any man serve me, let him follow me." "They left all and followed him." A thoroughly devoted man follows.

When we look at the brute creation, we may learn lessons that shame us; how often a dog will follow its master, spite of everything; beat him, give him meat, nothing will divert him, he *will* follow; he may have to cross a river, or make his way through hedge or ditch, but he persists in following. Following never calculates. There is no calculation in love. Love does not calculate what it will lose. Some interpret



Luke xiv. 28, "Counteth the cost," as calculation, but that is not the meaning of the passage. The question there, is, Have you the right material? Thank God there have been, and are, saints who are thus devoted. May we all be more so.

The third stage is union, and here I come to our corporate blessings—what is true of us as the church. I have not yet touched on the New interest. For the heart to be in the understanding of it, and really taken up with it, there must be the apprehension of what union is: one must be taught of God to know the reality of being united to that blessed One in glory, the sole object of my heart. Nothing can surpass the blessedness of realising what union is. In how few cases among saints where it is owned theoretically is it actually known! Of what value is it to a man to be born a prince, if he is not in the enjoyment of his position? Nothing transcends that moment in the soul's history when it apprehends—I am united to Him, I share in all His. Then I can "shout"! Joshua says, "Shout; for the Lord hath given you the city." (Josh. vi. 16.) That illustrates what I mean. Shout when you know it. The shouting is the peculiar sense of possession.

Now what marks this stage? Occupation with His interest. There may be deep personal affection without the knowledge of union, and with defective intelligence. That is seen in the

case of Mary Magdalene, in John xx. She had affection, the only true preparation for union. The disciple (ver. 8) who "saw and believed," had intelligence, and he went home; but affection would not go home, will not rest till she finds Him; and she *does* find Him. It is a great thing for the heart that loves Christ to find Him where He is. A wonderful moment for the soul to find Christ in glory. Paul says, "That I may know him." Mary will not go home till she has found Him, and when she does find Him, all is changed. He says, Go now and attend to My interests. Go to My brethren. It is not now her own interests or her own love, but His interests. He knew of her devoted love, and He tells her where He will be, and *then* He commissions her to attend to His concerns. "Go to my brethren and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father; and to my God and your God." Here we see in pattern what really characterises the person who knows that he is united to Christ in glory; he is occupied with the interest of Christ. The New interest is Christ's own on the earth; he is occupied with this New interest. Neither in the history of Jonathan nor of Ruth can we find what we have here; both come short of it. You may love as Jonathan, and follow as Ruth, but until you know that you are united to Christ in glory, you will not be free enough from your own interests,

to take up His. You *are* united to Him. It is all yours. All the rounds of the ladder are yours; but all your power, joy, and testimony depend on the round of the ladder on which the Holy Ghost has set you. We do not expect every one to be grown up. "We speak wisdom among them that are perfect." I trust I am addressing those who would like to be perfect. I am not speaking of gifted people, but of every soul. Often the brightest specimen of divine grace is in a woman. I may remark, that while on the one hand, all the ruin came in by a woman, what a triumph of grace, that so great a commission was, as we find in John xx., entrusted to a woman. Mary Magdalene is a pattern, not a shadow. In the Old Testament, you get shadows; in the New, patterns: a pattern shews the way a thing is to be done. Mary's simple and undivided affection for Christ was followed by her gaining intelligence. If I have true affection for the Lord—if my heart is right, I am sure to become intelligent sooner or later. Every one gets what he values. Mary goes about His interest; she no longer has a fear of losing Him; she is now in association with Him, and His interest is hers. I am in association with Him in unchangeable relationship to Him; and what occupies me now? Christ's own Treasure. Our souls want to know better that Christ's interest—His treasure, is on

the earth. Following this New interest, is what draws out the enmity of the world, as the Lord says, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own, but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. . . . But when the Comforter is come whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, *he shall testify of me.*" The Holy Ghost is the New power, and the *only* power for the New interest; you can carry on the testimony with the New power, but with nothing else. Any human resource is a hindrance. The enmity of the world is aroused if you refuse its help, but you can only maintain the interest of Christ by the New power on the earth. Here it is (and I say it with sorrow) that we have so failed; we have found resources in the world, in one shape or another; we have adopted human means instead of leaning solely on the Spirit of God. It is most hindering to the testimony.

In John xv. Christ instructs His disciples that they were to love one another, "This is my commandment, that ye love one another." And how far were they to go? "As I have loved you! Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." And in the epistle we have it, "We ought to lay down

our lives for the brethren." That is to be the measure of our love to one another. Perhaps nothing so tends to exasperate your natural friends and relatives, who are in the world, as to find that you have new objects for your affection and interest, a new company which is nearer and dearer to you than themselves. The disciples were to be like an island in the midst of a ruthless sea; the sea tried to swamp it, but could not. So they were to be in the midst of a ruthless world: the storm may come and beat upon you, and the waves, but you will not be swamped, you will be sustained here. Some may say—As the whole world is against us, we shall be swamped. No! With this New power on our side, we *cannot* be swamped.

In the parables which I have read (Matt. xiii. 44–48), we see that in the midst of all the confusion Christ's Treasure is here. We hear of all the political and social troubles on this earth, but in the midst of it all, Christ's interest is here. If it were not here, the sooner I left this scene, the better for me; but it *is* here; and the wonderful favour is, that He asks us to co-operate in His interest. He asks for our hearts; He says—I delight to take you into my interest, only, "Give me thine heart." I do not ask for your property; I ask for your heart. If He has your heart, He will delight to have you as a partner in His own precious interest on this earth.

Now let us look at these three parables. These last three were given in the house. The first four parables were given out of the house. (Ver. 1.) So, speaking typically, the first four are outside, for man's eye; the three last are in the house. The first of these tells us (ver. 44) that His treasure is hid in the field. In the second—the pearl, we get what its quality is—its beauty—what it is to Him. The third, “the net,” shews how we are to co-operate with Him; not in catching the fish, but in selecting them. They sat down to select them. Now it is only inside, sitting down, as it were, with the Lord, that we can select.

You are not in your right place in the Assembly, unless you have the sense that the Lord is there. If you have the sense of who the Lord is, you have a right understanding of your place; you are a living stone; but if you have not, you do not understand it: you are not held there in divine power. I am a component part of Christ's building. I take my place in the Assembly as a living stone, as one built in by Himself. That is a different thing from knowing that my soul is saved. The fact of my soul being saved is because of what Christ has done for me; but that which I am to Christ is connected with my being a living stone. I take my place as a living stone in His building. I am dwelling in Him, and have faith in Himself.

The origin of the house of God on earth was the rejection of Christ; it was brought in when Christ was rejected. (Matt. xvi. 18.) The house is little known. It is of immense importance to apprehend what it is—a divine structure on the earth, where Christ was rejected, and to be the “pillar and base of the truth.” The body is a mystery, invisible, like the works of a clock, which are not seen, but which work the clock. The house is where you can walk into, and if it were in a right state you would learn the mind of the Lord there. The Holy Ghost dwells in it. People say it is all in ruins. That is true; but we are called still to make Christ’s interest here, our delight. The Lord confides His interest; He says to His disciples, “Ye are my friends.” If we were nearer the Lord, we should be more in His confidence. “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him.” The Lord delights to have a friend. He is *my* Friend. I can sing that with all my heart. But who gives a line—I am a friend of His? If we are occupied with His concerns we are like the virtuous woman in Proverbs xxxi.: “The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her.” Two things marked her. In unflagging devotedness, she fed her household and clothed them, regardless of all that it cost her. Nourishing and cherishing characterised her. That is carrying out the desire of Christ’s heart—“Feed my sheep, feed my lambs.”

In Ephesians we begin in heaven, and come down to be in God's house on the earth, and are sustained here to be for Him in the scene of His rejection. "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God." (Eph. iii. 10.) That all might see it—that wonderful administration! How it should charm our hearts to think that the saints here are to be the beautiful expression of the glorified Man—of Christ in glory; and now the lesson book for angels. That is your new interest. I am not surprised at your friends seeing that your whole life is changed. They do not understand it. No one can understand the body who is not in it; it is a mystery. Persons who know us ought to have ground for surprise, in seeing that there is evidently an object here that has such an attraction for us, that we are so bent on following after it, as to be manifestly outside the common interests of the world.

In 2 Timothy iii. 10 we have the character of a person, who was consecrated to the interest of the Lord. The apostle says, "But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience," &c. That connects manner of life with doctrine.

We never can truly commend the truth, save as we are living exponents of it. If a man expounds great and wonderful doctrines,



we may rightly ask—What sort of man is he at home? It was asked once of myself. I could never forget it. To dive into my private life, and to see what it announces! All our power in testimony is in proportion to the way the truth acts upon ourselves. I never minister on a passage that I have not accepted in faith. The sense of ignorance is often a prelude to my getting it. There are two experiences; one is that we have light; we see it; the other is, that we have faith. It is faith that brings us into the actual power of the truth. I have often to say, "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief."

Paul exhorts Timothy—"Be thou an example of the believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." The servant is in a peculiar position. In 2 Thessalonians iii. we see how the apostle's aim was to make themselves ensamples. "Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us." A bishop was to be a pattern man. Do you not think the elect lady was a specimen? If there were more of this, we should not find all the worldliness that there is among us.

But, beloved, what I desire for you and for myself is that we may be so truly wedded to Christ that His interest may be ours; that we may have only one interest down here. I know the question may be raised—But what about my

business, and my family? You will not attend to your family one bit worse from making the Lord's interest paramount; and be assured of this—if His affairs have a paramount place in your heart, you will find that your affairs have a corresponding place in His heart. I find that the Lord cares for my family far better than I can; I have not half the solicitude for them that He has, if I confide in Him. The Lord grant that we may understand the exceeding blessedness of it. It is far from my wish to put a yoke on the neck of any; but I do desire to lead you into a circle of the greatest delight, to that circle where Christ's heart is. I long that we may all be helped on so as to have our hearts in that circle where we may share the delight of His heart day by day. At the close of the church's day on earth, the Spirit and the bride are found engrossed in one interest—"The Spirit and the bride say come." (Rev. xxii.) May we individually be in company with it! By-and-by all Christ's desires for us will be fulfilled. The bride will come down from God out of heaven adorned for her husband. Then will be the glorious display to this world, of Christ's great interest—the fulfilment of John xvii.; every desire of the Lord answered.

You will never satisfy the heart of Christ, unless you are making His interest yours. When you do, you will be a different person. The

Lord grant we may travel up to it. I am not up to it, but I want to be. I have got an interest that is unbounded. The queen of Sheba was entranced with the things of Solomon. There were seven things that entranced her, "When she had seen all Solomon's wisdom, and the house that he had built, and the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cupbearers, and his ascent by which he went up unto the house of the Lord, there was no more spirit in her." If we could only see the wonderful net-work of machinery going on over this world, in the Lord's ministry for His own, we should be entranced by it. May we know it better for His name's sake.

The Lord grant that we may so know what it is to have lost ourselves in His company, that His interest on earth may ever be dear to our hearts.

J. B. S.



# THE NEW POWER

## AND THE

### CONDITION TO RECEIVE IT.

ACTS I. 1-14; XXVI. 16-19.

My thought, beloved friends, is, to say a few words on one part of what our brother has brought before us, and this is with regard to the "new power" on this earth. When we think of the vastness and magnificence of the subject that we have been listening to, that is, "the interests of Christ," we must necessarily feel that nothing short of a new and divine power could possibly energise us to take any true part in those interests. Only let our thoughts turn to them in all their greatness and blessedness, apart from the remembrance of the fact that that new power is here, we should certainly be cast down. When we think of the One whose interests they are, and how little those interests seem to command us, how little we move in relation to them, it is of immense comfort to know, that there is a new power come down from the glorified Man, and that this same power is with us still, and will be with us to the end. The Holy Ghost

having come down from the blessed One in glory, from Himself that glorified and exalted Man, has come to bear testimony to His exaltation—to the effect of it, He is the power by which our hearts enter into the interests of our glorified Saviour, and by whom we are energised and maintained in them.

Luke xxiv. was previous to the Lord's exaltation, and we have there an account of the interview that took place between Him and His disciples, which is very blessed, and the words He speaks to them are very touching (ver. 49): "And, behold I send the promise of my Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with *power from on high*." "Power from on high!" What a wonderful reality! The simple way in which these words, "power from on high," are brought out is very blessed; there is an intimation too in the words which is precious, and carries them with a peculiar emphasis to the heart; for not only was this power to come down from "on high," but it was to come down from the Man on high—the exalted Man. There is an immensity in the fact, that it is from the glorified *Man* that the power comes. Man (in the Person of Jesus) has reached the highest place in glory; God now has Man, in the Person of His Son, in His own presence, according to His counsels and purposes, and according to all the desires of His

own heart. As Man He is there in the highest place of exaltation. Man has gone up, just as truly as in incarnation God came down, in the Person of Christ; the power that has come down is a divine Person—the Servant of the Son's glories—and this divine Person, this new power, I say, comes forth from the Man "on high," from the very scene of His exaltation.

Ministry in Ephesians is in that connection, where we have the dowries of the exalted Christ to the church, His body; it is brought out exactly in the same order; that is, "When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men." In Psalm lxviii. 18 (margin) it is, "Thou hast ascended on high—thou hast received gifts *in the Man*." "*In the Man*"—in His human nature exalted. It is all in connection with His exaltation on high He bestows these gifts, that is, persons; and they are bestowed in all the rights and glories of Himself, the exalted Lord. The very vessels in whom the power of Satan had once wrought, and used against Christ, are now used by this new power against the power which once held them.

The Lord is making known to His disciples in Luke xxiv., concerning this coming power, and these intimations are so full of interest to the heart that knows His love. Another little word I would notice as shewing that we must be in the right place to get these intimations—"He

*led them out.*" Surely it is a great thing to be in this outside spot to get such intimations. "*He led them out* as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands and blessed them, and it came to pass that while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried into heaven." There is a special character of blessing unfolded here. Observe, the blessing comes from the blessed Lord's own hands; He lifted His hands—those hands man had lifted up on the cross—and from thence all blessing comes. Here is His retiring act, the impartation of blessing; and the persons who got the blessing are those who are "*led out.*" Hence, I judge, we may learn, that if we are now to be recipients of like blessing; if such a peculiar character of blessing is to reach our souls, and the intimations of the Lord made known to them, we must know what it is to be "*led out.*" There is further a peculiar touch and beauty about those words recorded by the Spirit of God: "*He led them out as far as to Bethany.*" Bethany was the only place down here where He had found a home—where He was understood; the only spot on this earth that was congenial to Him, the alone shelter that this world afforded Him; and that is the platform from which He departs out of this scene, from which He ascended to heaven. Now He says, You have not yet got power, you must wait. (Ver. 49.) That connects itself with Acts i., where

there is a further intimation as to their testimony, in these words: "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth." It is wonderful the intercourse which passed between the risen Lord and His disciples during those forty days in which He was with them on the earth. When He leaves them here during that space between His going up and the Holy Ghost's coming down, they were just simply waiting and looking. Has not their attitude a special voice for us? Because we are not yet taken up. We are waiting to be caught up together. We are not waiting for the Spirit. He *has* come; but we are waiting to be taken up. Is not that company a sample of what we should be? They are a lovely picture; so completely outside the world, in an upper room. Who knew them or cared anything about them? They were gathered, a poor, feeble, waiting, expecting people. They were distinctly marked as a little outside company. What had they to do with the world or its line of things? How truly a separated people they were, a poor, feeble band of men and women, bound together with one Object, together manifesting their weakness and dependence in giving themselves to



prayer : and Mary, the mother of Jesus, of whom we have here the last mention in Scripture, is sharing with them their dependent attitude, and they have only one thing to do : *to look and to wait and to pray*. They were the very expression of dependence. That is the condition in which the power comes ; the simple condition that is ever concurrent with it ; hence it is found in this little company who are here shewn to us, as tarrying according to the Lord's own words, until they were endued with power from on high. Observe, too, they are occupied with Christ, as well as waiting for the promise of the Father ; they expect its fulfilment, and prayerfully await the coming One—the Holy Ghost. Should there not be in us a moral state corresponding to theirs ? We are looking and waiting, not, it is true, for the Spirit ; but for God's Son from heaven. Would to God, that the simplicity, and separateness, and dependence that marked them in their day marked us in our day.

Alas ! that it is not so we have to admit ; but why not ? Why should not the interests of Christ so fill our hearts as to detain us, and thus produce in us a moral likeness to these waiting and watching saints ? Is not the power for which they waited, but which we possess, able to thus form and fashion us ? Surely He is, and it is not possible to exaggerate the power ;

it is true there is weakness on our part, failure, sorrowful failure : we cannot but own our weakness to-day ; would to God we were bowed and broken-hearted about it. But there is no diminution of the power ; that Holy Person is still here as truly as ever He was ; and with the humbling confession of our low state, there is no ground for desponding, though every ground for humiliation. The same power that came down at the first, and wrought such marvellous effects in the church, is with us still in the same undiminished fulness, though we have sadly grieved and hindered Him in His operations. That brings in our responsibility. There is an immensity to own before God, along with the fact that this power is here, and effectual to work for the interests of Christ. In speaking thus we do not desire to cast saints in upon themselves ; in being occupied with ourselves we shall find nothing to comfort, and no power to lead us on. It is only as the heart is in occupation with Christ by the energy of the Spirit, that it can be engrossed with His interests.

There is another point I would allude to, in connection with this Scripture ; and that is, the extent of the testimony to which the disciples were called. "And ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth." "Ye shall be witnesses unto *me*."

Observe how the Person and the power go together. We have here three things; the *Person*, the *place*, and the *power*. The Person *where He is*, the glorified Man at the right hand of God, and the power here, where *He is not*, but where we are; not only to make everything real to our souls, but to make us witnesses here—to carry us out into those interests. “Ye shall be witnesses unto *me*.” Mark further the extent of the testimony in contrast with what had existed previously. It was closed up to one people, one nation; but now we have displayed the largeness of the grace that is brought out in all its grandeur and magnificence; it could no longer be bound within the narrow limits of Judaism, but must be world-wide. Jerusalem, the place where the greatest malignity and hatred to Christ had been shewn, is to receive first the wondrous message of grace; Judea, the region of religion after the flesh, is to be blest by it; next, comes Samaria, the defiled region; and, lastly, to the uttermost parts of the earth, the sound goes out.

There is a word in Acts xxvi. which I would just refer to in connection with this subject, where the Lord appears to Paul, and says: “But rise and stand upon thy feet, for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness, both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things

in the which I will appear unto thee ; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles unto whom now I send thee ; to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me."

Paul was to be left here on earth ; that is the force of "Rise and stand upon thy feet." It was not like the case of Stephen who looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God and Jesus ; there it was a preparation for Stephen's impending dissolution. Having rendered his martyr testimony, he was to pass from the earth to heaven.

Here the Lord appears to Paul to make him both a "minister and a witness" in the very scene where He had been rejected. May we all take in what our brother has said about servants being ensamples. We are all servants, though not all ministers. Paul was to be both a minister and a witness. "Witness" is a larger and a wider term than "minister." A minister is one who dispenses what God gives him ; a witness is one who bears testimony in his own person, who has to go through an opposing scene, tried on every side, baffled, tested, if by any means some loop-hole can be found, to spoil the integrity of his witness. And there is one thing which should be particularly marked

in connection with this call to Paul, and that is, his testimony and ministry were to partake specially of the character of the place from whence "the power" and commission came; it was to be, in one word, *heavenly*. "Taking thee out from the people, and from the Gentiles, to whom now I send thee." It should not be "delivering," but "taking thee out." The translation as it stands does not give at all the true force of the words of the blessed Lord.

In Paul we have a man who is made the special object of God's grace, and also of the power of the Holy Ghost; and the Lord says—I am about to separate you to Myself from everything on earth. We have, I believe, in this setting apart of Paul, a forecast of the church. The church was to be altogether distinct and apart from all that was earthly and had its origin here—neither Jew nor Gentile; it was to have no connection whatever with nationality; but to be a peculiar, unique thing in this world. "Taking thee out from . . . unto whom I now *send* thee." I separate you entirely—I will fill you with the power and then send you back. That is the way in which the power acts, it separates the vessel entirely, and sends it back to what it is separated from, in all the power of that which has separated it. So Paul was taken out of everything in this scene, set entirely apart, connected with heaven; filled with this

heavenly power, and sent back into the world, where he once had associations and links, and to which he once belonged, to be a testimony and witness to that glorified Man at the right hand of God ; and to make known the gospel of that glory which had been brought so nigh to him.

The Lord said to him, You are to "*open their eyes.*" What could do this but heavenly light and power? Who but God could open the eyes of the blind? And yet He thus charges His appointed vessel ; God is behind the vessel ; and does not that raise a question of the state and condition of that vessel ? Go, and open their eyes, and turn them from "darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." Here we have the whole thing set forth in this wonderful commission from the Lord in glory, to a man whom glory arrested, broke down, emptied, and then filled.

The apostle was the vessel charged with this testimony by the *Person*, filled with the *power*, and he was to go forth with regard to all these new interests, as a minister and witness to the Gentiles, besides being a minister of the church, as we read : " Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh

for his body's sake, which is the church, whereof I am made a minister," &c.

It is not only a great comfort to know that "the power" is here with us still, but what that power can do for us, and with us. At the same time it is right to remember what we can do; that is, we can hinder that power; we can grieve the Holy Spirit of God; and then there is not the effect, there is not the flowing out, and the wonderful accomplishment of God's own purposes by the vessel. May the Lord give us to take it to heart, and thus lead us into all that divine sensitiveness with regard to everything in and about us, which would grieve and wound that blessed Comforter and Spirit of God.

May He give us so to live and walk in this power, that we may truly live for the interests and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, while we at the same time wait for Him.

W. T. T.



# THE LOSS OF POWER

## AND

# THE WAY OF RECOVERY.

JOSHUA VII. 1-17; JUDGES VI. 1-16.

A STATEMENT was made this morning, that the power is here because the Spirit of God is here. I have read these verses with a view to bring before you the way of the loss of power and the way of recovery.

In chapter vi. we get the normal state of the people of God. They are in the land, the place of God's purpose for them, and there they have to meet and drive out the foe, as the Lord's host. The power of God was manifestly with them, and if it ceased to characterise them in their conflicts, the fault was on their part, for Jehovah was the unchangeable One.

The Holy Ghost, being here, maintains us by the truth in such a condition that God's power may act in us, and if there is a lack of power it is a solemn thing, and shews that something is wrong, calling for exercise of conscience. The more truly we understand what flows from the fact, that the Holy Ghost is



here, the more reason we have to be humbled on account of the condition of weakness in which the people of God are found.

In Joshua vii. the children of Israel are in a condition of powerlessness; the power that marked them in chapter vi. has been lost, and we are told *how* it was lost; and also the way of recovery.

Joshua had said (chap. iii.), "Hereby shall ye know that the living God is among you, and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Hivites, and the Perizzites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Jebusites. Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth passeth over before you into Jordan."

God then brings them in, they cross the Jordan dryshod. They walk round Jericho, the walls fall down, and they walk in. Jericho is completely overthrown; the power of God is manifested. Whilst the people were in a right state, there was room for the Lord to act and to display His power. It is all very simple: where there is self-judgment there is power. We must not disconnect the power of God from the moral state of the people.

It is the same to-day. The state of an individual or an assembly accounts for the weakness. How often we have to be humbled on account of the lack of power and blessing in our

midst, and the actual state of those gathered out to the name of the Lord, so that in some cases, instead of gatherings being centres of blessing, they are, through unjudged evil, centres for scandal and dissension. We may talk of power, but we must look at facts. I would not for a moment seek to weaken the side of the blessing and glory that has been before us, or to underrate the grace of God, and the blessed fact of the Spirit of God being in the midst of His people; but with all this grace, and the wonderful blessing that has been unfolded, we must be conscious of the lack of power among us, and that there is the other side, the actual state of things, which we cannot and should not ignore.

The end of Joshua vi. is: "So the Lord was with Joshua, and his fame was noised throughout all the country." Up to this time the power of God had been unhindered. God had His right place, the living God was manifestly among them, the people are in their normal state, victory is complete, all is bright. But what a sudden change in chapter vii.: "But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing: and the anger of the Lord was kindled against the children of Israel."

Here we have the word of God set aside,

and evil in their midst. Verse 3 shews the actual condition of the people: they say, "Let not all the people go up; but let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai; and make not all the people to labour thither; for they are but few." The moment they get out of dependence on God, they begin to measure their own strength with the strength of the people of Ai. "So there went up thither of the people about three thousand men: and they fled before the men of Ai."

What a contrast to the victory of chapter vi.! And why? Because evil is in the midst unjudged, and simple dependence on God has been given up. The sense of their need of His power has gone, hence they are routed by the enemy. The hearts of the people melted and became as water. Joshua their leader, rends his clothes, and falls to the earth upon his face; and mark his language! "Alas, O Lord God, wherefore hast thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? would to God we had been content, and dwelt on the other side Jordan! O Lord, what shall I say, when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies? For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the earth: and what wilt thou do unto thy great name?"

Think of such language in the mouth of the leader of the people of God, as—"would to God we had been content to dwell on the other side Jordan!" Still Joshua cries to God, and God hears him, though there is rebuke. "And the Lord said, Get thee up; wherefore liest thou upon thy face? Israel hath sinned."

Oh! how easily and how soon was the bright and victorious day changed into a dark and sorrowful one! and all on account of evil unjudged—a state which hindered the acting of God's power. The people left to themselves are like Samson when he had lost the hair of his separation, he "went out as at other times, and wist not that the Lord was departed from him." He was a Nazarite no more, and where was his strength? Gone! Where was the strength of Israel? Gone! They were defeated. Why this defeat? Why this dead stop, and the foe trampling them under foot? *Sin was allowed*, and simple trust in God was given up. Hence they are left to themselves, and are completely in the enemy's power. And remember this is not wilderness failure, but it is in the land, the highest place of blessing, the place God had brought them into, and of which He had said, He would without fail drive out from before them all their enemies.

Still, there is a remedy. What is it? The evil must be disclosed, and put away. Joshua

has to go through it. Let there be no covering up. God cannot cover up evil, God can on no account sanction sin in the midst of His people. The power is gone till the hindrance is removed. He says, "Neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed thing from among you. His power can only go on with what is suitable to Himself; He is not changed, but He cannot give up His character. His character was at stake, and amongst His own people. That is the terrible thing. It was not the heathen He was dealing with, but His own people, those whom He had brought into relationship with Himself. Hence the need of jealousy for His holiness in their midst.

And all this has its counterpart in the church of God. We are in conflict with the foe in heavenly places; and on earth gatherings of saints ought to be, in the power of the Lord's presence and what is suitable to it, bulwarks against evil. At Corinth we see that the Lord had to judge the saints for their allowance of evil; individuals were afflicted with sickness, and some even removed by death; and it was not till the evil had been put away that the apostle's heart could go out to them as it did in the second epistle.

God has brought us to Himself; is He going to give up the maintenance of His character in connection with those whom He has redeemed

by the blood of His Son? If so, He must give up the cross, which is the ground of our blessing. Why so? Because His character was vindicated at the cross. But God never forgets the ground on which we have been blessed, or that we have been brought nigh by virtue of the blood of Christ; nor can He be indifferent to His own holiness.

Do we understand the blessed privilege of being gathered out to Himself? Why is there a lack of power in the meetings? Because there is a state that hinders power, and the only way of recovery is by getting down on our faces and judging ourselves. Can we suppose a gathering is to go on with laxity, and be uncorrected by the Lord? Have not gatherings got their histories as well as individual saints? and where there has been a disregard for what is due to God in an assembly, it has lapsed into a chronic state, and until the evil in its root has been reached, there will be a hindrance to God's acting in manifest power and blessing.

But where such is the case, were there but *one* individual that would go into the sanctuary, and like Joshua cry to God in secret, having His interest really and truly at heart, looking for His interference, would it not come? Undoubtedly it would: He answered Joshua—He let him into His secret. Many a saint who is troubled about the state of things in a gathering,

gets down under the state of the gathering ; but there is always a way for faith in times of trial, if there is but dependence on God, for the ear of God is ever open, and He will come in if waited on, sooner or later.

In Israel's case, as we have seen, the display of power was immediately followed by the loss of power, because of the allowance of what was contrary to God ; this is invariably the case, for God never *can* go on with evil. It has been said by one, "That against the will of the flesh, God has an unceasing controversy, and never more so than in connection with His own people." There is therefore a character of fear and trembling when we think of the holiness of God, which becomes us ; grace itself will produce it, and teach us to cherish the sense of what is due to the God we have to do with, as well as to cultivate the joys which result from going on with Him. An increased sense of grace gives an increased sense of responsibility, because I learn more of His holiness—His character. Increased intimacy with God must be according to what God is.

In Gideon's day we have the people of God still in the land ; but their history as a whole, as is, alas ! invariably the case, is marked by going from bad to worse. The angel of the Lord had gone from Gilgal to Bochim, and the state of the people suffering from their enemies, is the fruit

of their own ways under the government of Jehovah. His dealings with them are the witness of His faithfulness; and the very absence of His intervention in power a proof of their state.

Why are we puzzled at the lack of power? We should not be so puzzled if we knew the principles of God better. Though it is a day of weakness, the principle applies. Going on with what is contrary to God is the thing that hinders His power. Here with Israel, directly the evil is judged, on they go. The effect of true ministry is to help us as to this. The effect of bringing in truth is to discover that this must go and that must go. And this must go on, if we are to make progress with God. A soul must be established in grace, in order to understand the government of God; and the better I know grace, the better I shall understand His faithfulness, and recognise the perfectness of His government.

It is a blessed thing for souls to be established in grace, but, depend upon it, the more we are established, the more will our hearts and consciences be alive to what is due to Him. In Gideon's day the children of Israel cry to the Lord, smarting under the oppression of the enemy. And it is our privilege to know that *we* can ever turn to Him whatever our circumstances, even though we may have to bow our



heads under His government, and acknowledge our deserts. God's ear is ever open, and He delights in our seeking Him; and how often would help and succour come, if the saints and their difficulties were really borne on our hearts before the Lord. But there is only one way of progress, one way of restoration, one way of victory.

We find in the word of God, whichever way we turn, that "Holiness becomes God's house for ever." It is a fixed and unchangeable principle, that God cannot allow evil to be connected with His name and His house. "Judgment must begin at the house of God." Look at Jacob, when called to go up to Bethel, and build an altar unto God, immediately we have him saying, "Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean and change your garments."

Wherever evil is allowed in a gathering of saints, the whole assembly is chargeable with the sin. This is strikingly seen in Israel's case: all Israel was identified with Achan. It is not said, "*Achan* hath sinned," but "*Israel* hath sinned:" and so at Corinth, the apostle says, "Your glorying is not good, know ye not that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven that ye may be a new lump, *as ye are unleavened.*" That is the standing of the church looked at in Christ, and that is the measure for its self-judgment.

We are in conflict with wicked spirits in heavenly places, but if we put on the armour of God, we have the power that is needed to enable us to maintain that which is suitable to God's character and to our heavenly position. If there is not progress there is sure to be declension. People say, "I am not getting on." Then go to God, cry to Him, and He will shew you where the hindrance is. When Israel cried, He sends a prophet who reminds them how He had wrought for them; but they had not obeyed His voice. That explains it all; that was the secret of their sorrowful condition, and it is the secret of the present state of the church. "Ye have not obeyed my voice."

Then comes the angel of the Lord, and sits under the oak, and appears to Gideon, and greets him with the word: "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour. And Gideon said unto him, O my Lord, if the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all the miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? but now the Lord hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites. And the Lord looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?" Gideon was exercised about the state of the people of God. He was seeking to reconcile their state with the

promises of God. He was not merely threshing wheat under the oak. The Lord's interests had a real place in his heart; and these exercises were noticed by the Lord, so He looks upon him and says, "*Go in this thy might*, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites, have not I sent thee?" Then comes the confession of his weakness, met by the gracious assurance: "Surely I will be with thee."

May God give us to be before Him about His people! His eye never fails to notice the heart that has a concern for His interests and His people. Gideon could not understand the angel's salutation, but God saw in his soul what Gideon thought little about. God knew how to estimate his exercises; and He knows how to estimate yours. There is One who puts value on the exercises of your heart. You may be at your daily toil, but what you do with your hands need not hinder the exercises of your soul, and prayers about God's people.

The way of return to power is what I want you to see. This chapter shews it to us. Power had been lost because the voice of the Lord had not been obeyed; but the messenger of God now appears to Gideon, and assures him that "the Lord is with him," and that he is to be the saviour of His oppressed people. Thus encouraged, he builds an altar to the Lord. Timidly, but confidently, he obeys God; then throws down

the altar of Baal. Gideon begins with his own circle: the putting away of evil must precede the return of power: "cease to do evil, learn to do well." Then—the altar cast down—he is led on; his faith is strengthened by the token he receives from the Lord, and he proceeds, as directed by Him, to select his company. This selection is a solemn thing. Only three hundred are chosen to accompany him, for the destruction of the enemy, and to win the victory. And whilst all was accomplished by the Lord's power, yet the people said, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon."

My object is to shew that the secret of the loss of power is unjudged evil, and that if God made light of evil in the midst of His people, He would make light of His own character. What has been propounded in our day is, that if a person is a child of God, on that ground alone he must be received into the assemblies of saints separated to the Lord's name. People say, "What have we to do with judging the people of God, or association with this or that evil in the church? The answer is, because they are children of God, they are bound to be separate from evil, and not deny the holy character of God. To allow the title of the children of God apart from godliness in their ways and associations, would be giving up the character of God, and allowing that God is to be dishonoured among His own people.

What signalised Gideon at the first, was that

his soul was exercised about the people of God, and the history of God's dealings with him affords comfort and encouragement to the weakest among us. The two things that we need to see clearly, and in their reality, are: the easy way in which power is lost, and the only way in which it is regained. There is only one way—Repent—as the Spirit says to the churches in Asia in their decline—"Repent."

The path of recovery has been marked out for us, and if even one individual goes into the presence of God about the state of His people, he will find that the power of God is the same, and only hindered in action. Felt weakness is no hindrance. We may and must be conscious of our weakness, but we have a Priest on high to minister strength to us for the path down here; and His desire is that we should be in spirit near enough to Him to know His mind; and like Joshua and Gideon, when evil has come in amongst His people, to take it up in confession before Him, that He may come in for our help and blessing, and for His own glory.

J. S. O.



# THE REWARD OF FAITH.

JOSHUA XIV. 6-15.

IN reading these verses my desire is to say a few words specially for the encouragement of the young and simple amongst us. But before I say a word as to encouragement, I would turn to Exodus iii. 7, 8. These verses have already been read, and I read them again, in order that what they contain may be impressed upon our hearts. It is vain to speak of encouragement unless we apprehend that the blessed purpose of God has taken hold of us.

Here we have the twofold purpose of God, first to deliver out of the hands of the Egyptians, and secondly to bring the delivered ones into a good land and a large—a land flowing with milk and honey. We know that God's purpose as to Israel is a type of His purpose for us, and that just as He undertook to deliver Israel out of Egypt, with the purpose of bringing them into the land, so He has delivered us out of the hand of the enemy, and will, according to His eternal purpose, bring us safely home to glory; and He desires, not merely that we should know it as

a truth, but that it should so take hold of us that our souls may be held and possessed by it; for only thus shall we be able to overcome the difficulties we meet with on our wilderness journey.

And now let me translate Exodus iii. 8 into New Testament language, and with this purpose, and that we may have the blessed sense of it in our souls, let me read 1 John iii. 1-3, though not at all as meaning that this is the antitype of what we have in Exodus iii. 7, 8. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God, therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." God's purpose is not only that we should be taken out of all that we were in; but He has also predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son, to be like Him, with Him, and at home with Him for ever in the Father's house; while already we are set in the relationship of children, to enjoy the Father's love, and be the subjects of the Father's care every step of the way here.

God's desire is not only that we should know these things, but that we should have the sense in our souls that He has chosen

us for eternal blessedness. He desires that we should be so possessed with these wonderful facts, that we may in spirit have the *present* enjoyment of these rich and wondrous blessings. How little we apprehend them! How feebly we enter into them! But what an encouragement it is to hear Him say, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." How that tells of what was in His heart! His present desire for us as we pass through this world is that we may be filled with joy. I know that some will be ready to say: But there is so much here that hinders our joy; such constant difficulties, and opposing elements arising day by day; and that is perfectly true: for if like Israel, we tread a wilderness path, we must like them be exposed to wilderness difficulties. When they came out of Egypt before they entered on wilderness experiences, they sang that wonderful redemption song, with the place of their bondage behind them, and Pharaoh and his host drowned in the depths of the sea. They were a delivered people, the land was before them, but the wilderness with all its difficulties lay between them and it. The triumphant song of Exodus xv. was almost immediately succeeded by the murmuring of the people at their having no water to drink, and then no bread to eat. But was not God sufficient for every exigency? and was it not



their privilege, had they only walked in the exercise of faith, to learn Him through these trials, and needs, and difficulties, in a way that He could not be learnt when Solomon sat upon the throne, and there was neither enemy nor evil occurrent, but the people dwelt in peace, and the land brought forth abundantly. That was a totally different state of things from the wilderness in which they found themselves when they came out of Egypt. Then they had to face all the difficulties and dangers of the way, and it is these that put faith to the test, and bring out and make manifest the real state of the heart, and how far there is really confidence in God.

We were hearing yesterday of the people murmuring in Caleb's day, and we do well to ask, is not that what we have done? Have not many of us murmured at things that we have met with in the wilderness? The moment we murmur, we are calling in question the wisdom and love of God. If we think that He might have chosen for us a smoother path, we are judging Him, and questioning His love. What we have to start with is, that He has in sovereign grace taken us up to bless us; and that having chosen us for eternal blessing, He will, most assuredly, accomplish all the purposes of His love towards us.

If we are not walking by faith through all

the difficulties here, failure is sure to come in; and if sin is allowed, the government of God must come in, and will take its course, and we shall surely find that word made good—"Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Government ever goes on, but grace goes on too at the same time. We shall not be the subjects of God's governmental dealings apart from His grace. This is strikingly seen in the case of David. On account of his sin his child dies, and he is told the sword shall never depart from his house; while grace assures him, "The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die."

Again, in the case of the transgressor at Corinth; his sin is judged in his being "put away," and this very excision is instrumental to his restoration, for the effect is—he is thoroughly broken down; and thus in result, the grace of God achieves a victory just where Satan had seemed to have gained a success. It is of the very highest importance for the establishment of our souls that we should hold to the purposes of God's grace which nothing can set aside.

What encouragements we have presented to us in this chapter! How beautiful is the testimony of Caleb to the sufficiency of God for the wilderness journey! He says, "And now behold the Lord hath kept me alive, as he said, these forty and five years, ever since the Lord spake this word unto Moses, while the children

of Israel wandered in the wilderness: and now, lo I am this day four score and five years old. As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in." When we listen to such a testimony as this, need *we* fear or doubt the Lord's sufficiency for us? When in difficult circumstances, Christians are sometimes tempted to ask the question why, if God loves us, does He allow us to be so placed: but such reasoning only shews that there is no simple childlike confidence in the Father's love. Could we possibly find ourselves in any difficulties where we could tell the Lord that He is not sufficient for them? Surely not. He has taken us up, and will never give us up. If we were only walking in the assurance that He has set His love upon us, and has taken us up for present and eternal blessing, every fear would be stilled, every doubt dispelled. Every difficulty is but an opportunity for the exercise of faith, and for God to shew what He is.

Faith always gets its reward; though all around may faint, and turn back in heart. The children of Israel turned back in heart to Egypt, they despised the pleasant land: they did not believe the word of the Lord as to it, and that was despising it (Ps. cvi. 24): they did not believe in the word of Exodus iii. 8, that He who

brought them *out* would as surely bring them *in*. Caleb and Joshua believed it; they trusted in God; but they had to share in the forty years' wilderness wanderings. What sustained them? What encouraged and lifted them above all the circumstances of the wilderness? Was it not the assured prospect of the land—the certainty that they were going on to it? Was it not that which cheered and filled their hearts? Have *you* got *your* hearts set on that blessed prospect before you? If our hearts are taken up with Christ where He now is; if we are in spirit entering that place with Him, sustained by the Holy Ghost here, really breathing a heavenly atmosphere, and tasting of heavenly joys, shall we not rise above every difficulty? Will not every attraction of the world be dimmed and dulled and distanced? And as we learn in some measure the blessedness of the portion we have in Him, what it is to be at home with Him in spirit, and there taste the sweetness and repose that are to be found in His presence, the joy of communion which is known only there, and which no earthly circumstances can give—we answer to the desire of His heart, by not only enjoying what He has called us to, but by manifesting in the world something of what He has wrought in us, and of that satisfaction we have found in Him, and of which the world knows nothing. God wants a people on the

earth in whom there shall be a display of His divine power, their hearts so satisfied in Himself that the world sees they have something which it knows nothing of. No doubt there are saints who do know something of this ; but why should we not all know it ? There are no favourites in the family of God. It is not a matter of intelligence, though I would not make light of intelligence ; but while there *are* different measures of intelligence, there is no measure of communion, rest, or enjoyment, which is not open to any one of us. It is the desire of God that we should know it. The hindrances to our knowing it are certainly not on His side, and therefore they must be on ours.

The Lord's desire is plainly expressed in the words I have already referred to. "These things have I spoken unto you that your joy might be full." That is the desire of the Saviour's heart for you, and for me, and for every one of us. Do some ask—How is it we have not got this joy ? I would remind them of a word in Proverbs which may explain the reason : "The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing ; but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat."

I do not doubt that every Christian desires it, but how many there are who sit down with folded hands, and allow themselves to be moulded by the circumstances around them, instead of finding in the circumstances the occasions of

communion, and the very means of growth. "The soul of the diligent shall be made fat." Some one may perhaps say, "I do not know that I am lacking in diligence;" but if we are not tasting something of this holy joy which the Lord desires for us, is it not evident that there must be a hindrance somewhere? And this ought surely to call forth exercise of heart before the Lord. Get into His presence and ask what is the hindrance—what it is that prevents you from answering to the heart of Christ. Why should we go along limping and halting? Paul was running as a racer to the mark; why should not we? What is the hindrance? Often hindrances are not seen in their true character: very little things will hinder us. Sometimes people will say when something is pointed out—"But that is such a *small* thing;" and so it may be small in a natural way; but if the Lord has shewn you that it is unsuitable to His presence—that you cannot go on with it and have His company, can it be a small thing *then*? We are called to walk in the company of Christ, and if we do so, that will put everything straight. It is as we walk in His company that things are seen in their true light. Are you conscious of anything in your surroundings which is hindering you by grieving the Spirit? Is there anything at all in your walk or ways that you would not like the blessed Lord to come and

find you doing? If we are allowing ourselves in anything that would not do for His presence, let us by all means put it away; for if we grieve the Spirit of God by keeping up with anything in ourselves, or in our surroundings, that is unsuitable to Him, He cannot go on with His blessed work of revealing Christ to us. He is not free to take of the things of Christ and to shew them unto us. Do we not well to ask how will these "*small*" hindrances look before the tribunal of Christ? If by the light of God's word we discover anything contrary to Christ, let us be prompt in refusing it. Then the Spirit will be free to lead us on. As the hindrances are refused, the Lord resumes His place in our hearts, and communicates afresh to us. "If a man love me he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him." When the hindering thing is put away, the Lord is free to manifest Himself to us, and our souls are free to go on with Him, and we are conscious of our nearness to Him.

One thing more as to our testimony. Christendom will not be attracted by a mere dogmatic statement of truth; it is the living it out—the manifestation of Christ in our lives, which alone will attract hearts. We may talk of having the truth. Thank God we have it; we cannot sufficiently estimate the immense privilege of having

such blessed truths made known to us ; but it is not enough to *have* it, we must be *in* it ; it must form, and mould, and fashion us. That is what will attract other souls. I feel myself that we should be humbled before the Lord, that there has not been the attractive power of the truth through us ; that there has been such a feeble living it out in our ways, instead of that living manifestation of Christ, which would attract weary hearts, and win really seeking souls to the place where His presence is.

Faith is ever rewarded. The faith of Caleb and its reward is very striking in the verses before us (Joshua xiv. 6-15) ; he got the very spot in the land that he asked for. Here he not only tells out all that the Lord had been to him by the way, but he seeks at the hand of Joshua Hebron for his possession. That was the very place where the giants were, which had made all Israel to tremble. "And Joshua blessed him, and gave unto Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, Hebron for an inheritance. . . . Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite unto this day, because that he wholly followed the Lord God of Israel."

The Lord has taken us up for blessing. But now, the hitch comes—Are we laying hold of it by faith ? He wants us to be walking in the energy of faith in the enjoyment of our heavenly portion ; so that we may walk above things here,



refusing the attractions that would keep our hearts down here, and not only breathing the heavenly atmosphere, but diffusing it to all around.

The Lord grant that it may be so.

F. S. M.



# GOD IS WITH HIS PEOPLE.

HAGGAI I. II.

I DESIRE, beloved brethren, to speak a word or two in connection with what was before us this afternoon. Surely we must all feel thankful for what has been before us: the wonderful grace, and the principles of God's ways, and of His house. It is a great thing to get principles. Paul says to Timothy, "That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of truth." (1 Tim. iii. 15.) I believe that the very fact of our gathering together at the present moment is according to the Lord's mind (especially those who are labouring, to help them to keep rank), and that He will bless it.

Referring again to Joshua, I would just note, that Moses had died, and Joshua comes near to Jericho (chap. v. 13), goes up to the Man with the sword drawn in his hand, and asks, "Art thou for us or for our adversaries?" What a lesson for us to mistrust ourselves, when we see the very one whom God had singled out in such a way,

asking that question ! The Lord says, " Loose thy shoe from off thy foot, for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so." Then follows, " See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour." (Chap. vi. 2.) All you have to do is to exercise patience. Jericho falls ; " And the fame of Joshua was noised throughout all the country." (Ver. 27.) Then comes failure on account of disobedience, as has been already brought before us ; and instead of going straight up to Ai, there must be ambushments, and all sorts of things. Why ? Because of Israel's sin.

The time of this chapter, which I have read (Haggai i.), was one of failure too. The remnant had returned, but the work of the Lord had ceased ; and the prophets Haggai and Zechariah were raised up, to stir up the people to a sense of their failure. The historical books give the history of the nation ; the prophets, what goes on inside. In Ezra we are told that the work had ceased ; and we have a narration of how the enemy had stopped it. In Haggai we find another thing. There is no mention of the opposition of the enemy. Not a word about the king of Persia. It is what the people say themselves. " Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built." That is what the people say ; a striking thing ;

and well for us to mark it. We often get occupied with the enemy and the hindrances. In Philippians i. 28, 29, we get a word which agrees with this, "And in nothing terrified by your adversaries." There are opposition and trial, and have been from the beginning. In Acts there were "many adversaries." But is the Holy Ghost afraid of adversaries? What we want to know is, that our bodies are His temple; that He is down here not only to glorify Christ, but to stop the current of evil that is rushing in on every side.

Then came the word of the Lord by Haggai, saying, "Is it time for you; O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste? Now, therefore, thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways." The Lord uses small things to bring about His own mighty purposes. He reminds them of all the disappointment, "Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled," &c. Then He repeats, "*Consider your ways.*" What about Persia? Had they to take their sword and go against it? No, they were to go up to the mountain and cut a piece of wood, and build the house, "And I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord." What a little thing! Just to bring a bit of wood—a bit of cedar! Faith can do very little things, beloved friends. God is using any measure

of faithfulness in this day. The house of God is not formed by man's hand now. Men cannot build anything for God in this day; but God is building, and it is a wonderful honour to co-operate with Him in His building.

“Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the Lord of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house. Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit. And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon that which the ground brought forth. . . . Then Zerubbabel, . . . and Joshua, . . . with all the remnant of the people obeyed the voice of the Lord their God. . . . Then spake Haggai, the Lord's messenger in the Lord's message unto the people, saying, *I am with you, saith the Lord.*” Here is the great thing. We do not profess to be prophets, but God *does* give communications. Mary Magdalene was not a prophet, but she brought a blessed message to the people of God. *All* the people are mentioned. They obeyed the voice of the Lord, and the message is, “I am with you, saith Jehovah.” GOD IS WITH HIS PEOPLE. There has been a tendency in our day to forget this. There have been earnest men who separated

and went aside in this way. They got weary, lost sight of the blessed fact, that God never tires, never wearies, but is always with His people. Here we see that His grace stirred up Haggai and the prophets to speak to His people; and He stirred up the spirit of not only Zerubbabel and Joshua, but of *all* the remnant of the people, and they obey the voice of the Lord their God.

Then the word is (chap. ii. 2), "Speak now to Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua, the son of Josedech, the high priest, and to the residue of the people, saying, Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? And how do ye see it now? Is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing? Yet now, be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the Lord; and be strong, O Joshua, the son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong all ye people of the land, saith the Lord, and work, for I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts." All are joined together in the message—Speak to them *all*. We remember the history of the foundation of the house in Ezra iii.; how the ancient men wept, and the others shouted for joy. How thankful *we* ought to be to see such a company as this gathered out to His name this day. But what is it to Pentecost! Are we aged people? Do we go back to the first beauty? Shall *we* be carried away by revivals? Nothing will quiet

our spirits like entering into what the church is in its intrinsic beauty and preciousness to Christ, the Pearl of great price. How encouraging the assurances that come to the people from the Lord! "Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the Lord; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the Lord, and work; for I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts. . . . My Spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not." With this assurance they are called to work.

Then there is another thing which I would call your attention to, and that is the *holiness*. "In the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the Lord by Haggai, the prophet [if God gives a date, there is some particular meaning in it], Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Ask now the priests concerning the law, saying, If one bear holy flesh on the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat, shall it be holy? And the priests answered and said, No. Then said Haggai, If one that is unclean by a dead body, touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean." This is a word with regard to separation. We are passing through a defiling world, and we need the application of the word of God continually to cleanse and sanctify our thoughts and ways.

Separation is constantly brought before us in Scripture. We have not entered into what the word tells us, if we go on with things which are unsuited to the Lord. If we are linked up with the truth which we have had before us to-day, it ought to be a clean sweep with everything that has been set up the last 1800 years. It is simple obedience to the word that we want; that brings in the light; and all the power of the enemy is gone in the light. You cannot take up anything of the day that is not marked with the darkness of the enemy. Let the light come in, and the thing is discovered. "The fruit of light is in all goodness, and righteousness and truth." Why? Because there can be nothing else, when the light is there.

One word more as to John xv., and the end of Ephesians. There are three things in John xv.; three things that go together in Christianity. First, fruit bearing. Secondly, love to one another; love that goes on to death, to laying down our lives for the brethren. Thirdly, the hatred of the world. "These things will they do unto you for my name's sake." Do not think about yourself; it is something in connection with Christ that brings out the enmity.

Now look at Ephesians vi. 10. Here the warfare is not against flesh and blood, but against wicked spirits in the heavenlies. True, man may be used to oppose us, but here is some-



thing far more terrible—the wiles of the devil. It is not the lust of the eye, but the direct and immediate opposition of the enemy. Therefore it is, “Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (ver. 11); and in verse 13, you are again told to “take unto you the *whole* armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day; and having done all, to *stand*.” You are never told to run in Ephesians, because you are in Christ, and have only to *stand*. “Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth.” The first thing is that the loins, the place of strength, are to be girt about with truth. Next, the breastplate of righteousness; that is what you are towards others, a person of truth yourself. The third thing is, your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. One thing that helps towards that, is love to the brethren. But you must have truth and righteousness before you have peace. That is what should mark us individually. But even then, are we to think that the enemy will not attack us? No! “Above all taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.” And then, “*Receive*,” not take, “the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”

The last thing is, “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit;” the mind

entirely free from everything in the world, and able to pray for the whole church of God.

The Lord give us confidence that He is still with us. He does not look for great things from us. If we were more lowly, God would lay things on our hearts. Little things it might be, but we should be His instruments of blessing to the whole church. You remember the story of the factory of tapestry, which was all stopped because of want of oil in the machinery. All was at a stand still, when a boy silently got some oil and applied it to the works, and all went on. If there is to be fruit-bearing, there must be love towards each other, and that is connected with obedience. The enemy tries to put out the light, and stir up the hatred of the world; but the Spirit of God remains with us. What we want is lowliness, and distrust of ourselves, and dependence on God, so that He may be able to use us for the help, blessing, and encouragement of each other.

A. B. P.



# THE OBJECT OF THE SOUL.

EPHESIANS I. II.

I NEED not, I think, say what a great, what a wonderful thing it is to understand what God is doing, to know what He has done, and what He is going to do ; and when we think of ourselves, it is more wonderful still. Yet this is the privilege and blessing conferred by Him upon all those who come to Him through His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, if we are in the dark as to this, it is our own fault, for He has plainly set it all before us, disclosed His whole mind and purpose to us, in order that it might have its present living effect upon us, and that thus He might work through us to the glory of Another, even our Lord Jesus Christ. To this end, therefore, He sets before us the Object He has before Him, as regards this world—the Object, indeed, which He always had, and which He will ever have.

In the Old Testament, He shews us man in innocence and losing it ; then man responsible and failing ; then man tested and found to be a hater of God, turning his hand against Him,

and refusing, and spitting upon, and crucifying His beloved Son, manifested in humiliation and grace. Thus, in consequence of this, God begins afresh, after the Cross, on an entirely new basis ; man having been tried, and set aside, and his mouth stopped. Under the law man's mouth is stopped by the just demands of God, and guilt is bound upon his conscience. By grace man's mouth is opened, but it is to praise God and to worship Him (this is in the new man), revealed and known in the Son of His love, and to own Him Lord of all.

If we look back over the past, and see what has already taken place in this world of sin, it will help us to understand the position the blessed Son now holds before God. Ever since the Cross, God has been glorifying His grace, taking up sinners, accepting them in the Beloved, and seating them in the heavenlies in Christ, and for His glory. Thus, because He has to do with us, and for the glory of Another, He speaks of the glory of His grace. It is through us that He glorifies His grace, taking up the vilest, and putting them into the highest and nearest place for His own satisfaction and for the glory of His Son. There is no third way in which God has to do with man ; it must be either in grace or in judgment. We were afar off, not only guilty but afar off, and dead in our sins, incapable of one thought or desire towards Him.

Then, still acting in the sovereignty of His grace, He gives us a capacity to understand Him, to go along with Him in what He is doing. This capacity is the new nature, and in itself it is infinite as being of Him, and we can never lose it. This capacity never enlarges, it is ever the same, and it will be so to all eternity; but in itself it is without power, it is helpless, and thus He has given us the Holy Ghost, the new power, sent from heaven when Jesus was glorified. This power is as infinite as the capacity. We cannot lose it either, for it is said, "He shall abide with you alway, even unto the end of the age;" but we may grieve Him, hinder Him, quench Him indeed, and thus lose those blessed things which come to the soul only through an ungrieved Spirit. So, when we grieve Him, all joy, all realisation may be lost; the soul going on in a careless way, hardly sensible, may be, of what it is losing. For the most part, people do not recognise this power; indeed, the great failure observable among Christians generally is this, they neither understand, nor apprehend, nor indeed believe in this new power that is given to them. The truth of the verse, "The Holy Spirit was not yet, because that Jesus was not yet glorified," is well nigh ignored. The present glory of a glorified Christ was what no mind of man, no matter how pure or cultivated, ever could reach to, or even comprehend, that that

One who was despised, rejected, spat upon, and crucified here in this world, is now seated in glory at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. But the Holy Ghost is here now, sent down from heaven to make known to our souls the present glory of Him who glorified God here below.

But, some will say, "All have not the Spirit," and would make the sealing of the Spirit a matter of attainment. This it assuredly is not. Verse 13 says, "In whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." No time is thus stated, except that is after believing; but the truth as to sealing is that when the soul believes, and simply and solely confides itself to the blessed Lord and His finished work, that soul is sealed, and then has power to enter into these things, and to know the present mind and will of God.

There are two views of grace given us in this chapter: the glory of His grace, reaching up to heaven and seating us there in Christ, "accepted in the Beloved;" and the riches of His grace, reaching down to us in our sins, and giving us redemption and forgiveness; both, indeed all, for the glory of Him who has acted towards us according to "the good pleasure of His will." But, besides making known this place and extent of blessing to us, the Spirit has another thing to reveal—the present glory of the glorified Christ

—the fact, in present reality to the soul, that He who took our place under wrath and in death, is now exalted to the right hand of God on high ; and that we down here are united to Him there ; that the blessed Lord Jesus, our Saviour, our Lord, our Head, the One to whom we belong, is already glorified.

Further, He who was rejected in contempt by man, and forsaken by God when made sin, is going to be brought forth by God, and vindicated in the world, in the very scene of all His humiliation, and suffering, and death, in all the blessed, holy approval of God. We shall not be here then—we shall be with Him, beholding and rejoicing in all the glory put upon Him. The Spirit brings this, as a blessed reality, home to our souls with regard to all that surrounds us here, that we may have the sense that while we are here, where nothing can be or will be right till the Lord Jesus comes in glory and is vindicated here, He is already glorified, and waiting in patience at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. When we are there with Him, we shall have no other object but Himself, nothing to hinder or distract. Now, in the midst of all over which Satan has power to mislead us, we have Him as our Object ; He in heavenly glory, we in the scene of His suffering and death. Thus the Object before us, by the grace of God, is the One before whom every knee shall bow, and at

whose appearing all the nations of the earth shall lament. What a contrast between His people and the world! You and I shall not lament when we see Him as He is. God can set no higher object before us. Nought else can control our souls, or really move the conscience like this. All the blessing bestowed does not reach us like the thought of seeing Him in all His glory; of being with Him for ever in all the bright, holy value of His glorious presence, for ever satisfied in seeing all the glory put upon Him to all eternity, and we shall be like Him. Yet this thought, blessed as it is, is an inferior one to that of being with Him.

The world does not know our Object—the Man that glorified God in this world, His Object, and ours through grace. Man, as such, is his own object; and this will be fully developed by-and-by. Israel, God's earthly people, we know, turned to idolatry—abandoned God and turned to idols, and will do so again. Scripture is clear as to this. But man, as such, will go into a still grosser form of idolatry, for he will set himself up as God, and declare himself to be the sole object of worship (see 2 Thess. ii.); and that is the spirit of the world, the object of the world, and it has nothing higher. It aims at and strives after peace and safety down here, and thinks it is progressing to that end; but “There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.” It is



in the midst of all that, where there can be no peace for man as man, that God sets us by His grace with His peace ruling in our hearts. All manner of trial and sorrow surrounds the Christian, yet he is sustained in it all, "troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken;" surrounded with all manner of distress, opposition, scorn, and hatred, but beholding and reflecting "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Surely it is a mistake to say this applies only to the Apostles. It is to shut out the application and power of it in our own souls. The truth is we are so little in the true place, as to our souls, that we shrink from what is surely true of all His people. Did He not say, "Marvel not if the world hate you; ye know that it hated me before it hated you"? Are we to confine this to the then hearers only? To whom then comes the word, "Whosoever will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution?" Ah! it is only His power, the power of His love, and truth, and grace, that can enable any of us to stand quiet and firm in the blessed enjoyment of Him and His Christ, in all the pressure and pride of this world. But thus the world will have nothing to say to us, it will cast us out, scorn and shun us. What has ruined the testimony is the courting the world, and seeking its countenance and approval—call it the religious world or any other. Thus seeking

popularity has brought about the ruin of the Church. And what remains? Just what was at the beginning—the same Lord Jesus at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, the same Holy Spirit here below, ready and willing, yea, waiting to make good to our souls all the present glory of the blessed Lord. The power never fails, but what fails is the subjection to and dependence upon that power. A dependent, obedient man is one in whom that power works. The difficulty arises from our thinking that we have a little strength.

He says, "Rejoice in the Lord alway," not sometimes, but alway. All saved souls rejoice in their Saviour; but who amongst them rejoices in the Lord? Owning and delighting in Him, the only One who has right and title over us. He has purchased us, and we are His—body, soul, and spirit. Surely the sense of this in the soul would make our lives and our thoughts different to what they are. What a different outlook we should have on all surrounding us in this world! In His goodness and unwearying love God keeps this blessed Object before our souls. He has raised Him from the dead, has set Him at His own right hand in heavenly glory, and tells us, by the Spirit, that it is the exceeding greatness of this same power that raised Jesus from the dead, and glorified Him in heaven, that has wrought in us, has given us life, and given us to

believe in Him. That mighty power exhibited in raising Christ from the dead, is the same power that has worked and works in us. Thus there can be no saying, "We cannot do this or that;" indeed, when we say "We cannot," it is really the will in opposition, and it would be truer to say, "We will not."

God will bring Him forth in glory soon, and we shall come with Him; but, before that, He gives us to look out over this world, the place where He was crucified, and survey it as He sees it, to have His estimate of it all, and to know what He is about to do in it—the scene of the humiliation, suffering, forsaking, and death of His beloved Son; the scene in which He glorified Him, and in which He will fully vindicate Him. But He sees another thing here now—the Church, the body of Christ. That which answers to Him in His present place of glory on high is His suffering, tried, despised people, in conflict here, the object of Satan's attack, ever the scorn and derision of man. But where can we see this once manifestedly beautiful Church, always, even in its ruins, so fair to Him? What remains of it all in the midst of the ruins? The same power to make known to our souls the reality of being united to Him at God's right hand; that all is working to one end, His glory; that He is coming, and coming soon to take us out of it to be with Himself for ever; that as to the world, nothing

can be or will be right until He comes to put it right, but that He has His rights, and His way, the fulfilment of all His will, and desires, in the midst of the ruins, amongst those who, in dependence upon, and subjection to Him, are content to be nothing, in order that He may be everything. We are not the Church. Woe be to us if we think we are; but we are, through His grace, gathered on that ground to be for His glory, and to know the sustaining power of His love and present favour, in fullest sympathy with us. Thus, verse 15, it says, "I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love to all the saints." Faith in Him found its expression in love to all His saints; those who are of Him in this world, as a company, sustained by His hand. Jesus glorified at the right hand of God on high, we one with Him there in all the acceptance of Himself before God, placed here in this world for one only reason—for Christ, for His glory. Every mist, every cloud goes, if this blessed truth comes home to the soul, not as a doctrine merely, but as a Divine, living reality. It clears away everything. The purpose of God is, to make known to us the present sense of His favour; and He has given us the power to make it good to our souls. If we have not that, what have we? If we have it, what do we want more but the deeper knowledge of Himself, the Lord of life and glory? We shall see Him as He is,

and be with Him and like Him for ever. Every one that has this hope in Him, purifies himself as He is pure; not *tries* to do so, but *does* it. That is the moral effect.

An Object soon to be manifested in glory, the glory of the Father and the holy Angels, is what He sets before us now. What a lever this is to bear upon our souls! He to whom we belong, whose present glory the Holy Spirit is here to make known to our souls, is to be manifested and vindicated here in this world. Till then He keeps us here that He may be glorified in us. If this is kept in all its simplicity before the soul, it will indeed help us to see many things in a different, because in a Divine, light.

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