

# TRUTH FOR THE TIME.

(PART X.)

BEING NOTES OF ADDRESSES AND  
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# GOD'S TESTIMONY.

(EPH. I. 1-14; 2 PET. I. 16-21.)

I FEEL in a sense the difficulty of presenting the subject which I have before me—that is, the testimony—and for the reason that many will regard it as a worn-out theme. The term has almost become hackneyed amongst us. But nevertheless I will venture to say a little about God's testimony, and will trace the line of that testimony through scripture, and seek to shew, if able, where that testimony now resides. And in connection with the subject I will say a word on the vessel of the testimony, and on the relation of the testimony to the vessel. Now, here are three pretty distinct points: the first, the testimony; then the vessel of the testimony, which in a certain sense is inseparable from it; and then what properly characterises the vessel of the testimony. That comes down, if not to practice, to what is very practical.

I have taken up the passage in Ephesians because it presents two thoughts. One is our calling, and the other our testimony. For the sake of brevity, I will say the calling of the church, or of the saints; and the testimony of the saints. These two thoughts appear. As

regards the vessel of the testimony I would say, that if you do not understand the calling, the testimony must be defective. Depend upon it, we are not up to the height of the testimony if we do not apprehend the calling. If it be the case, as no doubt it is, that a great many people go forth gospel preaching with little or no knowledge of the calling, you may be sure that their preaching will be defective. Even though outward effects may be produced by it, the effects will not convince me that it is otherwise. It cannot but be defective from the lack in their own souls. I am not speaking of those "in fellowship with us, but of many who go out preaching.

I begin by tracing the testimony of God through scripture, and it is very interesting to see one mind, one thread, running through the whole word of God. The apprehension of this cannot fail to have the effect of confirming our confidence in the word of God, so that we have the sense that whatever may fail, or however we fail, yet the word of God cannot fail. That is a point to which every one of our souls must come. You have in the word of God not only what is in itself infallible, but what cannot fail us.

The first point I take up in God's testimony is that seen in Abel, and I may remark that up to

the church the testimony of God would appear to have been identified with individuals. I think that was so. The difficulty might be presented that Israel as a nation was here for the testimony of God; but I doubt if they really were that according to the purpose of God. They ought to have been a testimony, to have given by fruit-bearing, witness that they were a vine on earth; but when Christ came into the world, He says, "I am the true vine." Israel had the place of God's vine, but they were not the true vine. The Lord says, "I am the true vine"—the genuine vine. Israel will under Christ come into the place hereafter, and will be a testimony here for God, but only in abiding in Christ. I make that remark in order to guard the particular point that in the Old Testament the testimony of God is bound up with individuals.

I am for the moment referring to the testimony before the flood. The beginning is in Abel. What he did bore witness to the ground of acceptance. That is the principle apparent in his testimony. He died on account of his testimony, but it is remarkable that "He being dead, yet speaketh."

Now I pass on to the next point, namely, Enoch. The theme of his testimony was the Lord's coming, "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints." At that early date

that was his witness. It was in view of what was a necessity for that that he walked with God, and that he was not, for God took him. If you had not the light of translation, you could not understand how the saints would come with the Lord. It is in principle the difference between 1 and 2 Thessalonians; in the first epistle the saints are caught up to meet the Lord in the air; in the second epistle they come with Him. That is what came out in Enoch, and the effect of it on him was that he walked with God; he was thus the vessel of the testimony. He did not make a conspicuous figure on earth; he was obscure, and he disappeared, for God took him. He was the witness for God in that day.

I pass on to Noah. Noah is not, as Enoch, a witness of the coming of the Lord, but of the coming judgment. I need hardly say that judgment must connect itself very intimately with the coming of the Lord. Noah was a preacher of righteousness, and what righteousness meant was expressed in warning men of coming judgment. The effect on him of his testimony was that he, believing God, did what God told him to do—he prepared an ark for the saving of his house. You see thus the effect of the testimony upon the vessel of it. Abel died; Enoch was not, for God took him; Noah was a preacher of righteousness, and built an ark for the saving



of his house. That carries us up to the flood. Morally all was in a line.

Now I come to later times, namely, to Abraham, and in him is marked a point of departure. It is not now simply a question of moral principles, as before the flood. In Abraham we come to another line, and it is indicated in that the *God of glory* appeared unto our father Abraham. "The God of glory" and "the glory of God" are two expressions connected in scripture. If you look at Acts vii. you will see that Stephen in speaking began with the God of glory, and ends with the glory of God. The glory of God is the climax, the result of what the God of glory works. The glory of God is the climax reached in Christ. The God of glory marks the point of departure. It indicated that God was One that had His own purposes. His purposes are His glory, and in the accomplishment of His purposes His glory is displayed. That is what I understand to have been presented to Stephen. He looked up to heaven and "saw the glory of God and Jesus."

But to return to Abraham. God gave the promises to Abraham. He promised to bless. In that way He anticipated the law and the curse. But another point comes out also in connection with Abraham, and that is, the title of God to dispose of the earth as He pleases.

The world had become apostate ; the spirit of Antichrist was there ; Babel was the proof that man had become apostate. In the face of this, God announces His purpose to dispose of the earth as He pleases. The earth does not belong to man. God has given it to man for enjoyment, but the earth is the Lord's and He will dispose of it to whom He will. God gave to Abraham the testimony of blessing—he was to be the vessel of it. What was the effect upon him ? He dwelt in a tent, but he looked for a city. He was a stranger and a pilgrim in this order of things, but he had a prospect—he looked for a city that has foundations. He was a man of expectation. I never knew of a city in this world that had moral foundations. Rome had not foundations, or it would not have passed away. Its renown was largely built up on violence and tyranny. London has no foundations—no moral ones. Abraham “looked for a city that *has* foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” He looked for the heavenly city, the new Jerusalem, founded in righteousness, in which no hand of man has ever been employed. It is a wonderful thing to contemplate a structure, whether it be a house or a city, in which man has had no hand. “Whose builder and maker is God.” It is a work which God does not entrust to any man. It is all of Himself. You get

something akin to it in Matthew xvi., where the Lord says, "On this rock I will build my church." So with this city, the Builder (the Architect) and Artificer is God. That is what Abraham looked for. As has been often remarked, Abraham had an altar, a place of approach to God, and on the other hand he dwelt in a tent. He did not run in the current of the course of things in this world, but confessed that he was a stranger and a pilgrim on the earth, for he believed God and had His promises.

I do not profess, in what I have been saying, to be exhaustive, or assume to compass everything connected with Abraham, I only bring two or three prominent points before you.

The next thing I take up is the tabernacle, and here the vessel of testimony was Moses. The truth foreshadowed in the giving of the law and the setting up of the tabernacle was this—that where the law was written God would dwell, that was what God indicated. I hope to be able to make clear that when the law is written in man's heart, then the way is prepared for God to dwell among men. For the time being the law was written on tables of stone. God was acting on the principle of testing, therefore the law was not yet written in man's heart. But in the ways of God the

law will be written in man's heart. The point of departure here is Christ. He said, "Thy law is within my heart." Not that the law was written there, I need hardly say, but it was within His heart, and the consequence of His coming is that the law will be written in Israel's heart; and when that is so, God will dwell with man. I do not doubt that this will be fulfilled in Israel in the future, when God consummates the new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. "I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people;" but "I will be to them a God" must be consequent on the law being written in the heart. There are two things consequent on the law being written in the heart: one is, that man becomes the reflex of God—Christ as man was the reflex of God, He was so perfectly, as we see in Psalm xl.—and the other is, that at the same time every one has individual knowledge of God. Consequent on that, God sets up His dwelling among men. I think that was foreshadowed in the direction to make a sanctuary which God gave to Moses. Moses had to set up God's dwelling-place, and to make everything according to the pattern shewed him in the mount. Moses was the vessel of the testimony in that day, and

what marked him was that he was faithful in God's house. He was not only a stranger and a pilgrim—he could not very well help being that, for he was in the wilderness. It had been different with Abraham: he dwelt in the land, and being rich he could have been otherwise. But it is in connection with God's house that Moses is spoken of as faithful. He did not deviate one jot or tittle from the directions given to him in the mount. He had a due sense of the importance of God's house, and of what it was to have to do with it. I think it would be well if we had more sense of the importance of God's house and of having to do with God in regard to it; we would not depart from the divine order and directions. Even in a day of the greatest confusion, faithfulness is the principle that ought to govern us—Moses was faithful in God's house.

But to pass on. We have had the promises in Abraham, the writing of the law and the tabernacle in Moses. The next point, I think, is the throne. David was in this the vessel of testimony. Again it was an individual. The throne came in when everything had failed after the first order. Prophets had testified, Samuel had come upon the scene. There had been a king after the flesh in Saul. Then comes in as king the man after God's own

heart—the anointed of God; and the testimony of God is bound up with David. He was the witness, the reign of grace, when all had been lost under law. Now, there are two things that mark David: he was ever subject to God's word, and was unflinching in opposition to God's enemies. He stood in the truth, always subject to the prophet. He was not a wilful king that did his own will. It is on the ground of what was seen in David that the throne of God in this world rests. The enemies are subdued and set aside, and the *throne* is maintained in all faithfulness to God's word.

I will not now speak further of the testimony of God as presented in the Old Testament; we have had the promises with Abraham, the tabernacle with Moses, the throne with David. I come now to the point where all these testimonies meet and rest, and that is in the Lord Himself. I will refer for a moment to what Christ was after the flesh. These different testimonies were all centred there, not one was lacking. The promises were there, for He was Abraham's seed and the vessel of the promises; the tabernacle was there, for God dwelt there in a prophet who was like unto Moses; the throne was there—or perhaps I should say, the title to the throne—in the true Son of David. That is how the Lord came into this scene and was

presented to His people after the flesh. The consequence was this, that at the close of His course here the Lord rides into Jerusalem claiming the throne. He enters Jerusalem as Zion's King claiming the throne. "Tell ye the daughter of Zion, Behold thy king cometh unto thee, meek and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass." He rides into Jerusalem, claiming His inheritance. That was the testimony presented in Christ after the flesh, and that was rejected. They rejected the promises, they rejected the One in whom God dwelt, and they rejected the One who had divine title to the throne. Christ was the vessel of the testimony, and what marked the vessel of the testimony when you get every testimony centred there? It was the perfect solution of the whole question of good and evil. "Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity." That was what marked the pathway of the Lord Jesus here in this world. It has been said (and truly) that the opposite will mark Antichrist; he will love iniquity and hate righteousness; the result to Christ is—"God, thy God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." There was the unvarying resistance of sin and evil all through His pathway here. In His death He took the place of death to sin, but in His pathway it was not death to sin, but

striving against sin. (Heb. xii. 4.) He resisted sin in every form in which it presents itself, every kind of evil; the whole question of good and evil was completely gone through, the complete conflict with sin and the complete maintenance of good—all that was due to God. What came to pass in the Lord down here, to put it in the language of scripture, was, that evil was overcome by good. It is most terrible to think that the Lord was rejected in spite of all the good that came out in Him. All good from God was presented to man here, and yet the vessel of it was rejected. He resisted unto blood, striving against sin. That was the pathway of the Lord Jesus Christ down here.

Now the Lord Jesus Christ is no longer here. Other things had to come into view. Redemption had to be accomplished and Christ to be exalted to the right hand of God. The whole ground of action had to be changed. The man after the flesh, after the first order, had to be set aside, and the Man after another order had to come in. Man after the flesh was annulled, and in the resurrection of Christ man after another order was brought into view. God had to be glorified in man after the flesh; for that reason Christ came in flesh that He might glorify God. But there was another reason. The Man from heaven had



to come into view when He had severed every connection with man after the flesh. Now what I say is this: The testimony is still here, but it is now no longer connected with an individual, but with a company on the ground of faith. The ground has changed. The One in whom the testimony was presented is rejected and is now on the right hand of God and is Head of the church, which is His body here. It is not individual testimony now. I understand that the church is left here in testimony to what belongs to Christ. It is no new testimony, that is to say, it is not of anything further that has to be accomplished, for every element of God's glory is secured in Christ at God's right hand. God has His way. Christ is the true ark of the testimony and the mercy seat. The church is here, properly speaking, in witness by the Spirit of God to the glory of Christ. That is the position of the church, maintaining here in this world, a testimony to the rights and inheritance of Christ, and in which latter the church itself has its own proper part.

Now no one of us could do that if he did not first know the calling. In the passage I read (Eph. i.) you first get the calling. If you are not in the truth of the calling you cannot be in the full enjoyment of God's love, for that is the great point in the calling. "He hath chosen us in

him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." Love is the very essence of sonship. The secret of sonship lies in the knowledge of God's love; we are in that position in the enjoyment of God's love, and responsive to that love, and no one can be of any account practically in regard of God's calling, except as he responds to His love, for He has chosen us to be before Him in love. We must be holy and without blame or we should not be suited to God, but the essence of sonship is love. God has made known His purpose as to us to that end, that we might be formed in the divine nature. Sonship is that we might be before God according to His nature. If God sees fit to have sons for Himself they are "before him." Testimony down here is not the point in this passage, but "*to himself*." The thought in sonship is "*to himself*." We need to be in the light of that, in order to be responsive to that love.

When you know the calling then you are fitted to be here in the testimony. The two points that come before us in this passage are: First, We have the forgiveness of sins. Secondly, We have intelligence of God's will, and the will of God is to head up in one all things in Christ. Everything that was presented in times gone by in type and shadow is now gathered up in

Christ. God has made known that no purpose of His will has failed, however it may have appeared to fail. All is established in Christ, gathered up in Him, and in Him we have obtained an inheritance; and in whatever Christ has taken up in the way of promise, or as regards the dwelling place of God, or in connection with the throne, we—the saints—have part with Him. It is not the higher side of blessing; I fully own that the calling is that, because it presents what we are to God; the calling is the *supreme* thought; but the testimony of forgiveness of sins, and of inheritance is vastly important down here; to put it in the language of Acts vii. we bear witness to “the glory of God and Jesus.” And we have the Spirit, the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession to the praise of His glory.

Just one word more, and that is this. We can understand that our testimony must be completely ineffective except as we are apart in spirit from the course of things here. If you are disposed to settle down here in a path of earthly ease, I do not see how you can be going on with the testimony of God. That is a danger which besets us all. If you fall into it you are not faithful in maintaining the witness of God's will, and that, you must remember, is part of the testimony. Even in the very first principle of

the gospel to the Gentiles it is, "that they may receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance." Inheritance is in Christ; it does not refer to the present order of things; and if we have it in Him we are left here to be witnesses, not of our inheritance, but of His.

I do not think that our path here is exactly as was Christ's in conflict with sin. It is true that we have to walk as He walked, but as regards sin our place is of *death* to it. People I daresay will not leave us alone if we are in this path and walking as alive to God in Christ, they will be against us; but still our path is different from Christ's, it is death to sin rather than of conflict with it. We get an indication of our path in Peter (Matt. xiv.) when the Lord encouraged him to leave the boat to go to Himself on the water. I am here, but I do not set myself to attempt to stem the current of evil; but to walk in correspondence to Christ. I am not going to try to improve the world or anything of that kind. At the same time I am waiting here until the time comes to reign with Christ, and am here in the power of the Holy Ghost to witness to His inheritance.

I believe that to be our testimony, and I think it is of all moment to apprehend it, and to see that the testimony of God is now bound up with the church. It might be said, Where is the

church? Where am I to find it? I must leave that, but I think it is important to see that the church was the special vessel of the testimony. When Christ was here it was individual; He was alone; though even then He associated twelve with Him. Now it is no longer individual. The church is the vessel of it. People say, "Ah, but the church has failed." It *has* failed as God's house on earth, but I think we ought still to be like Abraham, strangers and pilgrims here, and like Moses faithful in God's house, and like David true to God's word and unflinching in opposition to God's enemies. In the light of the glorified Man, walking in death to sin, and coming consciously nearer and nearer to the One who is the blessed expression of God's purpose in regard to us, getting more to the height of God's calling as chosen in Christ that we might be holy and without blame before God in love, predestinated unto sonship. I do not believe in the power of any testimony here save as we are fully in the light of sonship, since I do not think we shall be effective if we are not in the enjoyment of it.

I feel how imperfectly I have presented the subject to you, for the reason that I am so little up to it myself—but it is a great thing to see the line of God's testimony right through scripture, and to realize where at the present moment the testimony of God resides.

F. E. R.

## GROWTH IN THE DIVINE NATURE.

(EPH. IV. 1-16.)

I THINK it is a most wonderfully encouraging thought for our souls, beloved brethren, that we have God's answer to the man that fell—that there is a Man, a glorified Man, at this moment, to His own satisfaction in heaven. God has, so to speak, got the answer according to His own heart to the man that fell. He is not any longer testing man or trying man, or seeing whether anything can be done with the man that fell. All that is over, and God has now got the answer entirely to the man that fell, and to all the ruin he brought in, in the glorified Man at His right hand. There is a Man there to His own entire and eternal satisfaction.

There is, as has been said to us already this morning, a most important point for our souls, and that is, that we see the purpose of God realised in Christ. You see it realised in what Christ is at God's right hand. You see the Son there. If God's purpose is to bring many sons to glory—well, the Son is there and He is the first born among many brethren. He became man to

bring sonship into manhood—now He is there; and as I look at Him I understand what is God's purpose as to the saints. They are to be conformed to the image of His Son.

You are enabled to take in the calling because it is opened out to us in Christ Himself. No mere reading of Ephesians, nor any mere knowledge of the doctrine of the epistle, will get the purpose of God into our hearts unless we have the sense in our souls that the Man of God's purpose has entirely supplanted us; that the man that sinned and fell is supplanted; the Man there has entirely supplanted the man here: then is opened out to us the purpose of God in that blessed Man. We may be able to talk of Ephesians and even to unfold its doctrine, but I am satisfied for myself that the only way in which I get hold of the purpose of God for my own heart is as I see it realised in the Person of Christ up there. If we in any little measure are able to enter into it, that we are before Him in love in Christ—if we have the light of it in our souls, then the other part we have had before us must result

I may say this line of truth was on my mind before our brother rose, and I am convinced that it is what God would bring before us at this moment. Nothing can be more important for us as gathered together. You will forgive me if I

press it a little—not that I desire to take the place of a teacher in any special way, but I am convinced it is what God would bring before us.

If we enter into what the calling of God is up there, it would have a great effect upon us in regard to the testimony down here. Nothing can fail as to the work of God by His Spirit forming the vessel of testimony here—the body of Christ. There is failure I know in the outward thing, “the house,” if you please; all is in confusion and disorder, but I see God is working in souls; Christ is building, and the work is going on; and it would be an immense thing for us (apart from any thought of ecclesiastical order) if we got the thought of the work of God with regard to the body of Christ at this moment, that souls are being formed by the Spirit in the divine nature. The growth of the body of Christ, as I understand it, is as we grow in the divine nature. You may have large numbers gathered into a meeting, but the body of Christ only grows as the saints grow in the divine nature. The growth of a meeting is not necessarily the growth of the body. When scripture speaks of the body the great thing with regard to it is growth. It is not directly through ministry but there is *growth* in the divine nature. Ministry is for the perfecting of the saints, but the body grows. You get it here,



“increase [or growth] of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.” It is from what every joint supplies, and deriving from the Head, and the whole growing in the divine nature.

That may go on with us, beloved friends, though the outward vessel of testimony has failed. I believe it does, and nothing can be more beautiful. We may speak of feebleness in a meeting and that there is no public testimony in it in the way of preaching, but suppose there were half a dozen saints in a place and they have no one gifted to preach, still I say, those six saints can begin with the first lesson in the outflow of the divine nature, and that is, “Love one another.” The first thought of fruit-bearing in John xv. is, “Love one another.” Every one can begin there. It is like learning music. You set a child to learn the elements—very little work it seems, but if you are perfect there, you can do anything. So the Lord in John xv. sets a beginning before His disciples as those who were in the secret abiding-place of love, and that was to love one another. Let us get perfect there. If one thing would help us at the present moment more than anything else, it would be to stoop down and serve one another in love, not seeking so much to teach one another, but to learn divine affections one to another in the company of Christ—thus being formed in the divine

nature to serve one another in love. It would be a wonderful thing.

Suppose, as I said, there were half a dozen saints who entered into what the Lord says, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye have love one to another." People would say, There are half a dozen saints in that place and they are knit together in love and affection. Naturally they have all sorts of differences but they are knit together in love. What is the secret? They abide in Christ—dwell in His love, and so are formed in that love. It would be a wonderful testimony! It was often said in the early days, How they love one another!

You may say it is very difficult. Yes, it is; because we are after the first man too much. If that blessed Man who is to fill all things, filled our hearts it would be very different. When the apostle comes here to the carrying out of our calling, he says, "With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love" &c., &c.

Who else could do it but God, make two men who were as opposed as men could be—Jew and Gentile—who but God could take those two and make "one new man," one in Christ? Now they are together in all lowliness and meekness. It is just every one of us getting down into our own proper place of nothingness. We are

nothing, Christ is everything, going down to serve one another in lowliness, only desiring the growth of one another, not seeking to instruct or teach one another so much as to serve in love, to help one another that each may grow up to Christ in all things.

Therefore we begin thus, if we walk worthy of our calling, "with all lowliness and meekness, . . . endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (Vers. 2, 3.) It is not any unity in the flesh. The moment you attempt that you cannot realise it. It is in the Spirit. All that is of Christ is formed in us by the Spirit of God. The Spirit must produce the unity. We are knit together in love according to the Spirit, not according to the flesh. Nothing of the flesh can be there.

I go on to verse 7, "Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." When I saw dear Mr. Stoney some time ago (not the last time I saw him) he brought before me one thing he wanted every saint to know. He said, "I would like the youngest saint to seek to know his place in the body of Christ." It would be a great thing for us, beloved friends, to know that each is responsible in connection with all other saints to set forth the grace of Christ. You cannot leave out "all saints," each one has grace according to the

measure of the free giving of Christ. Whatever grace Christ has given—and His is free giving—every one is responsible with all other saints to bring out something of the grace of Christ. That is not the question of a gift exactly, that comes after. We see the Lord now ascended up on high; He has overcome the whole power of the enemy; He has led captivity captive, and having overcome, He has given gifts to men, the end in view is that which is to be descriptive of Christ. In chapter vi. it is not exactly *conflict with Satan*, though there is *conflict* in a certain way, for the power of the enemy is opposed to everything that is of Christ; but we have to stand against the wiles of the devil; we are to maintain the good. The good has come out in Christ, and the church is the vessel of it. Not as Israel was, Israel was a vessel; but the law entrusted to them was put in a box, and they took care of it and kept it. They were never the exponents of the truth. The church is not a depositary of truth—we are to be the exponents of the blessed Man at God's right hand. If the body is here to maintain the testimony, it is the witness of the Christ who is there. The first great thought of the body in this epistle is that it is the fulness of Christ who is gone up into heaven, but it is that in which Christ is continued down

here. Now that is a very important thing, and the way in which it comes out is important—Satan overcome and captivity led captive. Christ having gone down into the lower parts of the earth, now ascended up on high, far above all heavens, that He might fill all things. Everything is to be filled by the glorified Man. God's glory will fill the whole universe through Christ. He received the Spirit, and having overcome the whole power of Satan, He gave gifts. As the psalm says, "He received gifts in the man," and having received them He gave them. It is an immense thing to know the gifts come from a glorified Christ. What was it for but for the perfecting of the saints, so that the vessel might be formed for the setting forth of Himself—the full setting forth of the glorified Man who is in heaven. Apostles and prophets are the foundation gifts, then evangelists, pastors, teachers. If I say one word about the evangelists, I think, as the word is now used, they are too much dissociated from the other gifts, when all are given for building up the vessel of testimony. If thus dissociated they cannot be large enough in their thoughts, they have not enough before them the great thought of the glory of Christ, and hence the perfecting of the saints, with a view to the building up of Christ's body; they have the thought

of the need of man, and not enough the glory of Christ. I do not speak of many amongst us. Thank God! they have the thought of the glory of Christ; but, generally speaking, the great thought of the evangelist is the need of man. But the great thought here is, that the gifts come from the glorified Christ, the evil has been overcome by the good, and the church is to be the setting forth of the good. When I look at the evangelist I see him in connection with the body of Christ, because the body of Christ is for the setting forth of the good.

The first point in connection with the gifts is "for the perfecting of the saints." In this passage gifts are not looked at directly as ministry for the body, but for the perfecting of the saints. So Paul could say in Colossians, "That we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." The great object of ministry is the perfecting of the saints. If we get the saints perfected, fully fitted out, they will surely know their place in the body. The ulterior thing is the work of the ministry, and the building up Christ's body; but primarily it is the perfecting of the saints. When you come to the body, the body *grows* in the divine nature by that which every joint supplies. If each saint gets the sense of what he is in Christ, entering into what sonship is before God in

love, and knit together in love, do not you think the body will grow? The body grows just in proportion as it grows in love. It is as each grows in the divine nature that the body grows. It is not any great apprehension of doctrine or dispensational truth, but a young believer can really begin with that first lesson of love and affection one towards another. There cannot be a greater thing for our souls than the association of the saints together in Christ, so that divine affections can flow. If you want to begin, you must begin in the circle of the saints, where divine affections flow, where we get built up in love. All that is for Christ on earth to-day came from that small beginning in John xv., the Vine and the eleven branches, and every bit of fruit that has ever come out for God, came from that beginning. The moment a soul is converted there is a divine work in that soul, that Christ may be formed there and so become a part of that circle which is knit together in love, and which began with the Vine and those eleven branches.

And how did the Lord tell them to begin when he spoke of bearing fruit for the Father? That they should love one another, that they should be perfected in divine love and affections, as He had loved them. Thus are we in the sense of the calling of God. What a wonderful

thing it will be when heaven and earth are filled with Christ, and all the love of God is known in Christ and the saints. We understand grace a great deal better than love, because grace comes to my side; love carries me to God's side. It has often been noticed in chapter v. that Christ gave Himself *for* us, but an offering of a sweet-smelling savour *to* God. There was the sweet-smelling savour to God. We must not stop short of divine love. Everything of Christ was for God, if my heart is not carried up there I shall not get into the sphere of divine affections down here. It is an immense thing to be in the circle of divine affections; if we love one another God dwells in us, thus we become knit together in love; the body of Christ grows just in proportion as we grow in divine love. "The perfecting of the saints" means that every saint should be brought to the sense of what the purpose of God is in Christ, that so he may know his place in the body. And further, if I do not know my place in Christ how can I enter into what the work of the ministry is? We have all begun to serve by telling others the little we had learnt, without perhaps knowing that a glorified Christ gave gifts for perfecting the saints; but it is not merely being able to preach a sermon, or even to tell a sinner how to be saved from judgment, that constitutes the ministry



from a glorified Christ; the point immediately in view is the perfecting of the saints, that is the first great thing, and if the soul does not enter into what its place and portion is in Christ, how could the ministry be according to that glorified Man? Then you get the building up of the body of Christ, that which is to answer to Christ's thought and desire—His fulness.

Then verses 14, 15: "That we henceforth be no more children . . . . but speaking [or holding] the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ." There are two elements here which are most important. You get them in John xvii., "truth" and "love." That the soul should be in the element of the truth, "sanctified by the truth," and growing in the divine nature, because loved as Christ is loved, "growing up into him in all things, which is the head." You get those two words, "in love," very often in Ephesians: "holy and without blame before him in love;" "speaking truth in love;" "the edifying of itself in love;" and "walk in love."

If we look at it simply with the Lord, though it is a very wonderful thing, yet if we look at it simply it would be very simple to us too. The first great thing is, that blessed Man at God's right hand has displaced the man here, and Satan's great effort now is against that Man

in the glory. Satan's effort when he was here was to lead the whole world to crucify Him and cast Him out; He was overcome; and now his great effort is against His body, to prevent that we should be for Him down here. For that the gifts are given.

I feel that I have put it before you very feebly, dear brethren, but the Lord can enlarge it. If He leads us along that line, that the church is the vessel of testimony and we are set here to grow in the divine nature, it would be a great thing. I do feel it, it is not merely what we teach or what we say, but what we *are*; it is not great efforts or great endeavours, but, as I said before, if there were only six people in a place where it could be said of them, there Christ is set forth in that company, they love one another, there are the affections of the divine nature, they set forth Christ—how wonderful it would be. I do commend it to you; I desire to take it home to myself; that in all the little assemblies we should not be those who have the credit of having more light than others, but that it might be said, They love one another; they are knit together in love; and thus growing up into Christ, He is seen.

T. H. R.



# READING.

(NUM. xxi. 1-18.)

F. E. R. I have an idea that this is the beginning of the second part of Numbers.

W. T. P. W. What do you call the first part ?

F. E. R. The first twenty chapters.

W. T. P. W. Could you give a broad general outline ?

F. E. R. They give in type the responsible side of the Christian, and after the death of the high priest another chapter begins. You cannot understand chapter xxi. unless you see that it comes in after the death of the high priest. The death of the high priest terminates one chapter of christian experience, and after his death another chapter is opened.

F. H. B. Why is it so ? Is it necessary to bring in another order ?

F. E. R. The death of the high priest changes the platform. It is the end of priesthood in one sense.

G. E. What is the end of priesthood ? I don't quite understand.

F. E. R. That when a Christian has done with

the responsible side of his course down here, it is the end of priesthood; we don't need it any more as connected with infirmities. That part of our christian course will be over, and we shall no longer want the help of the high priest in that sense. It will come to an end in regard to us. And this is true now in so far as our souls enter on the ground of divine purpose. The priest is known in another light.

F. H. B. Do you mean we need His priesthood as minister of the sanctuary, in connection with purpose?

F. E. R. Yes, that is another thing.

M. G. And I suppose we are only ready for that as we have part with Him here, as we get started here.

F. E. R. The second part of Numbers is in the history of the Christian contemporaneous with the first part. We do not go through Numbers in the way that Israel went through the wilderness.

W. T. P. W. You will have to explain that a little bit.

F. E. R. The reason is simple; properly speaking every Christian begins with the cross and the Spirit, of which we have the type in Numbers xxi. He begins his christian course with the cross, and goes through in the power of the Spirit.

F. H. B. And the latter connects him with a state of things outside of his responsible life.

F. E. R. The effect of the dealings of God in the first part of Numbers was to bring to light the people that were to inherit the land. This helps us to understand the two numberings. The first, the responsible people brought out of Egypt, and the second, the elect people who are going to inherit. The link between the two was Caleb and Joshua. Faith was the link.

F. H. B. By their going on contemporaneously you mean that though we are a responsible people going through the wilderness, we are connected with a new order of things, outside of things here.

F. E. R. Yes, for we begin with the cross and the Spirit of life in Christ.

A. P. When you say this, you mean that is in the history of our souls ?

F. E. R. Yes, I think you must admit that both the Galatians and Corinthians had begun so. Thus the Apostle speaks to the Galatians, "Before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you." And in the beginning of the Epistle to the Corinthians it had been the same—the preaching of the cross. Then he says to the Galatians, "Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith" ? He had presented the testimony of the cross, and upon that the Spirit had been received by them.

F. C. Is the cross the paschal lamb?

F. E. R. I think the cross is the complete setting aside of man, according to the type of the brazen serpent.

F. H. B. But many converted persons are not so far on as that in the history of their souls, and therefore I suppose you could not say they had yet made a start in Christianity till they come to the cross and to the Spirit.

W. T. P. W. You will have to explain that, please—because they had been Christians some time according to that remark.

F. H. B. I do not say they are not converted persons, but a Christian is one who is in the Spirit, a spiritual man.

E. D. Would you not say Romans viii. 9. was the starting point of a Christian?

F. E. R. The starting point as to the christian state is the old man crucified. That answers to the brazen serpent. "God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh."

W. B. Have you to travel through chapter vi. before you touch chapter viii. 9?

F. E. R. I think Romans is very much like Numbers. Chapters i. to vii. take up one side, and chapter viii. takes up another side. The experience which is the result of being in the Spirit, runs concurrently with what we get

from chapter iii. to chapter vii. Chapter iii. to chapter vii. goes pretty much with the first part of Numbers, and chapter viii. with the second part, and I think it is not difficult to prove this.

W. T. P. W. Perhaps you will just give us an outline of it.

F. E. R. In the first part of Numbers the people are taken account of in connection with their responsibility, in view of the wilderness. What is prominent is the means by which God conducts the people and sustains them in their responsibility; and two great points that come out are the water of purification and the priesthood. That is what you get also in Romans. In the early part, chapters iii., iv. and v., the Christian is in divine light, but in his pathway he is in responsibility. In chapter vi. we get what in a sense answers to the water of purification, and in chapter vii. we get the support and refreshment of the priesthood, so that we bring forth fruit to God.

F. H. B. That is another husband?

F. E. R. Yes. Then chapter viii. takes up another side which runs contemporaneously with the previous part, and that is the state of the Christian as in the Spirit; that is the proper christian state. Not exactly the light of the Christian's path, and how to walk in that, but the state.

W. T. P. W. I think you must distinguish between the state of a Christian and the christian state.

F. H. B. You mean between the practical state of a Christian and the christian state?

W. T. P. W. The state of a Christian is the positive actual state before God.

F. E. R. I think that there is nothing true of him before God as to state, but what is effectuated in him.

W. B. Are there not Christians in Christ irrespective of whether they enter experimentally into it or not?

F. E. R. I think that a Christian is in Christ as he is formed in Christ.

F. H. B. I thought scripture used the term, "In the Spirit," in an abstract way.

M. G. It is not in an abstract way in Romans viii. In verse 2 the apostle changes to the experimental; it is what is true in your soul. "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath set me free from the law of sin and death."

QUES. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus," what of that?

F. E. R. There the statement is abstract—But as to what comes out in the next verse, "For the law of the Spirit of life . . . ." that is undoubtedly experimental.



F. H. B. And no longer abstract but individual. Thus verse 1 would be really the Christian in Christ. Full deliverance effected in the power of the Holy Ghost.

E. D. Verse 1, if I understand rightly, is reaching one's place in Christ through deliverance?

F. E. R. I think it is actually effectuated. The moment the Christian is formed in the divine nature, he can be spoken of as in Christ. Deliverance never really goes beyond the degree in which a Christian is partaker of the divine nature.

M. G. Is not that true in the beginning of Romans viii.?

F. E. R. Yes. Those who are in that state.

W. B. When may a person be said to be in Christ?

F. E. R. The moment there is the first breath of life in Christ.

F. H. B. It depends upon his having received the Spirit.

F. E. R. Yes; he has received the Spirit and not only so, but the Spirit has taken effect in him. Christ is in him. The moment Christ is formed in you you are in Christ.

E. D. Would being "in the Spirit" go as far as that? Does being in the Spirit necessitate state?

F. E. R. Yes. I think so.

M. G. But would there not be a difference between the Spirit being in me, and my being in the Spirit ?

F. E. R. One is dependent on the other, but they are not quite the same thought.

M. G. They are often misunderstood.

F. H. B. As to the thought that at the first breath of life in Christ, that moment one is in Christ, there is often much misunderstanding as to that. You do not mean the first breathing of the Spirit causing the sense of sin, or new birth ?

F. E. R. No.

E. D. Would John xx. be concurrent ?

F. E. R. I think so.

F. W. G. You spoke of Romans viii. being concurrent with chapters iii., iv., and v. I should like a little more about the early part of Numbers and Romans being concurrent.

F. E. R. The thought came out more in connection with Numbers xxi. Light and life must be with us concurrent. Every Christian must of necessity begin with the cross and the Spirit, and that comes out in chapter viii. The light must be concurrent with the life. It is light up to chapter vii.; afterwards, in chapter viii., it is life. So in Numbers, the beginning is the people in the light of deliverance. When you come to chapter xxi. it is typically life.

A. P. How are we made sensible of that breath of life ?

F. E. R. When you become conscious of the love of God and there is response on your part.

A. P. How does the brazen serpent come in ? Is it through human instrumentality ?

F. E. R. No ; every bit of divine work done in the soul is simply and entirely the work of God.

F. H. B. But God might use an instrument to enlighten, to convey the truth ?

F. E. R. Yes ; an instrument may enlighten, but the effect of, or answer to, the light is God's work.

E. W. You would say it is new creation by the Spirit ?

F. E. R. Yes, exactly.

E. W. But there must be the recognition of the instrument.

F. E. R. The soul newly born wants light ; but the presentation of light is not in itself the work of God in the soul. The work of God in me is seen in the way in which He causes me to answer to the light.

F. H. B. You would say, He works by light ?

F. E. R. Yes ; but that is not His work in me.

M. G. The one is purely objective, and the other is subjective. The light is always by the Spirit of God.

F. H. B. I wish you would repeat that again about the work of God being the answer to the light.

F. E. R. Suppose the love of God is presented to a soul, it is as light. The answer is in that I love God, but that is the work of God.

W. B. Why do you say the love of God is presented as light ?

F. E. R. Is not that what you present in preaching the gospel ?

W. B. But why not be satisfied with the term "presenting the love of God" ?

F. E. R. But what you present is the light of His love. The light is the revelation of God.

F. H. B. And surely that is His love.

F. E. R. That is the wonderful character of light, that while it exposes, it attracts.

M. G. The revelation of God is what He wants me to know about Himself.

F. E. R. Nothing can be more marvellous than that the light has come into the scene, and God wants us to answer to it.

QUES. Has the light no effect unless there is a corresponding work in the soul ?

F. E. R. The light may affect the conscience of any man ; it is not only the elect who are affected, but the light, being the revelation of God, can affect every man ; therefore the evangelist has not to choose the people he preaches to.

M. G. Is not that the light in the second parable of Luke xv.?

F. E. R. Yes; the light fell upon the silver piece to bring it into view.

D. L. H. Where does our responsibility come in in connection with that? If God gives light are we not responsible to answer to it? "That they may turn from darkness to light."

F. E. R. Yes; but you never can, and never will, except God works it in you. Everything that is really effected is the work of God from beginning to end. Where can you put an evangelist or a teacher between John iii. and vi.?

W. T. P. W. He comes in very happily in chapter x. He gets his instructions from chapter iii. to chapter viii., and then he comes in in chapter x.

F. E. R. Well, from chapters iii. to vi. you get a person a pretty good way on. The Spirit in him, the well of living water; he eats the flesh, and drinks the blood of the Son of man; he has passed out of death into life. A person has got on a good bit who is there.

A. P. Where does the brazen serpent come in as to life?

F. E. R. In chapter viii. the light of the brazen serpent comes in. This is essential, for as life comes out in connection with another spring it is on the ground of sin having been condemned

in the flesh, the first man completely set aside and another man come in to God's glory, only on that ground could the Spirit be communicated to man. The natural state of man is in the flesh, and that must have come to an end if another state is to be produced in man. And another state in man means another order of man.

F. H. B. Would you say a person does not breathe, has not any sense of life, before he has entered into that in some measure?

F. E. R. My impression is, that the first breath of divine life is love; it is the response to God's love. When you know God's love you love Him.

F. H. B. Do not many get that sense before understanding much of the cross?

F. E. R. Perhaps so.

E. D. Is that why in chapter v. we get the love of God shed abroad in our hearts?

F. E. R. Yes; and then the answer is in chapter viii.: "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to purpose."

M. G. There is state.

F. E. R. The first true sign of life is love. The importance of this is, that love brings to light the elect of God. I cannot tell who they are, but they are brought to light by life, and the first sign of life is love to God.

W. T. P. W. There was a paper written some time ago. "Light from the glory lends light to the cross." What do you say to the title?

F. E. R. I do not understand it. I know a certain brother who has passed from amongst us condemned it. I have a strong impression that man, being what he is, has to begin at the cross. You may try and give him as much light as ever you like, preach all sorts of things, but when he comes to himself, he has in the history of the soul to begin at the cross.

F. H. B. Do you mean, to get a sense of the righteousness of God?

F. E. R. Yes, I do. Every soul has to get a sense of the righteousness of God. It is a moral foundation.

F. W. G. It says in connection with the brazen serpent that "when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived."

F. E. R. Does it not shew that the cross comes before life?

W. T. P. W. There must be a reason for God letting this come in here at this particular part of their history.

F. E. R. Yes, a very good reason; it was necessary in the case of Israel. They had been thirty-eight years under law, and thus tested, and the flesh proved to be incapable. In their case you have the anomaly of a people delivered

from the judgment of God, and the power of the enemy, and yet tested in the flesh.

M. G. While we begin with the flesh gone.

F. E. R. Yes, exactly; we begin with the revelation of God, the destruction of the enemy's power, and the flesh condemned.

W. T. P. W. We have been a long time before we learnt the truth of liberty. The soul has been a long time on the road. We have known the Lord and had a sense of His love and grace long before we have known liberty as in Numbers xxi.

F. E. R. We learn the evil of the flesh in a different shape, perhaps we learn it in our indifference and unreadiness, the opposition of the flesh to the Spirit.

W. T. P. W. But the soul has been on its pathway a good long time often before the point is reached of the absolute ruin of the flesh, its incapacity to enter into the things of God and its opposition to the Spirit.

F. E. R. You only go back to where you started from as to God's testimony.

W. T. P. W. We have not made a fair start.

F. H. B. I think that is the reason why there is so little spiritual prosperity.

W. T. P. W. Do you put the blame on the evangelists?

F. E. R. It is not fair to put the blame on



the evangelist. The hindrance may be owing to the person who comes after the evangelist. Take the case of the Corinthians and the Galatians, they were not badly evangelised, they had had the truth presented, but had been spoiled afterwards. Now, perhaps in some measure hindrance is caused by the defective way in which the gospel is preached. But there are other reasons.

G. G. Did you say there is no love to God in the soul who does not know the truth of the brazen serpent?

F. E. R. I did not say so. What produces love is love. Love to God is given in scripture as the normal description of the Christian. The love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost. He loves us, and we love Him.

F. H. B. But that is true of every one that has the Spirit; and where the Spirit is, there will be that response in some measure.

E. D. Were the Galatians loving God?

F. E. R. The Galatians had been stopped. They had never really got on. They had got the Spirit, and yet were going back to legalism, and that does not look like a response to the love of God. Love is incompatible with legalism. Perfect love casts out fear. If I know that a person loves me perfectly, and I love that person, I cannot be legal with him. If I am, I do not

know the love; so in regard to God, we cannot be legal with God if we know by the Spirit His love. There must be a complete end of all legalism, it must be love.

REMARKED. The Galatians had the Holy Ghost, but Christ was not formed in them.

E. C. They are not addressed as in Christ.

F. E. R. No, it is not implied that they had never tasted it, but they had been stopped, and the apostle said he stood in doubt about them. He travailed again in birth for them.

E. D. He says, How soon you are turned aside.

G. G. Is it possible for the love of God to be shed abroad in the heart, and for there to be no response?

F. E. R. I think not.

A. P. If there were a response, would not the flesh be an intolerable hindrance? And is not that where this chapter comes in so helpfully?

F. E. R. Yes; but the love of God is light, and the response to it is love.

QUES. Are there not hindrances after the Spirit of God has taken possession of a believer?

F. E. R. I have no doubt it is after the Spirit is received that we really learn the constant opposition of the flesh, it comes out after. This is a hindrance; I think, too, we have been hindered by terms. There is one thing that has

been a great hindrance to Christians, that is the common idea of *nature*; and I will tell you why—the thought is too limited. Give me the man, and I can tell you the nature of the man; but give me the man first. The great idea in Christianity is not of a new nature but of a new man. First the man, and then talk about his nature. How could you talk about God's nature if you had not God? If you talk about the man it at once brings in the thought of a whole system of affections which centre in the man. Relationships are not in a nature, but in the man. God creates man, and puts that man in certain relationships, with affections belonging to those relationships.

F. H. B. We have generally put it the other way—the nature first, then the man.

M. G. Scripture speaks of the new man, and then of the nature that is characteristic of him.

F. E. R. He is “created after God in truthful righteousness and holiness.” You have put off the old man according to his nature, and you get the nature now because you have put on the new man, and it is in that new man that you are set in relationship to God and to Christ and to fellow-Christians.

W. T. P. W. By nature you mean what is characteristic of the man?

QUES. And you cannot have that nature apart from the man ?

F. E. R. You cannot have the nature apart from the man. Take any substance you like in natural things ; when you get the substance, the nature is that by which it is characterised ; you must have the substance first. Nature is not something *in* the substance, but it is the nature of the substance. So, speaking reverently, we can speak of God's nature, for we know something of God, and so, too, of the nature of the new man. The man (not the nature) is said to be created.

W. T. P. W. How do you connect "partakers of the divine nature," as in Peter ?

F. E. R. Peter does not speak of things quite as Paul does ; not the setting aside of one man and the introduction of another ; but it comes to the same thing practically. You have part in another man ; you become partaker of the nature of God as expressed in Christ.

QUES. You are a partaker of the man, it is moral ?

F. E. R. Yes ; you have certain moral qualities which answer to Him.

W. J. You said the breakdown in connection with the thirty-eight years in the wilderness was in connection with the law ; is not the

breakdown here in connection with loathing the manna ?

F. E. R. Does not that bring out the state of man more than the law did ? The coming of Christ, His presence in the world in lowliness and grace, was the greatest test ; but the grace of God rises above their breakdown. But Aaron has died, the priesthood connected with that order of things has come to an end, and now God comes out in a different way.

W. J. Is there not a difference between the serpent of brass in Romans and in John iii.—is it not deeper in John ?

F. E. R. The difference is this ; in Romans, as I understand it, it is on our side, more connected with our state. In John it is on God's side, it is in order that there may be an outlet for God's love.

W. J. Were you referring to Christ's rejection ? John starts with Christ rejected.

F. E. R. No ; in John iii. it is the lifting up of the Son of man, that the love of God may flow out. There is very little of man in John, all is on the divine side.

W. J. Is the Son of man lifted up by God or man ?

F. E. R. I have often thought that Christ could not die on earth.

QUES. Why not ?

F. E. R. Because He was the righteous Man, He could not die on earth or in heaven.

QUES. What is your idea of not dying in heaven ?

F. E. R. He could not die in heaven ; He must become a man to die, and therefore must come down. He could not die on earth, for He was the righteous Man who glorified God on earth ; hence He must be lifted up as testimony.

W. G. B. The love of God could not flow out unless He was lifted up ?

W. J. Is it the same thought in connection with the brazen altar, the lifting up ?

F. E. R. I should think the brazen altar is more connected with the provision of a place of acceptance on the ground of sacrifice. That (the brazen altar) will stand as good for Israel as for us ; it gives the ground of acceptance all through scripture.

M. G. Where man approaches ?

F. E. R. Yes.

W. T. P. W. Is it not Romans iii. ?

F. E. R. In Romans iii. the point is not of man's approach to God, but of God's approach to man.

E. D. Then the Son of man lifted up is not the thought of the burnt-offering, but the brazen altar would be, for it is the place of acceptance ?

F. E. R. Yes, it is the basis of acceptance

because it is the place of offering ; acceptance is founded on sacrifice. Every offering was offered at the brazen altar. In one case the blood of the sin-offering was carried into the holiest, but it is noticeable that the blood of the burnt-offering was never carried into the holiest.

W. T. P. W. Why was that ?

F. E. R. I think the blood of the sin-offering was carried in as a witness. The glory of God had been vindicated in the death of the victim, and not only a ground of acceptance established for man.

M. G. The blood on the mercy seat is God's side entirely. At the brazen altar it was a question of man's approach.

F. E. R. The great thing as the basis of God's approach to man, is that God's righteousness has been established, His glory vindicated, so that God can come out to man ; when it is a question of our approach to God, then it is " He was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." That seems to me more the thought of the brazen altar. You would be very defective if you did not see that God could not approach man if His glory had not been vindicated. On the day of atonement after the blood was sprinkled on the mercy-seat, all the other offerings came in.

M. G. God must be glorified before He could come out.

J. P. If priesthood characterises the first part of Numbers, what characterises the second part of Numbers ?

F. E. R. The second part is taken up with the elect—they are brought to light. The evidence of this is that Balaam appears, and Balaam in the vision of God speaks of the elect of God ; not the Israel of responsibility, but the elect of God. You come to the antitype of this in Romans viii. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect ?" Thus the elect are brought to light, and through Balaam God pronounces upon them. Then they are numbered, but not for the wilderness, as at the first time ; now they are numbered to inherit. In the second part of Numbers we have but little of priesthood. Except in one instance, which shewed the zeal of the priest, we hardly get an allusion to the priesthood. Eleazar is appointed to the priesthood, and we have the inheritance referred to ; but priesthood is not prominent in the second part of Numbers. That is what makes me say that it is of importance for understanding our experimental history as Christians to take the two parts of Numbers together. Most certainly as long as we are down here we cannot do without the water of purification, nor the refreshment



of priesthood. Moses was to take the rod of Aaron. It was divine goodness on the ground of priesthood, providing refreshment for the people.

A. M. Then after chapter xxi. it is the purpose of God, and that is Romans viii. also.

F. E. R. Yes, exactly. In chapter viii. you come to state—and in connection with divinely-formed state, you get the elect of God brought to light. “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect”?

J. P. What you say as regards the new nature is equally true about the old?

F. E. R. It is what characterises the man; you have the man—the old man corrupt.

W. J. Is the serpent of brass the condemnation of the first man?

F. E. R. I think so. The blood in Egypt typifies the declaration of God’s righteousness; the Red Sea, the destruction of the enemy’s power; the brazen serpent, the condemnation of sin in the flesh,—man’s state. All three are realized in the one death of Christ—all in connection with the cross of Christ.

F. H. B. Would you say that in some measure we enter into the truth of the cross before we enter into God’s purpose?

F. E. R. Certainly you must. You could not

enter into the light of the new man if you did not see that the first man is set aside.

F. H. B. Otherwise you would connect God's purpose with the first man.

A. M. Is not the order of Romans viii. life, and the purpose of God ?

F. E. R. Yes. God's acting according to His purpose. It is life by a divinely formed state, and it is by life that the elect of God are made manifest.

QUES. Brought to light by the light, and it comes out in love to the brethren ?

F. E. R. Yes, I think so. "By this we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." Christ "laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."

W. J. What is the bite of the serpent ? Has it anything to do with hatred marking the nature of man ?

F. E. R. I think the thought of the serpent takes you back to the garden of Eden.

A. P. What is the song to the well ? When does the song come in ?

F. E. R. John iv. is, I fancy, an allusion to it. "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again : but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst ; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well

of water springing up into eternal life." A Christian reaches eternal life by the power of the Spirit in him.

M. G. Is that what comes out in Romans viii. ?

F. E. R. Yes. John iv. is reached in Romans viii. At the close of the chapter we have the persuasion that nothing shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord—that is the well of water springing up into eternal life.

E. C. Would you say both the rock and the well are effected in John xx. ?

F. E. R. I should say so—there is the introduction to it at any rate.

G. G. Is the well in Numbers xxi. and the rock in chapter xx. the same ? The Spirit in both cases.

F. E. R. That may be—but it is more the Spirit's ministration in the way of refreshment in chapter xx., ministry may serve to that end. In chapter xxi. the well of water points to the Spirit Himself.

QUES. John iv. is clearly normal christian state ?

F. E. R. Yes ; in the true sense John iv. is the beginning as to state.

W. G. B. As a type Numbers xx. was never properly completed ?

F. E. R. They got the water, and the type

shews the way by which they got it; it gives the divine thought. The servants may fail, but God takes care that His people get the water; it is a gracious ministry of the Spirit of God. I do not know how we should get on if we had not that. The water of purification maintains you in the truth of Romans vi., but you get also the Spirit's refreshment. Ministry or refreshment is part of God's ways with a people in the wilderness.

T. H. R. The failure of ministry did not hinder the grace of God from flowing, but a very serious thing, I think, for the ministers.

F. E. R. It kept Moses out of the land!

W. T. P. W. Have you any thought about the princes and the nobles?

T. H. R. I think it is simply what the Lord said, He that will be chief among you let him be your servant.

QUES. Is the water of purification ministered as well as the water of refreshment?

F. E. R. It is available. The wilderness is a scene of death and therefore of defilement.

M. G. Marah comes in.

F. E. R. Yes. I think the waters of Marah may be drunk, but Marah has to be maintained. It is all very well to take up the truth of Romans vi. and say "Dead indeed unto sin,"—but it must be maintained.

M. G. We have to drink into death?

F. E. R. Yes, and you want the water of purification ; and the responsibility rests on every Christian to serve one another. We speak of ministry, and it is our responsibility one to another to do as Christ had done to His disciples ; we are responsible in a way in regard to any defect we notice in one another.

W. T. P. W. Is that done by ministry ?

F. E. R. It may be done in ministry, but I think it is more done by care. What is wanted is more regard for one another ; more pastoral care—You care for me, and I care for you. I think we are defective there. It takes some courage to approach one another—I believe it is often lack of courage that prevents us from carrying out the Lord's injunction.

W. T. P. W. Do you not think it may be lack of love ?

F. H. B. That is it, I expect.

F. E. R. It must be done in the spirit of love, and love would make us courageous and skilful.

A. M. When you say the Lord washes our feet, you mean He does it through His people ?

F. E. R. Yes. I think so. "I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you."

F. H. B. You do not look upon it as an example of His present service ?

F. E. R. Yes, I do, but mediately through His people.

QUES. One word more as to the thought of John xiii. Is that advocacy ?

F. E. R. I do not think so, I think it is the Lord's present service, it is a service which the Lord carries out mediately through one another ; we are in a scene where we contract defilement, and if love were more active amongst us, if we had more confidence in one another, we should be more active in this service in the desire to remove anything hindering from another.

A. P. Is that priestly service ?

F. E. R. Yes. I think priestly service would be realised.

M. G. I suppose the eating of the sin-offering in the holy place would come in there. We must be in the presence of God to partake of it.

F. E. R. Yes, you must partake of it. I wish I could put out the exceeding beauty of God's ways, the full light of God come in, the revelation of His righteousness, and the setting forth of His power, and now all administration in the hands of the Lord Jesus at the right hand of God ; and all the light of that coming into the soul ; and then the rich provision which God has made to maintain us in the light ; and then the subjective side that in which we are formed according to the love of

God, and in that way the elect of God brought to light.

M. G. That really brings us from Romans iii. to viii.

F. E. R. And it covers, in a sense, the book of Numbers.

At the close of this book we see the purpose of the two-and-a-half tribes to settle on the wilderness side of Jordan. You may get a certain amount of light, a sense of divine things, and yet stop short of the purpose of God. You may enter into the thought of relationship, and may respond to the love of God without going over Jordan into God's inheritance.

W. T. P. W. The two-and-a-half tribes went over and came back again.

F. E. R. Yes, and they fought too, and so it is to-day; when a real crisis arises, people of that kind are prepared to go and fight, but when the fighting is over, and the quiet time comes, they go back to the other side,—the place of their providential possessions.

F. H. B. Because they were never in the land in heart?

F. E. R. Their hearts were where their families and possessions were. They were too individual and too social. A good many people are in that boat; they do not put the assembly before the social; they put the social first, and the

assembly after—but the other way is the divine way.

W. T. P. W. Is not service sometimes a hindrance? A man may think more of his gift than of the assembly.

M. G. Gift belongs to the assembly, does it not?

F. E. R. It does properly. Every gift was set in the church. I know of no gift but what is set in the assembly, under the direction of Christ, of course.

A. M. They are to go in that connection?

F. E. R. They could not go independently of it. You do not find Peter or Paul doing anything as to which they were not prepared to justify themselves to the Church.

W. T. P. W. They were very simple in those days, and they came back and told the saints all about their service.

F. E. R. Why should not we be? They took great pains to make all clear to the assembly when any important question arose, or anything that might tend to compromise fellowship.

M. G. Just as in human things. In a business all are working for one interest—There was great simplicity in reference to both the saints and the servants.

A. M. The simplicity would apply on both sides to saints and the servants.



QUES. Did they justify themselves to the assembly, or to the saints individually?

F. E. R. To the assembly. You might not be able to justify yourself to an individual when you might to the assembly.

W. T. P. W. I think the way the Spirit of God brings out the truth in the Acts is very lovely. The mutual interest between the assembly and the servant, and between the servant and the assembly is very beautiful.

QUES. I suppose what we have in Acts xiii. the gathering together of the assembly for prayer and fasting would be an example of it. Would it not hold good now?

F. E. R. Yes, in principle. I would not care to go out on a tour of service without the fellowship of the assembly.

REMARKED. If a man started thus he would have the fellowship of the assembly.



## “THAT THE CHURCH MAY RECEIVE EDIFYING.”

(1 COR. XII. 28-31 ; XIV. 1-5 ; 29-40.)

I DESIRE, beloved brethren, to say a few words in continuation of what was before us in the morning.

The last brother who spoke to us carried our minds to Ephesians iv., shewing the way in which Christ was to be seen in His people down here.

Now, the first Epistle to the Corinthians we all know differs largely from that to the Ephesians, but what has struck me much lately is the way in which the apostle brings the soul of the saint into the presence of God in connection with the truth of the assembly. I will turn back for a moment to the earlier part of the epistle to shew what I mean, for although many here have been long on the road, there are some younger ones, and it is for them I chiefly speak. It has often been said we are apt to forget the recruits. I say, thank God for the recruits ! and thank God also for the recruiting sergeants—those who seek to get them into their places in the assembly. We

all have to learn, and we have to remember there are always those who are just beginning.

It is very interesting to see that of all the epistles in the New Testament those to the Corinthians are the only ones addressed “ To the church of God.” (Chap. i. 2.) This remark holds good also with regard to the second epistle. Both are addressed “ Unto the church of God which is at Corinth.” The point was that in the midst of heathen darkness there was that which God could claim as His own, and address as His own. There was a spot where He was to be known and revealed, and where He shewed Himself to His people. That was His assembly. There is nothing more blessed for the soul to carry in mind than that. At the same time it is a very serious matter—I feel it increasingly—it is a very solemn thing to have anything to do with the things of the Lord, and the assembly, just because it is *God’s* Assembly, not man’s.

As you run through the epistle this thought comes out in various ways. Go back to chapter iii. If it be a question of husbandry. “ Ye are *God’s* husbandry.” If Paul and Apollos were fellow-workers they were *God’s* fellow-workmen. We too are His fellow-workers, we belong to God, if it be in your hands or mine it is *God’s* work. If it be a question of tillage—it is *God’s* field ; or if it be a building it is *God’s* building—*God’s*

temple. So in chapter iv., if it be a question of judgment of their stewardship, he says, wait till the Lord comes, and "then shall every man have praise of God." This principle renders you independent of everybody, clear of every influence but this—"I have to do with God: I have to say to God." It makes no difference if I be praised or censured of man. It is a small thing to me, says Paul, whether I am praised or judged—"Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come." Our souls are set down before God for everything in connection with His people, and His testimony, and His service.

A great deal more of the same kind is in the epistle, and a very striking word is found in the end of chapter iii. (ver. 19.) "The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness." "The temple of God" is in view, and as I come up to this building—and it is God's building—I see written over the portico, as it were, these words. "He taketh the wise in their own craftiness." It conveys to me this thought—If you bring the wisdom of the world into this building you will be found out. When I come to the steps of the building that is the first thing that strikes me. Remember this is *God's* temple and what is of the world—what is human—will all be found out and judged. Human wisdom is

of no use there. There is another inscription inside the building to which I will come presently.

Passing on now to the chapter which I read, it is very interesting to see the way in which the truth that comes out in chapter xii. is introduced in connection with the parenthesis which intervenes between it and chapter xiv.—which of course is a continuation of the subject, gifts and ministry. For many a long day I failed to see the reason why the apostle stopped his instruction as to the gifts in connection with the body in chapter xii. He stops his subject, as you observe, and then gives us the lovely unfolding of love—what love is, and what it is not, in chapter xiii. and resumes his instructions regarding the assembly in chapter xiv. I trust I see the point of it now! No matter what I may have, or you may have in the way of power—because that is what is unfolded in chapter xii.—no matter what you may have in the way of gift and power by the Holy Ghost, it is of no use without love. Manifestly power is not grace; spiritual power is not grace. A man may have a great deal of power in connection with a gift imparted by the Lord, but it is not grace. So whatever may be the greatness or measure of the gift in chapter xii., I do not think it is of the slightest use in chapter xiv.—which is the assembly in function—the sphere and field of its

action—unless it be baptized into, and permeated with the spirit of chapter xiii.—that is, love. It is just what our brother was saying this morning—love is everything. You may not have gift, but there may be that which is more profitable—the outflow of that love which is the mark of a soul belonging to, and walking with God.

The supremacy and sovereignty of God in His assembly is much pressed in chapter xii.

We read in verse 28, how “God hath set some in the church.” If in verse 4 Paul talks of “diversities of gifts,” then in verse 6 he says, “It is the same God which worketh all in all.” Evidently in Corinth (and I do not think, beloved brethren, Corinth was the only place where the tendency came out, if I know the history of the church of God, whether in days gone by, or in our own) there was the working of the human will and mind, and a desire on the part of some to have a place of importance. Manifestly there was no desire on the part of Paul, or Apollos to take this place, but there was the endeavour on the part of some foolish men to put either them or others up. (See chap. iv. 6, 7.) Notice how the apostle slays all this factionary work. “It is *God* that worketh all in all.” He would slay all schism, and division, and school and party of every kind. If it is a question of the body, it is not Paul or Apollos, but, “Now hath God set the

members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him. (Ver. 18.)

If I think of the church as it is presented here in Corinth, I see that God has set the members in the body according to His own will. Do you know, beloved brother, why you are where you are? Why you are located just where you are? If there is true subjection to God, and subservience to Him, you will feel and own that you are in the spot where it has pleased God to set you, and that is everything. The moment I see that *God has set* that brother in his place, and this one in his, I am content, and say, Thank God for that servant and his ministry! It is *his* place, not mine, so, if I am right, I neither emulate nor ape it, being just satisfied with my own place and niche in the body. (Ver. 24.) "*God has tempered the body together,*" &c. God has arranged all, for we read, again (ver. 28), "*God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly, teachers,*" &c. Here we get not a complete list of gifts, for that we do not get anywhere in scripture. We have some mentioned in Romans xii., others in Ephesians iv., and many here, but not in any case a complete and detailed list. In each passage the gifts named are seen to be in connection with the special truth the Spirit of God is bringing before the saints at the moment.

Here it is striking to observe that the list includes no evangelist. The reason is not far to seek. The apostle is instructing the saints about their coming together, and the order of the assembly before the Lord, and it is not there that the gift of the evangelist is in exercise. I feel strongly the force of what our brother said this morning, that the evangelist is of the assembly, and belongs to it. No evangelist is working according to the truth, unless he is working in conjunction, and if possible, in whole-hearted fellowship with the assembly, and he then naturally helps his converts to gravitate towards the assembly. In the apostle's days that was a natural thing, and the convert was like a fish out of water if he did not get amongst the saints. In the assembly was the power of the Spirit: there the Spirit reigned, while outside, darkness and the devil reigned. To-day, in the divided state of things which marks Christendom it is very different, and I think an evangelist ought to be very careful how he foists his converts into the assembly. For myself I am very careful how I seek to introduce any who profess to have been blessed by my ministry. I think my brethren are far better able to judge than I am myself of my work. This is a most important principle, and I think I see it in scripture, e.g., Acts viii., where Philip went down to Samaria. Philip is the only



man in scripture called “The evangelist,” and a fine warm-hearted fellow he was—a real fisher of men—he caught a great many fish in Samaria, and he thought he had caught a great fish when Simon the sorcerer professed to believe, and was baptised. Philip would have brought him into the assembly if the Lord in His grace had not sent down Peter and John to detect him and keep him out.

It is a great thing for the assembly to be exercised about the reception of souls who confess the Lord. I would like to add a little word with regard to the responsibility of the saints generally in regard to the reception of souls desiring fellowship in the breaking of bread. This is far too much left to the two or three who may commend such. It is necessary, and very nice that they should be commended, but we ought to have in our souls more distinctly the sense that it is the assembly that receives, as it is the assembly who may have to dismiss or put away. If the saints were more exercised as to this it would be greatly for the profit of the assembly, and tend to practical fellowship.

And now as to the gifts and their exercise, “God has set some in the assembly; first, apostles, secondarily prophets,” &c. We still have them, if I may so say, in the writings of the New Testament. We “are built upon the foundation of the

apostles and prophets " of the New Testament. In other words, our faith rests on that which is revealed in their writings. (Eph. ii. 20.) Another subsidiary sense in which prophets still remain, we have in chapter xiv. 3. Pursuing, we read "thirdly teachers." The reason why you get the gifts placed in the order of their value—why you have them numbered 1, 2, 3,—is because the Corinthians were very full of their sign-gifts, and very much occupied with the man who had power to speak with tongues and the like, and they very little valued these other gifts which were of far deeper importance and value for edification. The Lord comes in and puts things in their true place, and estimates the gifts in their real value before Him, as made known by Him, and "tongues" are put last.

Among the rest we read of "helps." That is a very nice little word, "helps." There are many persons who may be helps in the assembly who may not be the possessors of any very great gift. It is very nice to be a "help," and it is very gracious that God allows us to be "helps" to one another, as well as to be His helpers. I was much struck the other day with a word in Judges v. There was a great crisis in the history of Israel, and we see a certain company who did not rise to the occasion. "Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye

bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty." (Judg. v. 23.) It is a great thing to be always free, and fresh, and simple in heart, and ready to be in the hand of the Lord to do just what He would give one to do. Every one has his own little niche for God, and it is good to remember our Lord's word when He "left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and *to every man his work*, and commanded the porter to watch." (Mark xiii. 34.) We can all be "helps." The Lord gives us each an opportunity in our little corner, to sweetly and simply serve Him and His people. This is open to every one.

I pass over chapter xiii.—a wonderfully choice and interesting subject—for time fails to expound this "more excellent way." Whatever gift you and I may be possessed of it might be augmented, and if we do not possess any gift, I wonder if we are covetous in the sense of chapter xii. 31? Brother, are you covetous after this sort? My young brother, are you covetous of "the best gifts"? If not, I have the privilege to-night of exhorting you to be covetous. Mr. Darby used to say, "If there were more devotedness there would be more gift." True indeed, and if there were more devotedness to the Lord, more seeking from

Him that we might be helpers to His saints, I am sure there would be more gift than there is. The apostle's exhortation is very striking.

What is the "more excellent way"? This beautiful atmosphere of love of chapter xiii. You remember the word of the apostle to his son Timothy: "God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." (2 Tim. i. 7.) These three words bring before me these three chapters: chapter xii. is "power;" chapter xiii. "love;" and chapter xiv., "a sound mind," and I sometimes doubt, brethren, if we have it; and certainly we have it not if love does not rule our ways and words in the assembly unto "edification."

I now pass on to chapter xiv. for a minute or two. Verse 1. Prophecy has the double sense of (1) foretelling events, or (2) is that class of ministry which reaches the conscience and brings the soul into the presence of God. You have it beautifully illustrated in the case of the Lord with the woman in John iv. His word, "He whom thou now hast is not thy husband," reached her conscience fully, as she says, "Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet." Here however clearly prophesying has a wider range than that, for "he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and

comfort.” (Ver. 3.) It is a most blessed line of ministry that. “Edification” builds them up. “Exhortation” stirs them up. “Comfort” binds them up. If the ministry is of a really prophetic character there will be the building up, the consolidating of the assembly. And there is more than that, “exhortation” that stirs us up. I ask any one who looks over the scene to-day, Do you not think the saints of God want stirring up? I know I need it, and I am always thankful to the man who stirs me up. The ministry which stirs you up makes you to feel I must wake up; I must lay aside this or that weight. And more than that—this ministry comforts, it binds up, it makes Christ precious to the heart. May the Lord give us more of that kind of ministry, beloved friends. I am speaking of the ordinary round of ministry in the assembly day by day.

There is one word that marks this chapter. The key note of chapter xiv. is one word, “edification”—what will edify? That will always be a serious question to every one who possesses any gift. I may think I am edifying the assembly, and be mistaken. If I do not edify, I think you ought to tell me. If my ministry is unprofitable, I think brothers ought to be faithful to me—while withal they are gracious—and tell me that my ministry is not

to profit, and then I trust I shall have grace not to plague you with it. The great point is, what will edify. You find that over and over again in the chapter. It is very important that what takes place in the assembly should be of that character, and love would desist from continuing ministry which failed to edify. Note how this is pressed in verses 12-14: "Forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel *to the edifying* of the church." We are bidden also "to utter by the tongue words *easy to be understood*." Often in our meetings there is a good deal that is not edifying, simply because it is not heard. How can you say "Amen" to a brother's prayers if you do not hear them? You may say, The Lord hears. Yes; but if the part I take is to be profitable to others, I ought to speak so that you can hear, and so plainly that you can understand. If it be the giving out of a hymn, or praying, I judge it ought to be in a way that saints can hear. Here is God's word for it. I am only drawing attention to what is often lacking, and which many are conscious of. I trust the Lord will use His word. Let us remember profit is the great thing, and what I can neither hear nor understand will not profit either me or others.

Another point I would touch on. "Let the

prophets speak two or three, and let the others judge.” (Ver. 29.) I apprehend this is an occasion when the assembly is together. It may be open to question whether a meeting like this where I am speaking is to be regarded as a meeting of the assembly. It is, I know, a moot point; but I think “two or three” puts a limit on the number of speakers in a meeting of this kind. As to this I feel speakers need to be individually before the Lord. I name it, because one has heard of not only two or three but more speaking on such occasions; but I take it, the Lord has given us His mind very plainly here—“two or three,” and not more.

“If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace.” (Ver. 30.) What does that mean? That the second has to wait till the first sits down? I do not think so. If the Lord gave a revelation to another prophet, he was to get up to say it, and the first would hold his peace and sit down. *Now* there is no revelation, and as another has said: “Order is before power. God is never the author of confusion.” Subjection is the great point here. It is beautiful to note the way the Spirit of God looks for profit. What is more profitable than to see a man subject to the Spirit? The prophet ought to be under the control of the power of the Spirit of God, and in subjection to Him,

because he might have risen in the power of the Spirit to speak, and gone on beyond his measure.

May the Lord give us all to know what it is to be always before Him for real profit, not only now, but when we are at home in the little meetings from whence we all come.

The apostle winds up very beautifully with verses 39, 40. This is what I see written inside the building, all round the wall, as it were: "Let all things be done decently and in order." Outside the building I saw everything will be detected that is not of God, for "He taketh the wise in their own craftiness." Now, inside there is what suits the presence of God, and what is to mark His servants and His saints in His assembly. This injunction speaks for itself, and I desire to have the abiding recollection of it in my heart.

It is a wonderful thing when you think that the church, the assembly, is now the lesson-book of angels—that angels are to learn, beloved fellow-christians, the manifold wisdom of God, as they see the Spirit's blessed activity and power in God's assembly.

The Lord give us each to be more suitably filling our little niche, as individuals in His service, and likewise to know in our hearts the blessedness of being members of that body of



which Christ is the Head, so that when we come into the assembly we may remember it is God's assembly, and that all things may be done "decently and in order," for His name's sake.

W. T. P. W.



# HOW WE ARE FORMED, AND WHAT CHARACTER WE BEAR.

(MARK ix. 33-37.)

It is just in my heart, beloved brethren, to endeavour to speak a word or two as to the love of Christ and the name of Christ, the former as the spring of everything to His people here upon the earth, and the latter as giving their character here upon the earth; their distinction, the only distinction that they are entitled to as His people. I say the love of Christ because, as has often been noticed, the child whom the Lord set in the midst of His disciples was taken up into His arms. When He spoke of "one of such children," He spoke of children who have been embraced, and therefore I feel free to speak in connection with that of the love of Christ.

But for a moment I will dwell upon that which gives rise to all this. The disciples disputed by the way which of them should be the greatest. For how long a time it has been man's great ambition to make himself a name! As it was said at the time of the building of Babel, they would make themselves a name, they would win renown here upon the earth.

They sought to form a centre here upon the

earth around which they could combine, and along with this they would have renown for themselves ; they would make themselves a name. How consistently man goes upon this line, not only in the outer world—that which sets up to be the world, but even religiously, man goes upon the same line. As the Lord said so solemnly at the close of John v., “How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour which cometh from God only?” They despised the lowly One who had come simply and alone in His Father’s name because they were not upon that line themselves. They were upon the line of self-exaltation and receiving glory one from another. Thus the principle of their moral being comes out, they stumbled at the coming of the lowly One in His Father’s name.

Not only does the blessed Lord express their moral principle, but He shews the culmination of it in another who would come in his own name. Him they would receive. So this terrible principle which has been found with man from the outset will culminate in the exaltation of Anti-Christ. With him there will be self-exaltation to the utmost, and to the utmost he will receive glory from man. Probably Herod in Acts xii. was a foreshadowing of it when they shouted, “It is the voice of a god, and not of a man.”

There is just one other example I would turn to for a moment in the Acts. It is the instance of Simon Magus (already referred to) in chapter viii. 9-18. His heart was not right in the sight of God. I touch it briefly, beloved brethren, to put out the contrast it presents to that which is before me to speak on. Here is a man who gives out that he is some great one, and in his pretension he is supported to the fullest degree by Satanic power. He advances further than this even. When outdone by a greater power than he possesses, he is subdued before it, and along with those who had been his victims and were now undeceived, he takes the place of believing. But now the bent of his mind comes out when the apostles come from Jerusalem! He continued wondering, we read; but seeing the Holy Ghost given he seeks even to buy with money that which would the more signalize him. He would not only accept the aid of Satan to make himself great—as Antichrist will—but beholding the power of God he even thinks of buying it, that clothed with divine power he might be the more exalted.

What a terrible creature is man! And how we need to be on our guard against the leaven of this terrible principle! May I suggest that even the Corinthians (though differing widely I allow), were not entirely free from the leaven

of that moral principle ? They evidently sought to be great, and in following out their desire they would use even the adorning of the Spirit of God to make themselves great. I would repeat however that I see a great difference between the magician and the Corinthians. I only allude to the latter as an instance of the leaven of the terrible principle.

I gladly turn from this, beloved brethren, to the points I named at the beginning, the love of Christ and the name of Christ. "One of such children" He says. It was a little child He took. What marks a child is, it is confiding, and it is lowly. It confides in a known love, and it is lowly because the pride of man is as yet unknown to it. The Lord sets this before His disciples—a little child.

Oh ! beloved brethren, how great the contrast to that which I have touched just now. A man seeking to be, and giving forth that he is, some great one. What a distinct contrast to all this is a little child ! It confides in a known love, and what is the known love in which we confide ? Surely it is the love of Christ. What touches us in the beginning is the grace of Christ that brought Him to the very spot where we were, as Luke x. so touchingly speaks. He was journeying. He had a distinct end in view, but in reaching the end He came to the very spot where

the ruined man was. So the first thing that touches our souls is the sense of the infinite grace of the blessed One who has come so low to meet us in all our ruin and need.

But, beloved brethren, I trust we do not stop there. Touched by His deep grace, we are attached to Him like the woman in Luke vii. It is the one who is forgiven much who has the deepest sense of grace, and is the most fervently attached to His blessed Person. As attached to Him we begin to enter into His love, and come under its sway and influence. It needs the application of the cross to all that we are naturally; but what supports us even in this is the attachment which has been formed between our hearts and that blessed One who has come down so low to reach us. In the light of all that He is we can afford to be set aside by His death. Then, beloved brethren, what is the spring of everything to us? Is it not the love of the Lord that the apostle brings before us so touchingly in 1 Corinthians xi.? When he speaks of the treachery of Judas in the betrayal, he shews what is the nature of the flesh which is entirely set aside; but what takes its place? The love of Christ. The apostle does not content himself with pointing out the disorder there was amongst them, nor even the root of the disorder, but he brings

in what would correct it all. I think where we often fail with one another is, we do not know how to bring in what would *correct* the evil we see. It is easy to see the evil, and we may have eyes sufficiently anointed to trace the evil to its root, but we must be in the power of the good to be able to correct the evil. There the apostle shone most blessedly. What is the corrective? The love of Christ. It becomes the spring of everything to us. He loves us. How can we be for Him rightly if our souls are not in the enjoyment of His love? If we have not known consciously what it is to be in His blessed embrace?

I do long for myself and for every one here that we may know that embrace in a fuller and more blessed way, that we may be in the deep sense of the love of Christ, self-abased, seeking no distinction for ourselves, but with hearts deeply attached to Him and bathed in His love. Surely this forms us as nothing else can. Who can be here for Him who has not the sense of what His interests are? How can we know His interests if we are not in the secret of His love? It is only as we know His love we can understand what His interests are here on earth. We are privileged to come forth as those embraced by Him, confiding as well as lowly, confiding in a love we know.

Now I turn to the second thing. If we know the love of Christ, what distinction would we value? I think I may answer for all—we would value no distinction but what the Lord Himself gives us—His name. “Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me.” I judge the name is that which sets forth the Person. It is the declaration of that which He is. Beloved brethren, this is the distinction which He is pleased to place upon us in this world. He gives to us no name of our own before the public eye. I think I may venture to say, if we seek or accept names of distinction from the world, we render ourselves unfit to be witnesses of the One who sends us forth. He may give to us a name as a kind of secret between Himself and us, but no name to distinguish us before the eyes of the world. The secret name of affection signifies what we are to Him, which is most deeply blessed. “I will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.” (Rev. ii. 17.)

But that is not our public distinction. Beloved brethren, I know of none for the servant of Christ but that which He is Himself, we are to be here in all the blessed distinction and



character of His own name, and having nothing but that. What will that do for us? It will expose us to reproach and rejection from the world; but, mark, the Lord says, "Whosoever shall receive you, receiveth me." And ought we not to covet that in the soul of the one who receives us there should be the sense of receiving Him, in whose name we are in the world? It is most blessed if all that He is so finds its expression in us, that those who receive us have respect in so doing, not to anything that we are naturally, but to what He is.

If I speak for a moment of preaching, I would not value any one coming away from the preaching to make much of the preacher; but I would like in the soul of the one who has received blessing the sense of the fact that the blessing has come from the Lord. Was it not so in principle in John the Baptist? He was an exalted man, yet through grace he not only could take the place of nothingness, but also maintained it before his Pharisaical interviewers who came down from Jerusalem. His joy was in the voice of the Bridegroom, and he delighted, I think I may say, to take those who had been attached to himself and attach them to that blessed One to whom he bore testimony. I would like to have it so with souls now, that in receiving whatever testimony we are privileged to render

they receive the One who sends us. The servant's own name is of no importance whatever, and just in proportion as we exalt it we diminish the value of the blessed name which the Lord has purposed to put upon us. And I may just add, beloved brethren, "Whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me." What a blessed chain is this! His disciples should go forth from the embrace of His love, formed by Him in the knowledge of His interests, going forth with no distinction but His own blessed name, bearing His own character; for surely it is more than bearing His name merely in word; it is the character that attaches to us as men in the world: so there will be the sense in the soul of those who receive the testimony that they have received the One whose name is upon us, and in the reception of Him there is the reception of the One who sent Him. Thus all leads up to the knowledge of the Father and the enjoyment of His love.

May God grant, beloved brethren, that knowing the love of Christ, our souls filled with the deep sense of it, we may neither seek nor accept any distinction here upon earth but that of His own blessed name!

J. R.



# LOVE'S RESPONSE.

(JOHN xx. i. 15-18 ; 2 COR. v. 14-15 ; JOHN xii. 3-8.)

I AM sure, beloved brethren, there is only one thing that will deliver us from that principle that characterizes man, the principle of self-exaltation, and that one thing is the love of God, the love of Christ. That is the cure for it and that alone. One characteristic of love is it seeks not its own. It never thinks of itself ; it is always occupied in the good of others. Therefore what we all need is really to be established and built up in the love of God and the love of Christ. I am sure of this, there is nothing that is really acceptable to the Lord in any way that is not the fruit of love. It must be, whether in receiving the truth or in service, or in worship, it is only what is the fruit of love, divine affection formed in the heart that is acceptable to the Lord.

What I have before me is to shew three different ways in which the love of Christ works. In the case of Mary Magdalene, the way in which it works is very much what our brother referred to just now. It became the point of attachment between her soul and the Person who had been

the means of her deliverance from the seven-fold power of the devil. She had tasted that the Lord was gracious. She knew He was good, and her heart was attached to the Person who brought the grace, and wrought the work which delivered her. It is a very great thing when that is the way grace works in the soul. I think very often through a faulty presentation of the gospel, the work of Christ being preached merely as a means of delivering a person from the oppression of sin, it does not have the effect of endearing the Lord Himself to that person. The grace is presented merely as meeting man's need. Many a one gets his burden removed without being attached to the Person who has done it. Where that link has been formed, and there is nothing to hinder it, the natural effect is—it binds the soul to the Person, and as in the case of Mary Magdalene, she follows Him. If you follow Him you will come to where He is. You will find yourself in association with Him where He is. It will land you on a new platform, in a new order of things, where all things are of God: where all is perfection and all is eternal. It brings you into the resurrection sphere, and it is a great thing to reach it. I fear many of us may not have reached it yet. It is the sphere where God is working and displaying Himself. What do we know of it? What is it to be free of ourselves and our things, and to be

occupied with God, and the display He is making of Himself, to be occupied with what He is doing? What do we know of it? Where does that begin? In the resurrection of Christ where He began a new creation, according to His own pleasure and eternal purposes of glory. It begins with Christ risen from the dead. What do we know of that? and to be formed according to such a scene as that?

It is not the sense of our need that makes us follow Him. It was the sense of our need that made us look to Him at the beginning; but what attracts the soul to Himself is affection. His love forms a bond between our souls and Himself, so that we say, I must follow Him! Where this is the case the soul can never be satisfied apart from the Person who attached it to Himself. And in following Him I get the sense of what it is to be associated with Him in a scene outside of man, and all that came in by Adam, a scene where all is of God, a scene where there is nothing but rest, eternal rest; a scene of God's own satisfaction, God's delight, and there I find my delight. That is what I get by following Him, I find "the light of life."

That we see in Mary Magdalene, and what did she get? She got "the light of life." "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life." She followed Him to

the cross, to the grave, but she found Him in resurrection.

One of the great marks of love is keeping His word. He that loveth Me keepeth My word. That is how love works. It makes us follow Him, and it makes us value His word. To whom will He communicate His word? Is it to the one of great mind and learning? No, it is to the heart that loves Him; it is to the heart that treasures it. The word is kept in the affection. If a person loves you, and you love that person, if he writes to you, how you value that communication because of the person who wrote it. "If a man love me, he will *keep* my words." He will treasure them in his heart. That is the one who gets His word. In Mary Magdalene the Lord found one who valued His word, and He gave His word to her, assuring her of her association with Himself, a man risen from the dead. He had come from God and was going back to God, and He says, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and to your Father; and to my God, and your God."

That is the first thing. It was no question about her blessing, her good, no thought of her need. She was thinking of a Person, valuing Him, valuing His word and she got on. And we should get on a good deal more if we had more of that spirit—if we were more following the Lord,

saying in our hearts I must reach Him, I must have His word. That is what I want above all things, and if we really loved His word we should get it.

I pass on to the next passage I read. In 2 Corinthians v., we get another way in which love works. The apostle had spoken of the judgment seat of Christ, a very serious and solemn subject. But the judgment seat of Christ was not the motive of his life; he says, "The love of Christ constraineth us." The love of Christ was the motive of his life. (Vers. 14, 15.) All his life was the expression of devotedness to a Person—the whole life. It may be passed by many of us in a very common-place way, or it may be passed by others more in public serving the Lord; but what made up the whole life of Paul was, *I live to Him*. I have an object before me, and in everything to Him I live. How acceptable that was to the Lord! A life laid upon the altar for the Lord! and every bit of such a life in us is acceptable to the Lord. However hidden it may be, however small the service, if it be the fruit of the love of Christ, it connects us with Him. We have the privilege to live to Him. He who died for us lives. A living Person. He lived to God, and every bit of our life that is on that principle is fruit to Him, acceptable to Him. We may get a lot of praise from man; we may shine before

man, but nothing is acceptable before God that is not the fruit of that love, and everything not done from that motive has nothing in it for Him, nothing that He delights in. He loves, surely, to look down and see one that is living to Him in a world like this. "That they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." Can we say, beloved friends, He governs our life? Is our one desire to please Him? to live to Him who died for us and rose again? Does His love constrain us? Is it the spring of our life?

Now I turn to the last instance in John xii. I take it that Mary in her action gives us the expression of real true worship. What governed her action was that she was consciously in the presence of the Son of God. It was the greatness and glory of the Person that stood before her, so that she felt nothing could be wasted that was spent upon such a Person. Had it been spent upon the greatest servant that ever lived, it would have been waste to spend it on his feet—but on that Person, the Son of God, nothing could be waste that was spent on His feet. She was consciously in the presence of the Son of God.

But there was another thing. She knew the Person loved her, and she loved Him. If it was the Son of God—well—the Son of God loved her and she loved the Son of God, and her action was



the fruit of love. Love spending itself upon its object. She poured everything out at His feet in love. I do not believe any service or worship is acceptable to the Lord, if it is not the fruit of divine affection in our soul. "The Father seeketh such to worship him." Divine love seeks response. It is as children we worship. What gratifies the Father's heart who is the source of all this divine love, is a response, an answer. And the Spirit of God has been given to form that response in us, to give us to apprehend the love revealed to us—the love that called us, the love that has taken pleasure in us, and in love and affection we worship Him. It is the fruit of love.

If we were really together in the power of the Spirit, and consciously in the presence of the Father's love, and in the enjoyment of it, we could not help worshipping. There would be a stream of worship going up to the Father, the fruit of divine affection wrought by God's Spirit in the heart, and that is what would be gratifying to the heart of God our Father.

May God grant that we may be built up in the love of God, the love of Christ, and that He may work this in us, as in these examples we have had before us, and it will be to the delight of His heart, and for our immense joy and blessing.

F. H. B.

# THE SPHERE OF LOVING-KINDNESS, AND THE SPHERE OF CHRIST'S LIFE.

(JOHN XVI. 16-33.)

WHAT I desire, beloved brethren, to bring before you is the transition which we get here. I am persuaded that it is a great point for us all, and that if we do not understand what I call the transition we lose much. The Lord, as Messiah here, was about to die. There was a little while when they would not see Him, and all their living hopes connected with Messiah would be gone. There was coming a moment when He would be away from them, and everything connected with Him as Messiah on earth would pass away. And then they would see Him again, but when they saw Him again it would be in a condition and state that could not pass away—"your sorrow shall be turned into joy." (Ver. 20.) Nothing could touch that, and in point of fact it would be an entrance for them into the whole scene of new affections that were connected with the Father.

Now, there is another point I should like to

touch on, because I am persuaded it is oftentimes where we stick fast. I think it was a very important point we had yesterday afternoon, the two parts of Numbers which were referred to, that we have to take them, not consecutively but together. I do not think in the apprehension of our souls, generally speaking, that we do, still it is a very important point to see that they are concurrent. It is not that one does away with the other—they run side by side.

What I feel—and I think I may say as one converses with others—what one sees to be the difficulty with souls is this: that souls are not prepared for what we have called the second part of Numbers. We know a good deal oftentimes about the first part, and if I refer to it now, it is only to bring the other more into contrast. To shew you more completely what I mean, I would like to refer to Numbers xx.

It has been said in regard to Numbers xx. that Israel had grown old in the wilderness. They were not at the beginning but at the end of the wilderness. Thirty-eight years had passed since they began the wilderness journey—I may say, thirty-eight years of long-suffering mercy on God's part. I believe most of us understand a good deal about that. I do not suppose there is a saint here who

has had much experience, who would not enter into and feel what long-suffering mercy we have each been the subject of. Suppose I take Psalm ciii. for instance: "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." I would be very sorry if all of us could not join in it in the sense of divine mercy, and did not feel what wonderful mercy and goodness has been accorded to us since first we knew the Lord. What grace and goodness and mercy have followed us all the way through! While all that is true, we must not dwell only on that side. Alas! how little we are ready to accept what the purpose of God is for us.

If I say a word or two more on this chapter, the first thing recorded is, that Miriam dies. Miriam's was the voice that chorussed the song of praise that Moses sang on the shores of the Red Sea, when Israel joined in that triumphant song: "Sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he cast into the sea." Miriam, the prophetess, took a timbrel in her hand, and, as it were, she and the women of Israel chorussed back what Moses sang. There was the answer to the song of Moses; the echo went back of the wondrous goodness and grace of God, the greatness of

His salvation and deliverance, and of all His victory and power that had been accomplished and displayed for Israel.

Now, after thirty-eight years in the wilderness, that voice is silent—Miriam passes off the scene. If we take the close of the saint's history, or as we are getting to the close of the church's history as the vessel of testimony, in its passage through this world—for we have to take the moment of our history here collectively as well as individually—it is not exactly the song sung years ago that is the song for to-day. It is not that we forget it or that we are not to go on in the power of that song, but other things come in, deeper things sometimes come in. If you remember in chapter xxi. (I am quite aware we are beginning another subject here), what you get in the close of that chapter is this: Sihon king of the Amorites and Og the king of Bashan are overcome and Israel possessed their land. It was the pledge of full possession of the promised inheritance. In connection with this I would like to dwell upon two psalms (Psa. cxxxv. and Psa. cxxxvi.), if you will turn to them for a moment. They are the close of the "Songs of Degrees," and consequently bring us to the close of Israel's history, when at last they will come to know what the purpose of God is for them, having learned Him through

their history, and that His mercy endureth for ever.

Psalm cxxxv. opens with "Praise ye the Lord. Praise ye the name of the Lord; praise him, O ye servants of the Lord," &c. (vers. 1-4), and so on. It goes down to the victory over Og and Sihon, and adds "all the kingdoms of Canaan" (vers. 10, 11); but the Psalm does not really carry them into the land; as a matter of fact, they had not yet inherited it, though God's power had wrought for them. Now we come to two texts—one is an allusion to what God said to Moses at the burning bush. (Exo. iii. 14, 15.) It recalls the enduring character of the name of Jehovah—the name in which all the promises made to the fathers would be fulfilled. Moses pleaded the memorial of this name when Israel had broken down under the law and made the golden calf. (Exo. xxxii. 13.) As to the question of life or of their being the people of God under law, all was over; but in answer to the intercession of Moses, all the mercy and goodness wrapped up for Israel in the name of Jehovah was made known to him; and though under the government of God they were put under the law as a system, what they started afresh with after their breakdown, was the goodness and long-suffering mercy of Jehovah, this comes out in the well-known chorus:

“Jehovah is good ; his mercy endureth for ever.” Here we have : “Thy name, O Lord, endureth for ever ; and thy memorial, O Lord, throughout all generations.” It was the name revealed to Moses at the burning bush before the law was given. “What shall I say unto them ?” was his question as to the name of Him who sent him to the children of Israel, and the word was : say to them, “I AM THAT I AM. . . . The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you : this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.” (Exo. iii. 14, 15.) Then when Moses goes up to the mount, after the breaking of the tables of the law, He proclaimed the name of the Lord to him as, “The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands,” &c. (Exo. xxxiv. 6, 7.) He will not clear the guilty, but He is longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and goodness.

Verse 14 is taken from Deuteronomy xxxii. “For the Lord will judge his people, and he will repent himself concerning his servants.”

The chapter I refer to in Deuteronomy gives in a prophetic song the history of the people, foretelling all their break-down, and so on, but before Moses touches on that, he says, “I will

publish the name of Jehovah," consequently his song opens with these beautiful words, "My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew . . . . because I will publish the name of Jehovah." He begins with what is in the name of Jehovah, and then in the end of the prophetic song you find these words: "The Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants when he seeth that their power is gone," &c. (Ver. 36.) Everything for them depended upon the long-suffering mercy and goodness which were contained in the name of Jehovah. His very judgment of their evil leading them to trust alone in Him who was revealed to Moses in the bush, and whose mercy and goodness had brought them through the wilderness.

Psalm cxxxv. carries you to that point, and Psalm cxxxvi. is the chorus to what we get in the previous Psalm. They have the sense of what God was to them, for every verse ends with "His mercy endureth for ever." That is a different chorus from Miriam's! This is at the end of the journey. They record step by step what God had been to them—what God had done for them. "His mercy endureth for ever" is the chorus now. It is not now "Sing ye to the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously." But a chorus celebrating abundant mercy and goodness. Our



chorus is, as it were, that of Psalm cxxxvi. in regard to our history here. "His mercy endureth for ever." "His mercy endureth for ever." "His mercy endureth for ever." Such a chorus is a blessed ending to the history of our responsibility down here. God has sustained us ; all through goodness and mercy have followed us.

Now come back to Numbers xx. The voice of Miriam ceases. The chorus of the first part of the history passes away, but what we find in the chapter is that the Rock has followed them all the way, and that Rock was Christ. Moses says in Deuteronomy xxxii., speaking of the enemies of Israel, "Their rock is not as our Rock ;" and again and again in that chapter Jehovah is spoken of as their rock. Now you get that the Rock has followed them all the way, notwithstanding their perverseness. "That Rock was Christ."

Oh ! beloved brethren, what a history is the history of the people of God sustained by the grace of God and the priesthood of Christ. At the close of the journey from the rock which has followed them all the way, the water comes forth for the refreshment of the people. It is most blessed to see this never-failing outflow of the grace of God. For "That Rock was Christ." Look for a moment at verses 3-5. "And the people chode with Moses and said, Would God

that we had died when our brethren died before the Lord! . . . . And wherefore have ye made us to come up out of Egypt to bring us into this evil place? It is no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates, neither is there any water to drink." Now the Lord does not say a word to them in remonstrance about their chiding. If I may so say, the Lord in grace admits it all. He admits that the wilderness in that sense was an evil place—it was no place of pomegranates, nor was there water to drink. The wilderness was not Canaan. The Lord admits it. He does not chide with them though they strove with Him. But He says, as it were, you shall have My never-failing abundant grace. You are not in Canaan, but you have My grace, the Rock has followed you. The blessed answer of God at the end of the wilderness after the thirty-eight years of testing, the result of priesthood established in resurrection power, was that His grace was as full and as fresh and as blessed as ever. "That Rock was Christ." He answers them with the fulness of the grace that was in Christ. Do you wonder at the chorus of Psalm cxxxvi. "His mercy endureth for ever"? Do you wonder at the chorus being repeated again and again. As you think of what God is, what Christ is, how He sustains us, and how He has kept us all this time? Not a bit!

When you come to Numbers xxi., you find again the answer of God in the brazen serpent, not now to the want of the people, but to the flesh. They found fault with the manna—and called it light bread. You see what the flesh in us is. God had borne with them, He had answered all the want and weariness and distress of the people in grace. Ah! but the flesh—it is not the living grace of Christ for that, but the death of Christ it is, that sets us free to speak of what God is—that “his mercy endureth for ever;” in the sense of what Christ has done we can say, “His mercy endureth for ever.” There is not one in this room to-day, beloved friends, but I am sure your heart can take up that chorus as you survey your history in the light of grace, “His mercy endureth for ever.”

Now I turn to John xvi. There you find that Christ is not opening to them now mercy that we meet with in our responsible life down here. We have been looking at the grace of Christ that comes to us in our pathway here—the grace of God that admits the difficulties; that this is no place of figs and pomegranates—that there is no water—no springs here, but He answers us with Christ. There is all the blessed grace of Christ for our souls—there is the support of Christ. That Rock followed them, that Rock was Christ. But in John xvi. we have another thing,

and I want to conduct you for a moment to it. The Lord is now telling His disciples of the little while when they would not see Him. They must have known something of His grace during the three-and-a-half years when He had companied with them—what had He not been to them! What had they not learned about the Lord! His tender grace—how He bore with their ignorance and ways and manners. His forbearance and grace with them must have been wonderful; and now He has brought them to that point where He says, “A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me.” Were they going to lose Him? Yes, for a little while, they would lose sight of Him, for He was about to go into death and thus break every link and connection with this scene altogether. I believe that is just the point we do not like, beloved brethren. We all like what I have been saying to you about “his mercy endureth for ever.” And I would be very sorry if there was one heart who could not say it; I can join heartily in that chorus; but that leaves you down here. It does not carry you across to Christ’s side. The point now is that Christ was going to that side, and after the little while they would know Him only on that side. I am persuaded a great many of the difficulties we have as to truth and so on, arise from

this, that we are not ready to go to the side of things where Christ now is. I know the difficulty myself, and I believe I know that this difficulty is in other people's minds. We can all join heartily, and chorus back the song, that "his mercy endureth for ever." The real difficulty is in quitting the place where the Lord is not. Now the Lord is leading the disciples to the sense of His departure. He is not telling them exactly of the sorrows of the wilderness, that it is no place of pomegranates and so on, but He is telling them that they will have to enter into the sorrows of His death, that they would have to know a little of His absence, when He would travail for them in the throes of death; such was the sorrow of the little while, but it was the travail that would end in the birth of the new creation. It was to Himself as about to enter into another state and scene that He was leading them. Are we prepared to take that way?

It was referred to yesterday that love draws us to Christ; but we find here that it is to Him in this new place, and that new place is now revealed to the soul in Him. It is not now the mercy that has come to me in Him, blessed as that is, and how one's heart rejoices in it! And we could not do without it, we could not else get to this point, we should not be free for it;

but when I have known the grace of Christ to support me down here in my infirmities, and I have the sense of what He is to me, then He can carry my heart to another point. He says, as it were, I am going into the sorrows of death, but it is that you may know me in a new condition. "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." He was carrying their thoughts beyond the sorrows of His death into a scene of which He is the fulness. Down here I want mercy. I say, "his mercy endureth for ever." I am weak and infirm and want the priesthood. I want His grace, and, thank God! I get it; but that is the blessed Lord coming to my side. The Rock follows us. That Rock is Christ.

But in John xvi. the Lord tells them "the time cometh, when I shall no more speak to you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father." They could not then understand or enter into the things of the Father, but the moment would come when, having gone through death, He would shew them plainly of the Father. That is not telling them about the Jehovah of Israel, but of the Father. The name of Father brings in all the eternal counsel and thought of God, before ever there was failure or sin, or the need of mercy and grace. Jesus had come from the Father, as He says: "I

came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father." How much do our hearts enter into it? To my own mind it is a most wonderful thing that the Lord Jesus Christ has been thus revealed to us as having gone through death and entered into that new scene; thus we get the revelation of all the Father's things in love made known to us by Him who is out of death. He went through it to make a way out of it, in order that He might place us in association with Himself on the other side, where He can make known to us the Father's purposes and counsels, and assure us of the Father's love.

What must it have been to those disciples for forty days when they companied with the Lord and saw Him. You will understand me if I say, that what they saw was no longer a man in the state and circumstances of those who partake of the mercy of God down here, but they saw Him in another state altogether—risen, outside the whole scene, and bringing them into association with Himself, as One that belonged to heaven, and had broken every link with the man of responsibility and failure; Himself, the Man of purpose and counsel out of death, and they in living association with Him. What they touched then was the sphere of life in Himself. The moment the soul has the sense that

Christ is out of death, and of association with Him—as you know it by the Spirit, you touch the sphere of His life.

I believe that is where we are defective. I can understand His mercy coming to me here, but I feel for myself, beloved brethren, how little I have touched the sphere of His life. I do not think there would be an atom of difficulty as to “in Christ” if we knew what it was to touch the sphere of His life now. He is the blessed Man out of death; He was always the living One here, but He has gone through death according to the Father’s counsels. Nothing can be more touchingly beautiful than that verse in John x., “I lay down my life, that I might take it again.” It was always in the Father’s mind that the Son should go through death, and take life in another sphere altogether, in order that He might give to the sheep that the Father had given Him eternal life, and the Father loved Him for doing it; thus we are brought into touch with the sphere of Christ’s life through association with Him.

It is not more that I have to say, dear brethren. I brought forward the other side first in order to bring out the contrast. It was noticed yesterday how the moment you come to the gift—the well of water, figurative of the Spirit’s power—you get, “*Spring up, O well; sing ye unto it.*” The



well springs up unto eternal life. That is what I mean by touching the sphere of Christ's life. I am brought into living association with Him. At the bottom of many a soul you will find love to God; but how many things are there at the top of that! I have no doubt in every believer whose heart has been touched by divine grace, you will find at the bottom the well of water, the love of God there, and as to the future all is clear for that; but what between? what of earth? Do you say, I love to look at the mercy and goodness of God? Yes, you want them, and I want them, and the Rock follows us; but I do say—how far have you and I touched the sphere of Christ's life?

That is what the disciples were brought into here. He says, "Ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again." They would see Him in life beyond death, and He adds, "your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you."

I put it to every one—How far do we know the sphere of Christ's life? How many things are preventing the love of God springing up in our souls, so that there may be the response in our hearts to His love and the cry "Abba, Father;" and I do not say that God is not known as Father, but what do we know of what the Lord says here, "I will shew you

plainly of the Father"? Unless the well is springing up, though we may call God Father, there is not much meaning in it. As risen it is that the Lord shews us plainly of the Father; the Spirit, so to speak, springs up into the sphere of His life—"Spring up, O well; sing ye to it." So in Romans, "They that are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." They are led by the Spirit, they are in the current of the Spirit, the Spirit always leads to Christ. He has come from the glorified Christ, and what I may call the domain of the Spirit is what you get in the first part of this chapter, "He shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you." That is the proper domain of the Spirit. The Spirit always leads to Christ. Thus they that are led by the Spirit are in the current of the Spirit, and that is the well springing up. It is then not merely that we know the name of the Father, but our souls are in the blessed revelation of it as sons. The Lord shews us plainly of the Father, and the cry goes up, "Abba, Father."

Now, dear brethren, I do trust the youngest here will be able to see that it is one thing to have the mercies of God, and we need them, and thus to find Christ the blessed support of our souls day by day; it is another thing to touch the sphere of His life and to answer to His love.

It is there divine affections flow, when love springs up into its proper sphere—the sphere of His life—and then I believe everything would be simple and plain.

May the Lord just give us to know it!

T. H. R.



# THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE SON OF GOD.

(JOHN ix. 30—x. 16.)

THERE is a great deal of difference, beloved brethren, between the meeting of necessity and the unfolding of privilege, and I think we get it brought before us here in a very striking way in the case of the man who was born blind. We find two things very distinctly brought before us in his case; first of all the meeting of the question of his need, which was a very pressing question, and afterwards his being introduced into what we may call privilege. And I am very sure that in the history of our souls we find the same thing holding good, and it is only as the question of our soul's need is met, that we are in a position at all to enter into the other side of things which our beloved brother has been speaking about this morning,—what we speak of as the heavenly side, that which the knowledge of the Son of God introduces us into, and which is spoken of in Ephesians iv., as the "full knowledge of the Son of God."

I do not believe anybody touches these things, (I can only speak from my own apprehension of things, which is not very much), the heavenly

things, the things concerning the Son of God and the Father, till one's own soul's need has been met; that is to say until souls are really set free on their own side, so that questions regarding their own welfare and blessing, and standing with God are all settled. Then it is, I think, that we are free to enter into the higher things—in fact, the things of the Father, which are not our side at all.

Now just let me point out what is very manifest in this case. This man was born blind. Anybody could judge what his need was, namely, sight. The chapter is most interesting. It really sets forth the condition in which man is by nature. But the Lord Jesus was passing by and saw him, and the question is raised with regard to him, "Who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind." The Lord replies that it was no question of one or the other, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him. There was a subject of divine grace; God was going to take that man up and exhibit the works of God in him. And immediately the Lord made clay and anointed his eyes and said, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is being interpreted, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing."

Now what he apprehended, I suppose, was that the Lord Jesus Christ was the One sent of God.

He had got light, light from God, and the blessed Lord Jesus Christ was the One who had brought this light into his soul. His eyes had been opened by the blessed Lord Himself. He was a divine Person we know, but He was the One who brought the light of God down into this world, and this poor man had got it. He went and washed in the pool and received his sight. It has often been noticed that he was just as blind after the clay was put on his eyes as before, until he went and washed in the pool. That is to say, the simple presentation of the Lord Jesus Christ before men does not open their eyes, but where there is the operation of the Spirit there is light. The light came to him ; he got his eyes opened. I think we must admit his need was met as much as it could be ; he was blind and he got his sight. That really sets forth what God in His infinite grace does in regard to every one of us. When God takes us up and presents the Lord Jesus Christ to us, we know Him as the One sent of God, and that we have had to do with Him ; we have come in contact with Him, and we bless God for Him. We know Him as our Saviour. I suppose every one here has had to do with the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, and we can speak much perhaps, and praise God for what He has done for our souls. All most sweet and blessed and most deeply important and

essential; and if this is not met we are not in a position to enter into anything that is on the other side, the Lord's side. That is how we begin, thank God, from our own deep necessity, and we learn how the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, has come down into this world to meet it in the most perfect way possible for us, so that there is nothing left to be done. Thank God for it! We may be in different states of soul, no two here just the same, but I trust we have all begun there. We know the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour; and furthermore we have to find out how He sets us free from ourselves, from sin, and from this world, things of the utmost importance. The Lord Jesus Christ has been here, dealt with the question of sin and broken the power of death, so that we may come into His victory and all that He has gained for us. The ground is clear and what we are now privileged to enter upon is the ground as it has been cleared by the Lord Jesus. In the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ He has dealt with the whole power of evil according to God's glory, and the love of God has been brought down into this scene; and that which had been the great expression of Satan's power, namely, death, has been turned, as has been noticed, into the expression of the love of God. It is a most wonderful proof of

love that He has done this. So instead of death being a terror, it speaks to us of the love of God, and the most wonderful victory and turning of things about on God's part that we can conceive.

Now let us come back to the blind man. The moment He confesses the Lord Jesus Christ according to his apprehension of Him (and he could not go beyond that), it at once brings out opposition. And the very opposition helped him, for the more they tried to frighten and worry him the more apprehension he got, until at last he says boldly, "Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes. Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth. Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing." He had got hold of a good deal, though he was only just born, as we might say. He had got hold of what they had not, and had more knowledge than his teachers.

Now we come to this terrible fact that they cast him out. And why was this? They had cast out the blessed Lord first, the One in whom the testimony of God was completely set forth,



as we noticed yesterday. All that was true of God, all that God had in His mind in regard to man, was perfectly set forth in the blessed Lord Jesus Christ, and man would not have it, and the leaders of the people, the religious leaders, were those who took the lead in rejecting Him. We may rightly say this poor man tasted death very early; he found out what a world it was. It was a tremendous beginning for a man, the first day of his new birth to find himself in a world like this with Christ cast out and no room for one who owned Him. What an awakening!

Dear brethren, may I ask how far have our souls entered into that fact? How far do we walk through this world in the sense of it? There is what is pleasant here; the sun may shine, the weather be beautiful, and all that kind of thing; we have many mercies to be thankful for, but have we the sense as we go through the world that He is not here?

I often used to notice when I was in the world, that when death came into a house in the midst of out-and-out worldliness it pulled people up. They could not go on with things they found pleasure in before; they could not find pleasure in them now. A man who has lost his wife, for instance, may go out into the beautiful fields, may see the pleasant sunshine, and hear the song of the birds. But he is

bereaved and his heart is desolate ; those pleasant things do not repair the desolation. And in spiritual matters the same thing holds good. If our hearts are greatly attached to Christ (alas ! how feebly they are), we should go through the world in the sense that He is not here. He is outside all that is here. Men have made a worldly religion of Christianity and have adapted it to the world in the most extraordinary way. If the devil had not helped them they would not have done it so successfully. But Christ is not here. Do what they will they cannot get rid of that fact. He is rejected, despised, an outcast ; and if we are to be in His company, depend upon it, we have to accept death.

Now death, as it were, was forced upon this man, rolled in upon him, and he was perfectly isolated. But now the Lord Jesus Christ came and found him, and said : " Dost thou believe on the Son of God ? " I wonder what we should say if that word were addressed to every one of us here this morning. A great many would very likely say, " Of course we do ! " I am not so sure about that ! I think it is a very serious question how many of us do. Do not let the simplest person misunderstand me. We believe on Him who is the Son of God ; but to believe on the Son of God is to believe on that blessed

Person so set forth. It is a question of the *name*, of what is set forth in the name, as we heard yesterday. The Lord Jesus presents Himself in that new, wonderful, and for man, astonishing relationship. Here was a man who could come and say of Himself, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" He was in relationship with God after a totally new sort for man. No man ever knew such relationship until He, who was the Son, became a man. Then He brought it into manhood. Think of that!

Now if we are outside what the world calls respectable, man's religion, if we have accepted death in any kind of way here, the privilege is that we may find ourselves, like this man, in the company of the Son of God, who conducts us Himself into all the blessedness of a new order of blessing for man, one that the heart of man never conceived. Here are the things which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man," &c. They are not within the ken of man at all. Man's power cannot reach them, but they are known by the Spirit's power. "God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit." Are they not worth being set for? That is the point. We know, I suppose, that the great mass of Christendom quote this passage as it is put in Isaiah, and

take no notice of the New Testament addition, that "God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit." If a man quotes it without the end of the verse it is obvious he has not entered into it. It is not that wonderful things for another day are revealed, but what are for present enjoyment. They are the things of the Son of God. Now, beloved friends, do we believe on the Son of God? I wonder how many of us do. That is a question I put to myself, how much do I know about the Son of God so as to be introduced into the things which belong to Him in the sphere He has entered.

Turn to John xvi. and see what you get there. "He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you." It is all privilege, and privilege no one ever touches until death has been accepted as regards this scene; there is no question about it. But this is really the difficulty. Just as Satan said, concerning Job, "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life," so it is the last thing a man will let go. He will let go his bag of gold, supposing he finds himself fallen into the water and drowning, sooner than his life. He will keep his life at all costs to the last.

Now, have we let our life go? That is the question. The Lord says, "He that hates his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal."

And "if any man serve me, let him follow me." It is a wonderful thing, dear brethren, just to touch that scene!

I must not speak longer, but add that I read from John x. also, because you get there where the blind man was brought. He was one of the sheep. The sheep is in chapter ix., and the Shepherd in chapter x., where we find what the Shepherd does with the sheep. When He putteth forth His own sheep He goes before them outside the fold, outside the place recognised by man, outside the sphere of man and man's religion. And look what we get here. "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved" (a question of need), "and shall go in and out, and find pasture." If you do not have that you will starve. All this is a gracious meeting of need. But then look what intimacy we are introduced into. "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine, as the Father knoweth me, and I know the Father." That is how it should read. Brethren, I would appeal to you, as I desire to appeal to myself, is it not worth seeking after, putting it even on that ground? That is what the Lord has called us to; He would have us follow after Him. If you are in His company you will find yourself in the most wonderful intimacy possible.

Now do we not want to know these things, dear brethren? Well then, let us accept death. Flesh and blood does not like it. We like ease and comfort and to have a place here. All that is very natural to us. But these heavenly things are all on the other side of death, and they are indeed well worth entering into and enjoying. And we know the Spirit of God has come down from a glorified Christ in heaven, from the Father and the Son, to make all these things known to us now, and to make them good in our souls, that we may be already in the reality and power of heavenly things before we actually get there. So that in that way heaven may be begun in our souls here on earth.

What a difference it would make for us! And how poor and insignificant the best and brightest things of this world would be when seen in the presence of these unseen and eternal things. May the Lord lead our hearts into them by His Spirit, for His name's sake!

D. L. H.



# THE LIBERTY WHEREWITH CHRIST HAS MADE US FREE.

(GAL. iii. 23—v. 1.)

THERE are two thoughts that come together in the latter part of the passage that I have read. The children of promise are children of the free-woman. The children of the flesh are children of the bondwoman, but the children of promise—like Isaac, for he was the child of promise—are children of the freewoman.

I will say a few words about the children of promise, and then about that with which they are connected. They are the children of the freewoman. I want to shew you, if I can, what it is that brings us into christian liberty—I think the greater part of saints very poorly enjoy liberty. The apostle says, “Stand fast . . . in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.” That is the end and object of what the apostle brought before them.

The apostle brings before us here the secret of liberty in the mother of whom we are begotten. I can understand the contrast to it in Ishmael. Ishmael took his character from his mother, who

was a bondwoman. I have no doubt that he became an Ishmaelite from his mother : his hand against every man, and every man's hand against him. That kind of man is really in bondage, knows nothing of true liberty. Nor did he know much of dwelling in a house or of being at home. He was the son of the bondwoman and took character from his mother.

On the other hand, Isaac, being the child of promise, was the child of the freewoman, and he too took his character from his mother. Sarah was Abraham's wife, and Isaac was brought up under the influence of his mother. A man takes character from his mother, though not perhaps ability. You will rarely in the world see children of character if they have not a mother of character. You can readily understand this. While character is being formed children are thrown so much in contact with their mother, that it is no wonder if they take character from her. So it was with Isaac, and so with Ishmael, and so with us as Christians. "Jerusalem which is above is free, which is our mother." As Christians we take our character from the testimony presented to us, and the character we derive from that testimony is practically liberty. "Jerusalem below," was in bondage with her children, they were begotten of that system. The mother was in bondage, and so too her children.



They took their character from their mother, as did Ishmael from his mother; but Jerusalem above, which is our mother, is free. It has that character like Sarah.

The secret why so many Christians are not in the enjoyment of liberty is probably because they have not been sufficiently affected by the testimony.

I was lately speaking to some one in regard to special meetings in London for young men, and the observation was made that, whatever subject might be before them, conversation eventually came round to the question of deliverance. I can very well understand this. You get together young men who have been converted, but they are not in the enjoyment of liberty. My impression is that they have never as yet taken character from their true mother, they have not yet been sufficiently affected by the testimony. Had it been so they would be in the enjoyment of liberty.

The Galatians had not taken character, were not in liberty. That is why the apostle brings this subject before them, and at the end he says, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." That is the admonition. What a sorrowful thing to see these Galatians, who had begun in the Spirit, now

turned away from the testimony—for that is what had taken place. Turning from the testimony and going back to some past testimony—it had a most mischievous effect. How do you think you can at the present time connect the thought of liberty with a Christian in the Church of England. He never goes to church without repeating the ten commandments, and prays over and over again, “Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.” How can Christians brought up in such associations be in the enjoyment of liberty? They too have gone back to a past testimony, and they take their character from it, and are consequently legal; and if legal, as sure as possible they are worldly. The two things are bound to go together, legality and worldliness. Legality recognizes the world and men as they are; not the world to come. If we do not live in the light of that we are legal, and because legal we are worldly.

Now, as to the children of promise, I understand that they are the children of God’s purpose. Isaac was the child of purpose, and therefore the child of promise. Since the time of Abraham God has always been acting on that principle of sovereignty. It is declared in Romans ix., x. There were two children of Abraham—and if the principle of sovereignty had not been acted on Ishmael would have had part with Isaac, for he

was the son of Abraham after the flesh. Had it not been for the principle of sovereignty the same would have been the case with Esau and Jacob. But God *chose* Jacob. He says, "Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated." Israel could not complain of that principle, for they were the children of Isaac and Jacob, and it was the principle on which Ishmael and Esau had been rejected. Isaac and Jacob were the children of promise.

The first thing, then that comes out here is, that Christians are the children of promise, that is, the children of God's purpose. If you refer to the previous chapter you will see that "before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our school-master unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." That is the way in which faith brings us into the light of God's purpose. In that light we are God's children through faith. Law had had its place up to a certain time. It was a schoolmaster up to Christ, but the divine purpose in Christ is revealed for faith, and according to that we are the sons of God. We have a place before God accord-

ing to His purpose. I could say to any Christian, You are a son of God according to His purpose. You may not have entered much into it, but it belongs to you according to God's purpose. When God reveals His purpose it belongs to me. Time was when it was not known, but now it is revealed in Christ, and therefore I appropriate it. It is not a question of progress or attainment, but of relationship. We have passed the law and have got into the light of faith, and have apprehended by faith the expression in Christ of God's purpose. God is bringing many sons to glory, and His purpose in regard to them has its expression in Christ.

You have a picture of this in Matthew xiv., where the Lord encourages Peter to leave the boat to go to Himself. The picture is not completed till chapter xvi. As far as I see, Peter did not reach Christ in his soul till then. In chapter xvi. Peter reaches Christ by the revelation of the Father. He confesses Christ: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Peter apprehends Christ in that light as the blessed expression of the purpose of God, and in answer to that the Lord says: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

The fact is, that the assembly is really built on the truth of sonship, and the light of sonship is come out in Christ. God has been pleased to reveal to us in Christ what sonship means—we could not understand it otherwise—it could not have been fully expressed otherwise. You may get the name in the Old Testament, as, for instance, “Israel is my son, my firstborn: and so “out of Egypt have I called my son;” but this will not give you a true idea of sonship. It is vain to talk of sonship apart from affection. If sonship is revealed it is in One who is the object of the Father’s affection. That is how the Father revealed Christ to Peter, and Peter confesses Him as “the Son of the living God,” and the Lord says, “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church.” Christ was the object of the Father, and He was an object to Peter.

How can the gates of hell prevail against that which is formed in the divine nature? If Christ is known in the Father’s love, and we are formed in that nature, how can the gates of hell prevail? They might prevail against faith as a system here, but they could not prevail against that which is built upon the Rock, that is, Christ as the divine expression and revelation of the purpose of the Father.

Now, in chapter iv. you get a point farther.

“When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son.” (Verse 4.) That is very much like Matthew xvi. Christ comes of a woman—that had reference to the ways of God in regard to His humanity; He is made under law. Those who were the heirs of promise were under law. Christ comes into both positions, “made of a woman, made under law, to redeem them that were under law, that we might receive sonship,” be brought thus into the light of purpose. Sonship is the gift of God. It is of great importance to apprehend that. It is something akin to what we have in John i. 12: To “as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the children of God.”

Then further: “And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.” So far what we have got to is this. The Christian is in the light of God’s purpose, apprehends His gift, and has the Spirit of God’s Son. This could never be till Christ was in glory. Sonship refers to Christ in glory. For us sonship means that we are to be conformed to the image of Christ in glory, and the Spirit is the Spirit of God’s Son, not as He was, but as He is; and by the Spirit the Christian cries, “Abba, Father.” The apostle continues: “Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son.” (Ver. 7.) It is a great point to

insist upon relationship. God looks upon every Christian in the light of relationship. He is a son, and he has the Spirit of sonship, and by the Spirit cries, "Abba, Father."

And yet after all the Galatians were very little grown—they had made but little progress! You see what the apostle says, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again till Christ be formed in you," &c. (Vers. 19, 20.) They had not gained much ground spiritually. Christ was not formed in them. They had the Spirit, but they were not in the good of sonship, for the Spirit of God's Son cries "Abba, Father." They had a poor apprehension of the love of God, and there was but a poor response to that love. They knew nothing about the assembly as Christ's body though they had the Spirit. Until Christ is formed in us sonship is not of any very great account to us. You may rejoice in the term and in the knowledge that it belongs to you, but it is of little avail for present enjoyment. As I understand it the truth is made known that you may be in state and nature what is suitable to sonship, and what is suitable to sonship is Christ. To put it in other language it is to be holy and without blame before God in love. That is the effect of Christ being formed in you. There is a nature suitable to the relationship in which God has been

pleased to place me, and the consequence of Christ being in me is that I am before God, not only in the light of His purpose, but in a condition to enjoy the position and the relationship that He has been pleased to give to me. "Before him in love," "holy and without blame" comes by the way, but the great point is, "before him in love."

I know but little of it and therefore cannot talk much about it, but it appears to me a most wonderful idea that I can be in the presence of all that God is, and *in love*, conscious that I am there for His pleasure.

There is one thing more connected with it. It has often been impressed upon us that love will have company. That thought is not so prominent in grace. It is because God loves us ("for his great love wherewith he loved us") that He will have us with Himself in His holy habitation. Just as God would have Israel in the land of Canaan. The wilderness would not satisfy God. And so God now desires His people to be with Him in His holy habitation—near Him. He has "raised us up and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

Now I want to come to an important point, and that is of character, and how you get it. Our character as Christians is undoubtedly



formed by the testimony, and I must refer a little to the testimony. Look at the latter part of the chapter, verses 21–31. We were speaking on a previous occasion of the testimony of God, and I will refer to it again in a very limited way. I go back only as far as Abraham, for the special testimony began with Abraham, and what came out in connection with him was this, that it was the purpose of God to bless; and not only to bless one special people, but “in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.” The principle that has come out in connection with that is that the blessing of Abraham has come to the Gentiles in a risen Christ, as you see in chapter iii. 13, 14, “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law . . . that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” That is how it reaches the Gentiles. Christ had to come after the flesh to redeem the Jew from the curse of the law, but to the end “that the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles in Christ Jesus.”

You may be assured of this, that every one formed on that testimony to Abraham will take a certain character. Isaac took a certain character; I do not doubt that he was formed on that testimony of the purpose of God to bless.

Now when we come to the law we find another testimony for faith, and what is shadowed there is this, that in virtue of the law being written in man's heart God would dwell among men. It all depended on what we get in Psalm xl.: Christ comes forth to be the reflex of God as a man down here, and in connection with that God dwells in man. That is the next great testimony. If faith had apprehended that, the apprehension would have had an immense effect. It does not set aside what preceded—the blessing of Abraham, which really means that a man is justified in the eye of God, stands good, but that is followed by the further thought of man being the reflex of God, and, in consequence of that, God dwelling among men.

The present time is marked by two things: Christ, the last Adam, in the presence of God in subsisting righteousness, and the dwelling of God by the Spirit down here. Christ having taken up that last Adam position in blessing the Spirit has descended, dwelling in believers, and thus forming the house of God down here.

Now I come to a further testimony, and that is the throne. The testimony in David is this, grace acting in power. That is what the throne meant. What was established in David, was not merely the principle of grace but grace acting in power. The enemies of God's people were subdued. It

was the effect of God coming in. Grace was predominant when Israel had forfeited everything after the flesh. One thing comes out very prominently in connection with David—we have heard of it already to-day—"His mercy endureth for ever." In a limited way it was the reign of grace. The beginning was that the ark had been taken captive and Ichabod written on Israel—the glory was departed. God raised up David from the sheepfold to be the Shepherd of His people. He chose the tribe of Judah and Mount Zion which He loved, and David to be king. The ark is brought to the city of David and the people sing "His mercy endureth for ever." Thus we have the testimony of the throne; it was in principle the reign of grace. Any one that entered into the testimony in those days would be greatly affected by it, and would get the sense that, whatever the unfaithfulness of man, God was faithful, and "His mercy endureth for ever."

That brings me to another point. The testimony of God is identified with a city. I could not say so much in regard to the blessing of Abraham; but when you come to the dwelling of God and to the throne, both the one and the other have eventually become identified with the city of the great king. Jerusalem was not the first resting place of the ark. It was pitched at

Shiloh, then brought by David to the city of the great king. When Jerusalem proved unfaithful, like an unfaithful wife, then God allowed Babylon to come into prominence. The idea of a city is maintained. The present time is really the time of Babylon, the fact being that the Jerusalem down here has had to give way to the Jerusalem above. That is what has come to pass, though eventually it will be restored to its place here. Now it is desolate, but eventually it will return to its first affections. But what marks the present time is "Jerusalem above." What I understand by that is that there is a point where every testimony of God is centred. "Jerusalem above" is the full expression of God's pleasure. It is not simply this testimony or that testimony of God, but the full expression of God's pleasure. Every testimony rests and will be displayed there. If you want a definite idea of Jerusalem above I can only point you to the Lord Jesus Christ at the right hand of God. In Him every testimony rests. We have a full expression of God's pleasure in the glory of the Lord. It speaks of righteousness; of God's pleasure in having a dwelling place in man; of His pleasure in subduing every enemy of man. In connection with the Lord Jesus we read, "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." What marks the present moment is

that "grace reigns through righteousness" past death "unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

I believe that if the truth of God's pleasure is apprehended it will do away with legality in us. For God is not on the ground of legality at all. Law was never the pleasure of God. The law had its place as a foreshadowing of what was to come, but God never had pleasure in law. It is not the time of law now; God is not on that ground at all. We could not reach God's pleasure on that ground. God now gives to man the testimony of His pleasure. Every part of it combined in the Man who has accomplished redemption and is now at His right hand.

If I were an evangelist I could go into the world and declare the pleasure of God. It is wonderful light to be set forth in the midst of the darkness of this world. God no longer on the ground of requirement but making known His pleasure, what He has accomplished for Himself in Christ. His blessing has reached the Gentiles though they were afar off. It has reached them in Christ Jesus. God has found in Him His dwelling place and the throne of grace.

I speak of these things because, if apprehended, we shall take our character from them, you will be brought into the enjoyment of liberty; for

we can only enjoy liberty in the light of God's pleasure. You are the children of that city in which the pleasure of God has been secured.

Nothing could come out fully till Christ came. There might be a little bit of light here and there but the truth could not come out fully till Christ came. The fact is that in coming after the flesh Christ removed in His death the man that was an offence to God, and now, raised again from the dead, He is the blessed vessel of God's pleasure, in whom the full light of God's testimony shines. And it is *now* that we are formed by the testimony ; when all comes to light in a public way people will not be formed by it though they will rejoice in the light. We are formed by it before the display. The Holy Ghost is come down from heaven the witness of how completely God has found His pleasure, of the pleasure which God has prepared for Himself in the Lord Jesus Christ.

I can understand the apostle saying "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."

May God grant that every heart here may be affected by the testimony of God's pleasure !

F. E. R.

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# THE FATHER'S LOVE AND THE CHRISTIAN'S HOPE.

(1 JOHN III. 1-3.)

I NEED hardly say that it is with great reluctance I rise, even to say a few words, after the height that God has been raising us to, this evening. But a few words may help the younger Christians present. We began our meeting with love, and we seem to be ending in the same direction.

In the scripture that I have read, the Father is gratifying His own heart by having us under His gracious eye as His *children*. This is the *manner* of His love. He desired that we should enjoy Him in that relationship. He could have created myriads of unfallen beings to enjoy Him as Creator; but the way of His love as here expressed is that we should be children. This is the highest of all relationships. Do not confound it with new birth. In all dispensations saints are born again; but it is the peculiar privilege of the saints now to be called the children of God. It involved the Son of God becoming man and accomplishing redemption, and as risen from the dead He gives us His place and His relationship as man before God; hence He could say, "My Father, and your Father; my God, and your God." "He that sanctifieth

and they who are sanctified are all of *one*, for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." What manner of love it is thus to be before the Father! Are we enjoying this blessed and wonderful relationship? Our *relation* to the Father is followed by *separation* from the world. "Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not." But let me ask, Do you know the Father? Is your heart satisfied with all that that name involves? I do not inquire if you know forgiveness, but has your heart taken into it the blessed revelation the Son brought into this world—"Neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him." To accept that revelation is to *believe* on the Son, and so to have eternal life, and as a consequence, we are identified with His place before the Father and before the world: "Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not."

We were hearing yesterday—I do not know how much we took it in—of the two parts of Numbers, our heavenly privileges and our earthly pilgrimage, which is very much like the two parts of this verse, the Father's love and our relation to Him, and the consequent separation from that world "which knew him not." It did not know a single principle that governed the heart of the Lord Jesus. The Father's will, the



Father's glory, were everything to Him. It knows us, alas! often because we practically contradict our relationship. It knows money-loving, pride, fashion, and self-seeking, because these things are its object; but it knoweth us not, because we are identified with Him who "lived by the Father," and whose every motive and principle was outside the world.

Now comes our expectation—"It is not yet manifest 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." This is the accomplishment of the purpose of God. We are to be conformed to the image of His Son. What a tale it tells of the delight the Father has in the Son, that He is to fill His glory with people exactly like Him. If I came to your house and passing through each room I saw the same article reproduced, I should say you had a hobby. Well, God has had a fixed purpose from the eternal ages past, and that is to fill heaven with people exactly like His blessed Son. "The firstborn among many brethren."

"And is it so—I shall be like Thy Son!

Is this the grace which He for me has won?"

It is surpassingly wonderful that we are not only to see Him, but to be like Him. Before we reach home from these meetings He may be here. Is there anything—any moral association—any

secret evil thing that you would have to drop if He came to-night? What follows? Why, "He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure." Purification follows expectation. The doctrine of His coming again, we may hold, and yet we may freeze, or be fast asleep, but this hope in Him has a practically purifying effect. We drop things—they must go. I saw a man not far from a railway station smoking a cigar and carrying a hand-bag; he looked at his watch and evidently had but few minutes to catch his train. As he put his watch into his pocket, he threw away his cigar and began to run. We shall never get on if we do not give up. An aged servant of the Lord, recently departed, has said there is no advancing without renouncing—the purifying process must go on. It is never to stop whilst we are here. I saw in an office some years since, oil extracted from shoddy in about six different stages of purification, the last bottle was quite transparent, whilst the first was thick and cream-like. "He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure."

Relation to the Father, separation from the world, the expectation of being like the Firstborn of the many brethren, and finally purification from all that is unsuitable to such a hope, are the four things I desired to remind you of. May the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ give us a deeper sense of the manner of His love.

A. M.

## READING.

*A wish was expressed that the subject of "In Christ" should be considered.*

(2 COR. v. 14-21 read.)

T. H. R. Nothing could more clearly indicate the character of what it is to be "in Christ" than verse 17.

F. E. R. I think we must connect that with what precedes: "If one died for all, then were all dead"—it is new creation.

A. H. That is to say, the old order has been closed up in death.

F. E. R. Yes; Christ is no longer known after the flesh, therefore the apostle says we know no one after the flesh.

REMARKED. That completely gets rid of the thought of being "in Christ" for security?

F. E. R. "In Christ" is properly outside of the thought of responsibility. The responsible man is seen as gone before you come to "in Christ."

REMARKED. Responsibility never enters into "in Christ."

F. E. R. How could it when the apostle in his own mind was so outside of the responsible

man here, that he does not know Christ after the flesh? Then he begins to speak of "in Christ," and he says, "Therefore if any man be in Christ."

QUES. "In Christ" would be in contrast to in Adam?

F. E. R. Every man in Adam is in God's eye dead. God now sees only one Man. I have been greatly struck with the passage quoted in Acts viii., "His life is taken from the earth." If so, then what life can there be here? All other life is forfeited; all is under the judgment of God, and when Christ's life was here that life was taken from the earth.

QUES. What is the difference between "in Christ" in Romans viii. and 2 Corinthians v.?

F. E. R. None I should say. "In Christ" is not the subject of direct teaching in Romans. It shews in chapter viii. 1 the place of privilege of Christians; but it is brought in as an abstract thought. No condemnation to them that "are in Christ Jesus." Here in 2 Corinthians v. it is a positive state: "If any man be in Christ, there is new creation." In Romans—if there, there is "no condemnation." The statement is abstract, not put forth in direct application.

REMARKED. They are in a sphere where condemnation could never reach them.

F. E. R. Quite so.

QUES. Our being "in Christ" is not exactly the thought of security?

F. E. R. No; security is in being sealed with the Holy Ghost. The fact is that the Holy Ghost has brought about new creation, the Spirit quickens.

J. R. Does not the expression in Romans vi., "reckon ye also," &c., go farther than that in Romans viii. 3?

F. E. R. It is only a *reckoning* there. It is a moral necessity, you reckon yourself alive to God. If you do, it must be "in Christ." The reason of this is, that there being no life at all in the first Adam line, you must be alive "in Christ Jesus." There is no life left here—life must be in the One who is out of death, in a risen Man—that Man is now in another sphere.

REMARKED. But in 2 Corinthians it speaks of the life of Jesus being manifest in our mortal flesh.

F. E. R. Yes, the life of Jesus is to be reproduced morally in us, the grace that came out in Him when on earth.

QUES. The apostle is speaking, is he not, from the standpoint of new creation when he says, "we know no one after the flesh"?

F. E. R. He is working up to it. It is only when your mind comes, in a sense, to that

point, that you enter into the reality of what it is to be "in Christ."

QUES. Is this what is spoken of in John xiv., "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you"?

F. E. R. Well, it runs with it; but here we have the character and order, "If any man be in Christ," "new creation." It is not re-construction, nor re-habilitation of the old order; it is a new order of man altogether.

W. W. How is it arrived at? How did the apostle himself arrive at it?

F. E. R. I think the first step experimentally is for the mind to be altogether free from the other man.

D. L. H. Does it not depend on what the Spirit of God has wrought in your soul?

F. E. R. I think so.

QUES. But the teaching in Romans v., vi., vii., viii. leads up to it—that must come before?

F. E. R. It must—but Romans hardly brings you to new creation. That is not a new remark.

W. W. It gives newness of life?

F. E. R. Yes; but that is moral, *walking* in newness of life.

QUES. What is the difference between "in Christ" and eternal life?

F. E. R. Eternal life in Christ is the privilege. "The gift of God, which is eternal life

in Christ Jesus our Lord." In new creation you find eternal life, nothing short of that. You cannot find eternal life apart from being in Christ, else there would be no new creation. John goes as far as Paul in this. He says it is in His Son.

QUES. Is life in Christ necessary for being in Him—must we have it first?

F. E. R. I think you are created in Christ, and the effect of being created in Christ is, that you have life in Christ. We are His workmanship, created in Him for good works.

QUES. Is it all the sovereign act of God?

F. E. R. New creation must be the sovereign act of God.

QUES. With regard to the expression "in Christ," is it always the same thing? For instance, Romans xvi. 7, "in Christ before me"?

F. E. R. I think there it is simply that they were Christians before Paul.

QUES. Do you attach it to profession?

F. E. R. I do not think "in Christ" is ever profession exactly.

QUES. "*If* any man be in Christ," why the "if"?

F. E. R. "If" always lays the ground for a necessary moral consequence. It implies a necessity, not a doubt.

QUES. Is it for exercise of soul?

F. E. R. It does exercise souls. When "if" is connected with a proposition laid down, some moral consequence necessarily follows. For instance, "If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself;" that is the necessary consequence.

QUES. You say "in Christ" is never profession, what *is* profession?

F. E. R. I understand profession is that you confess Christ as Lord.

REMARKED. Profession has to do with Christ in glory.

T. H. R. Profession is not a hollow thing in scripture. It has come to be such.

REMARKED. People are not responsible to profess anything as to new creation.

F. E. R. But people are responsible to recognise that God has exalted Christ, and made Him Lord of all; man is responsible to know this; God is not mocked; Christ has come out and accomplished redemption, and is exalted to the right hand of God, and every single person in the whole world should confess Him Lord. What we call Christendom is where people professedly own Him as Lord.

QUES. Does it not simplify the subject if we look at Romans vi., vii., viii. as our side?

F. E. R. Exactly, it very greatly helps.



QUES. At what point in the soul's history is a person "in Christ"?

F. E. R. I think when the Spirit has quickened it, "flesh profits nothing." The uselessness of the flesh is recognised. It is very interesting to see how the apostle arrives at this in his own mind here, how he refuses the flesh. I just point out the steps: 1, Christ dies; 2, That witnesses that all are dead; 3, The conclusion based on that is, we know no one after the flesh; 4, you come to new creation—"If any man be in Christ, there is new creation: old things are passed away; behold, *all* things are become new." It is then that we enter upon things that are of God.

QUES. Is the new man a peculiarity of Christianity?

F. E. R. The new man is a new creation, and always spoken of in connection with it. It is created "in truthful righteousness and holiness." The having put off the old man and put on the new are concurrent.

QUES. Is that the soul entering upon the truth before God?

F. E. R. Exactly. The end of man to His glory came before God at the cross, and the resurrection has brought in life out of death.

A. M. What is the meaning of the expression, "arriving at the fact"?

F. E. R. What is the good of the mere fact to you if you do not arrive at it? God arrived at it 1800 years ago, but it is not a bit of good in our experience until we have arrived at it.

W. W. Is the arriving at it illustrated by Elisha, when he rent his own clothes and took up the mantle of Elijah?

F. E. R. Yes; that is very much like putting off the old man. He rent his own clothes, and then put on the garment of Elijah, and that characterised him henceforth.

QUES. Is "old things passed away" true of any until they have arrived at it?

F. E. R. It would not be a bit of good to them till then. What is the use of it until made good in one's soul? nobody could predicate it of me until I have arrived at it. It has been said that the best robe was in the Father's house, but the prodigal heard nothing about it until it was put on.

God can see every person "in Christ" in purpose. He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, but we are not to lose sight of our own side on which it is made effectual.

M. G. I think the great difficulty and hindrance has been in looking at ourselves only as in the purpose of God, and resting there, and not entering into it practically for oneself.

A. M. It has been taught that "in Christ" is true of a soul from the first moment it has life.

F. E. R. I think the first breath of life is the proof that you are "in Christ"—that you have arrived at it.

A. M. Do you mean by the first breath of life new birth?

F. E. R. No. There is no breath of life according to God, until Christ is formed in you—then there is the putting off the old man, and the putting on of the new.

QUES. When Ishmael is cast out have you arrived at "in Christ" in the history of your soul?

F. E. R. Yes. But I think that is more the thought of liberty.

QUES. Do you connect that with John xx.?

F. E. R. I think in John xx. the Lord communicated the power or spring, but it had to take effect. John xx. is the divine side, shewing the place which Christ has taken as the last Adam, the Quickener. The child is alive when born, but you get the expression of life afterwards. When you get the expression of life then you are proved to be living, you are "in Christ."

QUES. You get the sense in your soul that you have got the Holy Ghost, the power to live?

F. E. R. It is not that merely. People are content to have the Holy Ghost, but that is only

the beginning. The Holy Ghost is a divine power, and out of all proportion to the man—to the greatest man that ever was; the work of the Holy Ghost is not to display divine power in a man. He forms you. He would rather see one single proof of life in you as the result of His formative work, than any display of power.

QUES. You mean by display power in performing miracles, etc. ?

F. E. R. Yes. But the Spirit is forming me. It is not simply that the Spirit should cry, "Abba Father," in me, but He would have *me* cry, "Abba Father."

QUES. Do you mean the difference between the presence of the Holy Ghost in the believer, and what the Holy Ghost forms in a believer, what comes out in him ?

F. E. R. Yes. The Holy Ghost forming the man is most important.

QUES. Is not the man full grown when he is new created ?

F. E. R. All is so far perfect, but that is only the beginning. One has to grow. The man formed in the Holy Ghost is more to God than the greatest work of power—and after all the greatest act of power is to form a man for God.

QUES. Would you say the Holy Ghost works in us that we may bear fruit for God ?

F. E. R. Yes. You go back to the first part

of Numbers and you take the wilderness according to God.

QUES. You say, you must be formed in Christ—how does the Spirit produce it?

F. E. R. I believe the Spirit works in two ways. First, He gives you the right thought of what He is forming in you; and the second is, He brings you under the influence of what He is forming you in. First, He ministers objective truth; but that is very different from what some are so ready to insist on, in a kind of dogmatic way as to the standing of a Christian—that is not my thought of objective truth. What I understand by it is the presentation of God to a Christian as revealed in Christ's death in such a way that the heart of the Christian is brought under the influence of the love of God, and formed by that love. Then there is another line of ministry, that is the testimony of God which has found its resting place in Christ, and the sense of this brings you into liberty. The two lines work together.

In ministry you present Christ as the expression of God.

QUES. Will you repeat the distinction between these two ministries?

F. E. R. I think it is very beautiful to trace the various testimonies of God in scripture, and to see all finding their resting place in Christ, the

expression and witness of God's pleasure, and the effect of seeing it, is to bring the soul into liberty. Then there is the other line of which I spoke, shewing the nature of God, what He is, and the purpose of His love. And the effect of this is, that the Christian is brought under the influence of God's love, and formed in His nature.

One of the lines is the revelation of Himself, of His nature—and the other of His ways. Every testimony of God converges and finds its resting place in Christ, and that is the thought in the New Jerusalem.

W. W. Does the effect upon the hearers come before the mind of the one who wishes to set forth God as He is revealed?

F. E. R. The testimony comes to the hearers as light. I do not believe either teacher or evangelist can really effect anything in anybody. God alone can effect anything.

REMARKED. As regards the ministry of 2 Corinthians, the ministers are not sufficient of themselves—but the apostle says "our sufficiency is of God."

F. E. R. But the Lord is the quickening Spirit. God will not, I think, use us except to enlighten. You never get a soul born again but by the power of God, nor do you usually get a soul enlightened but by the agency of man.

QUES. How far can the individual saint help the Spirit of God in forming Christ in us?

F. E. R. There may be cleaving to the Lord with purpose of heart. Many are wanting in purpose, and when they are tested they do not answer to the test. Every little bit of new light you get will test you. The great question is, will you answer to the test?

T. H. R. A very great deal as to that depends on whether you have the fear of God before you. That will make you careful, otherwise you may take yourself out of the line of God's teaching and leading.

W. W. Should you have before you the state of those you may be addressing?

F. E. R. We cannot ignore the state of people, but we know very little about it.

QUES. But if we were in the hands of the Lord, if dependent enough, would he not give the right word? J. N. D. used to say he found out the state of the meeting by the word which the Lord gave to him.

F. E. R. Possibly so, if a man were spiritual and sensitive enough. But you know ministry to a large extent is like an arrow shot at a venture. If dependent, the Lord gives help for the occasion, but you know little of the company you are addressing. I always feel a dread the first time I go to a place. But in going on one gets

a little sensitive to the company and more in touch with them. That is a great reason for going on in places a little longer than we have been accustomed to.

QUES. Would you say that the presentation of the heart of God is in the gospel, and that the presentation of all He has effected is what brings to the assembly?

F. E. R. You could not draw a sharp line in that way and attribute certain results to certain lines of ministry. Persons sometimes come to things in a most remarkable way. You may preach a powerful sermon and it does not apparently produce the least effect. There must be the activity of the Spirit of God. You may see the two lines presented in scripture, but *you* have to present things according to your own apprehension of them. I am not simply an expositor of scripture, and I do not think any servant should be; we ought to be expositors of what scripture has taught us. You can only help according to what God has taught you.

REMARKED. It is a terrible thing to take up other people's ideas and attempt an exposition of them.

F. E. R. I think so. Therefore you can effect no good unless in what has had an effect on yourself.

A. M. Will you explain what you mean by



saying you get "in Christ" in real power only in Ephesians?

F. E. R. I think in Ephesians you get the full opening up of the counsel of God which is in Christ. There are two lines of truth in connection with "in Christ," one that in Christ is the revelation of divine counsel, not simply that He is the revelation of God, but the expression of divine counsels; on the other hand there is the formative side in us and the power that forms according to that revelation, that is according to divine counsel as revealed in Christ. For instance, you get such an idea as eternal life *in Christ*, and "he has chosen us *in him* before the foundation of the world, that we should be without blame before *him* in love. Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ *to himself* according to the good pleasure of his will." All the revelation of divine counsel is in Christ. Christ Himself is the expression and revelation of divine purpose. Then there is the other side of the truth, namely the forming us according to that purpose, and therefore according to Christ. That is chapter iii., the subjective side.

But the apostle opens from the divine height. "He has chosen us," &c., that is divine counsels. Ephesians gives us the thought of new creation in a more distinct and full way than we get it

elsewhere. God sets to work to make His counsels operative in that way by the formative work of the Spirit in us.

QUES. What did you mean in speaking of God's ways ?

F. E. R. In meeting the breakdown of the responsible man here Christ brings to pass the will of God. There would have been no necessity for these ways of God if there had been no breakdown here. God's ways have reference to the breakdown and to the necessary solution of the question of good and evil.

The Old Testament wants the New to complete it. It is not complete in itself. It is perfect in itself, but you want the New to give the other side. You get the thought of access to God, and the ways of God in the wilderness, and the various testimonies of God, but you do not get God coming out. That we get in the New Testatment.

QUES. What is quickened together with Him ?

F. E. R. That brings you to the church. You can be a very good individual Christian in the wilderness. I was greatly struck with the two Psalms referred to yesterday, cxxxv. and cxxxvi. They do not bring you to the land, they do not go beyond the heritage of the land of Og and Sihon. The two and a half tribes, though really

enjoying land given them of God, did not abide over Jordan. They did not really enter into the height of God's purpose.

QUES. As to the formative power of the Spirit in the soul, is there such a thing as increase or progress in new creation?

F. E. R. I do not think you could speak of progress in new creation. When the apostle speaks of new creation in Ephesians he was speaking to saints who had really reached the truth of it in their souls; and when light is operative, you want to know something about what God has wrought. That want scripture meets. You cannot really understand any part of scripture unless you have it in your soul.

QUES. What is "faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints"?

F. E. R. I think they apprehended the glory of the Lord, and were walking according to it.

QUES. I suppose Ephesians could not be entered upon without first entering upon Romans?

F. E. R. You cannot get into Ephesians until you get into liberty. You do not get light until you want it. People are often studious to keep light out. They know very well that if the light comes in they will have to drop something—suppose they want to enjoy social life, or a pleasant place in the country, the light would break in upon all that. You are not here for

your pleasure, but for Christ's pleasure. I am sure people do keep the light out because they know instinctively that the light will shake them up.

QUES. What would make people go on in the Lord's path ?

F. E. R. If you are going to accept the path the Lord marks out for you it is death to things down here: all must go. It is the old story of Peter on the water. All the things I might be naturally entitled to, and able to enjoy here must go. It is gain to take the Lord's path, it brings a great deal of exercise, but you get Christ for your gain.

When the church is in ruin, or indeed in the ruin of any dispensation, nothing but a Nazarite will meet the case. That is, a man prepared to surrender the proprieties and joys of life that he might be naturally entitled to.

REMARKED. Every bit of light that we receive we find something that opposes it.

F. E. R. Therefore we are told to "lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us." That is not done once for all, but there is continual surrender. It is interesting to trace the first separated man, Abraham—in every little bit of light he got, as sure as possible he was tested. Sometimes he answered to the test, and sometimes he did not. If he failed, he brought trouble on

himself, while if he answered to the test, he got more light. I think every one might study the history of Abraham with great profit and interest, and learn in him the ways of God with an individual saint.

QUES. As to individuals, will you explain how Caleb and Joshua were kept out of the land though ready for it ?

F. E. R. They formed the link between the responsible and the elect Israel ; they had part in the two numberings, because they represented faith.

QUES. Would you say that in that way those who came out of Egypt entered the land ?

F. E. R. Yes, individual faith maintained this. The children of Israel came out of Egypt, and represent one Christian in a sense. But it is not the same man that comes out of Egypt who enters the land. The link is maintained in faith—the link is between the man of responsibility, and the man of God's purpose, and the link is faith.



# READING.

EPHESIANS I., II. 1-10.

A. H. In 2 Corinthians v., "If any man be in Christ it is a new creation." That is a new order of things, do we get that here?

F. E. R. We get new created here. We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus.

J. A. What is the difference between "in Christ" and "in Christ Jesus."

F. E. R. "In Christ Jesus" is an expansion of "in Christ." Chapter i. of Ephesians gives the divine side of the thought of "in Christ," that which is set forth of God in Him; chapter ii. gives our side, that is, the effect of God's work in us.

A. H. The first gives the counsels and purposes, and the second how God has wrought to bring us into them.

F. E. R. Exactly. The whole of chapter i. speaks of the truth on the divine side, revealing what was eternally in the thought of God, and what God has brought to pass in Christ—to head up all in Christ. That is the burden of the chapter.

A. H. God has only that one Man before Him, and the glory comes out in Him.

J. P. You said this morning that "in Christ" was state. "In Christ Jesus" in verse i. refers to "faithful," is that the state of soul to enter into it?

F. E. R. It is the state of soul in which they could enter into it.

QUES. Is chapter ii. experimental?

F. E. R. Yes, in the sense of its being what God has wrought.

G. G. Counsels were in eternity and the work is in time?

F. E. R. Yes, but not only have we God's eternal counsel, but that counsel now comes out in Christ. The One in whom God purposed to effect all these things has now come forth, and all has been effected in Him, and God has operated in Jew and Gentile according to it. Nothing could be effected till Christ came. The counsels come into view in Christ. God does not operate in us till He has in principle brought all to pass for His glory in Christ.

J. A. Chapter i. is connected with the revelation of God Himself in His counsels, and in chapter ii. we get the mode in which He has brought all about.

G. W. "In whom after ye believed." How

do you understand, "in whom"? Is that in Christ?

F. E. R. I think that all in chapter i. is on the divine side. It is God acting towards us in Christ, acting according to His counsel and sealing us to this end. Chapter ii. brings before us the operation of God which has set us in the place purposed. It is God's presentation to us of His will in Christ in chapter i. Hence faith comes in, not new creation; so too, forgiveness. "In whom" does not indicate exactly that Christ is the object of faith, but rather that God has acted towards us in Him. It is the divine side.

A. H. It is what we *have* in Him, not what we *are* in Him?

F. E. R. Yes, much more that. It is objective truth in the true sense in chapter i. In Christ God presents Himself to us. All the "in whoms" mean in *that Person* and God presenting Himself to us and acting for us in that Person. It is the special presentation of God to us.

J. A. Is that analogous to 2 Corinthians i., "All the promises of God in Christ"?

F. E. R. Yes, I think so. As many promises as are of God, in Him is the yea and in Him the Amen. It is "unto Christ" not "*in* Christ" there—attached firmly to and connecting us firmly with.

In Ephesians i. God presents Himself to us in



Christ as the accomplisher of His purposes. Then chapter ii. shews the corresponding action in saints which puts them in Christ. We are made to sit in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus. I doubt if we get the idea of our being in Christ till we come to chapter ii.

G. G. That is where the riches of His grace is displayed?

F. E. R. Yes, that proves the truth we were having this morning, that "in Christ" involves new creation.

G. G. Is chapter ii. realisation?

F. E. R. It involves realisation. It would be of no use to us if we did not realise it in Christ. I go fully with objective truth, only give me what is really that. Objective truth is the presentation of God in Christ—of His own sovereign purpose set forth in Christ. It is not simply the purpose, but that it is set forth in the Person who is the vessel of purpose. God has set Him at His right hand. He is the Head of the church, His body, which is the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. It would not have been possible for us to enter into God's purpose had it not been set forth in a Man.

J. A. It is an immense thing to have it, but God has everything in Christ.

F. E. R. You must go to that side of things

and that frees you from the influence of things on this side.

A. H. Verse 15. What is faith?

F. E. R. The Christian is addressed on his normal ground. God addresses the Christian as having faith and love to all the saints.

QUES. Why is redemption introduced?

F. E. R. The passage looks at a Christian as down here and details what he has in Christ according to the grace of God; he has forgiveness of sins and inheritance and the Spirit, the earnest of the inheritance. Chapter i. shews what he *has*, chapter ii. what he *is*, the last is the more important. What he has is in a sense incidental.

G. G. Chapter ii. shews the fruit of the work of God in the believer.

F. E. R. The great point is this, God has wrought according to the counsel of His will, He has wrought to have us in heavenly places like His Son, and that opens up "in Christ." He has blessed us in the heavenly places in Christ. We are quickened, raised up together and made to sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. You are to the praise of His glory down here *now*. I think that is in the present, it is much as in 2 Corinthians i., "unto the glory of God by us."

QUES. Is it not future in chapter ii.?

F. E. R. Yes, "In the ages to come."

QUES. What is the force of that, "To the praise of his glory"?

A. H. I had always thought that was manifestation by-and-by?

F. E. R. It may be so, but I had rather thought it present. Stephen was here to the praise of His glory. Saints are to be to the praise of His glory. I do not know whether they always are. It is in the consciousness of the inheritance.

QUES. What is glory?

F. E. R. I think God's purposes are His glory. He cherishes His purposes and is displayed in the accomplishment of them, and the Christian who is in the light of His purposes is to the praise of His glory. It is a great thing to be to the praise of His glory. You reach it as Stephen did. Stephen had to realise baptism unto Christ's death—to disappear. Up to Stephen things were in transition. In Stephen all closes; and he ends with death. The whole course of dealings with regard to Israel closed with Stephen, and as Christians we begin where Stephen ended. We are baptised unto Christ's death, and are to be to the praise of God's glory. Everything that is to come out in display by-and-by is to come out morally *now*. So as regards the Jerusalem above, it is our

mother, we are her children; that is, we have taken her character, it is to come out in us morally now. It is a saying, "Like mother, like children." It is seen in a company of people formed by the testimony of the glory of the Lord.

REMARKED. Something akin to 2 Corinthians iii. 18, Beholding the Lord's glory, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory.

F. E. R. That means something which makes us all alike. We are all changed into *the same* image from glory to glory, indicates increasing moral elevation. We know but little about Christianity, and have but a poor idea of its power when first set up on earth. Saints had the power of it then, though not so much the intelligence; we have now the intelligence but not much of the power. We cannot return to the power, to that which was at the beginning; but even in recognising that the Holy Ghost is still here, we get great good. The remnant in Malachi could not go back to the Solomon state of things. If Christianity could be set up as at the beginning, it would only fail again. It is a great assumption to imagine that we can set up a representation of the church. If we could, we should only break down. There was not, I judge, at the beginning any ecclesiastical formation, and I say that only

in view of the immense importance of our going back to the power and the simplicity of the Holy Ghost.

QUES. What is church formation?

F. E. R. The assuming of the ground of the one body shews the idea of it. In Acts what had the saints outside the power of the Holy Ghost? There was nothing save the power of the Spirit. I have thought that you cannot understand the assembly if you do not see what Christ was with His own down here on earth. Then in Acts you see the effects of the presence of the Holy Ghost. The first time the Lord's supper was eaten, the Lord was present with the disciples, and there He touched their affections, and that is how it should affect us; the bread and wine recall Him in His death, as the expression of His affection—and that brings Him in, present. For the moment you recall the love, you recall Himself. His death was a fact in the line of His love, but the love was there before the death, and it is unchanged after.

J. B. You say there was no church formation at the beginning, what then about bishops and deacons?

F. E. R. They were men full of the Holy Ghost. Church formation is that which man has wrought, not what God wrought. There

is nothing ecclesiastical, save ruin, left for us, and all that we can do is to return to what is in the power of the Spirit. I see the importance of this, and when you listen to the voice of the Spirit, He gives you an insight into the Lord's present mind. He gives you to hear the Lord's voice to the angels of the churches, how *He* views them. All our hopes are centred now on the coming of the Lord, on the manifestation of the church in glory, that is the latter glory. It is useless looking back to the past glory.

A. H. When was the quickening which we get spoken of in chapter ii. effected in the saints?

F. E. R. I could not say. The apostle takes up a company of people and describes what has been effected in them. I do not think time is taken into account.

A. P. When should we come into it?

F. E. R. What is described goes very far; you are in association with Christ over Jordan consciously in association with Christ—not in the land of Sihon and Og. The apostle looks at a company of people as having been in one state, out of which God had quickened them by His power into another state. You are quickened together *with Christ*; that is putting you into association with Christ in life.

A. H. Could that be said before realised in the soul?

F. E. R. If said of them without its being realised in the soul, it would be unreal. It is not said in the passage that Christ was quickened. It takes up Jew and Gentile as dead in trespasses and sins, a state in which Christ never was, and they have been quickened together with Christ. You cannot be brought into association with Christ without realising it. I doubt that it can be said that when Christ was raised you were quickened; He was raised, but He was not exactly quickened; He was not made to live; *we* are made to live with Him.

QUES. Does not quickened together with Christ mean Christ was quickened?

F. E. R. Well, the statement as to Christ is distinct and is in chapter i. He was raised, but we are quickened, that is, made to live spiritually in Christ. Quickened together with Christ shews the manner in which God will have us in heaven in association with Christ. It is not here the question of time, but of the manner of the thing. It is God's purpose to have us in heavenly places, but not without the blessed vessel of His purpose. But being quickened together with Him, you are clearly over Jordan.

QUES. Is this the riches of His grace?

F. E. R. No, it is rather "God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us." The idea of mercy involves sovereignty.

It is not exactly the riches of His grace that takes you to heaven. It is His love. When it is a question of display, it is the riches of His grace. The grace which God will display in the church by and by will be such as to be a pledge of the security of the whole universe of bliss. God has given in the church such a witness of His grace, that the saved nations will walk in the light of it. The kings of the earth bring their glory and honour unto it. If such grace is shewn forth there, then all are safe in the grace that reaches out to them. The thought is more of what God is going to make the church the display of, rather than of what He is to the church; the display is of grace, rather than of love. Display has to do with grace. Love takes you to heaven, God's own habitation.

A. H. Grace, as shewn in the church, is a wonderful thought.

F. E. R. Yes, it is. It will satisfy the desire of every living thing. God will fulfil that desire in the church, the nations will be very happy in the light of it.

QUES. Does the new creation extend in us?

F. E. R. You may grow in the order of the new creation, but the new creation itself does not grow. It is perfect; you are in it, but you



grow in it. A child is perfect as a child, but it grows to a man.

QUES. What was the anointing of the tabernacle?

F. E. R. God shewed by that that the whole system of the universe would eventually be established in the power of the Holy Ghost. It is a remarkable circumstance that the tabernacle was anointed without blood. Israel was very short-sighted; in their failure they lost the glory, and it goes out beyond them to the nations. God says virtually, *You* have failed, now the earth shall be filled with My glory. We are in the light of it now, and so are to be to the praise of His glory. Everything of God is great, there is nothing small.

A. H. That explains chapter iii. 10.

F. E. R. I think so, that is now. As you are led into the knowledge of God's love you enter into it, the knowledge of the love that will have you in heaven enables you to enter into it. The way you enter into the consciousness of quickening is by affection. You learn that God's love is so great that He will have you in association with Christ in His own habitation, you are drawn into it by love, in learning that it is for the satisfaction of His love that you are to be there, and you find that you are with Christ. Nothing

else will satisfy God, and nothing else will satisfy you.

QUES. Does "In Christ Jesus" involve position as well as state?

F. E. R. No, I think the expression refers to us abstractly. We are not taken into heavenly places as we stand, it is only as "in Christ Jesus" you go in. Nothing else will do for heaven. The person goes in, but only as in Christ.

QUES. How do you connect the prayer of chapter iii. with that?

F. E. R. The prayer in chapter i. is as to apprehending what God has effected. In chapter iii. we see the practical working of it in us, it shews how what is spoken of here would work out in us. As quickened with Christ you get an entrance into divine things, in intelligence and love; and the practical working of that is that you are filled unto the fulness of God; and that is down here. When you are quickened with Christ—made alive in Christ, you are not done with. It is then that you begin to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length and depth and height. You want to be strengthened in the inner man. You have only just begun when you are made alive in Christ. The great end is the sense of having a place in God's habitation, then you come out down here to be expressive of God.

In the end of chapter ii. we get the house of God on earth, His habitation through the Spirit ; and what is the good of the house of God, if God is not seen in it ? It is not the presence of a cloud now, it is God Himself there. The end of chapter ii. is the practical formation of state in us in order that God may be seen in us down here. Quickening is in view of taking us into His own habitation, in order that we should come out and express Him here. Everything that came out in Christ was to come out in the church ; the church was to be the continuation of Christ, it was to be very attractive down here, so that men might be drawn out from the world. It will be attractive in the future day. The church was here as the vessel of testimony. The evangelist went out from the church ; he must be hampered now to an amazing extent by the state of the vessel of testimony, but then he is himself part of it.

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# A GOSPEL PICTURE IN A DARK DAY.

(2 KINGS VI. 1-23.)

I DO not desire to say much as to the details related in this scripture, but I take up this passage in it (vers. 8-23) as giving a striking picture of the grace of God. The ministry of Elisha differs from that of Elijah in that it is for the most part a ministry of grace. It corresponds to the Lord's ministry, which was in contrast to that of John the Baptist. The object of Elijah's ministry was to recall the people to their allegiance to Jehovah. The ministry of Elijah failed in that respect, but God's claim was maintained, and then the ministry of Elisha comes in, which was the grace of God in the helplessness and ruin of Israel. Elisha had a double portion of Elijah's spirit, that is the portion of a firstborn.

Things were very dark in Israel at this time. It was the reign of Jehoram and immediately after Ahab. The previous chapter shews us what was the darkness of Israel at this moment, as the Lord says in Luke iv., "Many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian." Israel did not get the benefit of

the light, but Naaman the Syrian got it. I only speak of that to point out the state of things when this circumstance occurred.

I want first to call your attention to this fact, the *testimony of God* was in Israel, but the *light* was not with Israel; the light was with the prophet. You have in a day of confusion to distinguish between the *vessel of testimony* and the *light*, and when such is the case the *protection of God is with the light*. The king of Israel got the benefit of the light, though the light was not with him.

The king of Syria was opposed to God's testimony and to Elisha. He was sore distressed because the king of Israel was continually made aware of his whereabouts. He thought that there was a traitor amongst his servants, but they explain to him that there was not, but the light was with the prophet in Israel. The king of Israel had not the light, but he had the benefit of it. Thus at the present time Christendom, though it has not as a whole got the light, gains the benefit of the light. If it were not for the light of God and that light being maintained, I wonder where Christendom would be; it would quickly become apostate. Though they have not the light they get the benefit of the light, and they are protected and may be affected by the light. You may say there is very little value to be attached

to any little company that have the light. I think there is more importance to be attached to it than people think. I have no doubt that Christendom gets the benefit and, in a sense, the protection of the light. There is the holding to the truth of God, and that is an immense benefit even to those who have not got the light.

The next point is, the *protection of God is with the light*. Look at verses 13–17. “Go and spy where he is, that I may send and fetch him. And it was told him, saying, Behold, he is in Dothan. Therefore sent he thither horses, and chariots, and a great host: and they came by night, and compassed the city about. And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do? And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.” If your eyes have been opened like the servant of Elisha, you will see that the protection of God is with the light—the care of God is there. To refer for a moment to the seven churches. (Rev. ii., iii.)

Where do you think the Lord's interest was in these churches? No doubt His eye was on them all, but I think the interest of the Lord was in Philadelphia where there was little strength, but He could say to them, "Thou hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name." The shelter of the Lord and His protection were there. So here the place where Elisha was, was protected. The chariots and horses of fire were not around the king of Israel, but they were round about Elisha.

We might have good reason to fear any little bit of light being extinguished, were it not for divine protection; but my conviction is, that if the light is there, God will take care of the light to the end. I do not believe that His protection will be around assumption, or anything of that sort, but where the truth is held in lowliness God will not fail of His protection. I cannot tell you where the light may be at any future moment. Supposing that we have the light with us to-day, there is no saying where it may be another day, but wherever the light may be, the protection of God will be about the light. There was no fellowship in Israel in that day—save in evil, none for good; Elisha was a solitary man, but the protection of God was around that man. I think in this day God has given us the light, however small the appreciation of it may be, and He gives

us also the privilege of fellowship ; and as the light of God was bound up with that solitary man, and the protection of it, so now the protection of God will be round about the light, and those who are identified with it.

Verses 19, 23. Now what I want to shew you from this passage is, that *when you have got the light of God, you have a very deep sense of grace* ; it is only where the light of God is, that there is a true sense of grace. It is only one who has got the light of God who can really evangelise, for the more light I have, the more sense of divine grace I have. Here we have a very beautiful picture of grace. The Syrians were the opponents of God's testimony ; and the first thing is, they are made completely weak. They are smitten with blindness according to the prayer of Elisha. I do not know that you could have a greater picture of weakness and helplessness than in a company of blind men. Elisha prays for it, but he did not ask for judgment on them, but that they might be completely weak—and that in a strange country. That was no enviable position. I have seen blind men in a city getting along pretty well with the help of a stick and the curbstone, but I do not expect there was much in the way of curbstones in Samaria. The next thing is, they are conducted to Samaria, the very place their heart was set on reaching ; and what then ?



What did they meet? An enemy? Nothing of the kind. They met with grace. The King of Israel did not rise to God's grace; he said—Shall I smite them? The prophet says, why you would not treat your captive enemy in that way. "Set bread and water before them," &c. That is a beautiful picture of grace.

And I will give an antitype of it. I think you get this in Saul. Saul was not going to Samaria, but to Damascus, the city of these very Syrians, and on the way he was struck with blindness; he was made completely *weak*. It was not judgment, but God struck him with weakness, and he was brought to Damascus—the place to which he in his maddened rage was bent on going. He never expected to arrive there weak; he expected to be there strong in authority to carry out his mission of persecution; but God had other thoughts for Saul, and to that end He makes him utterly weak. God can make a strong man weak. I could give you other instances besides Saul. The thief on the cross was made weak. The Philipian jailor was made weak, and as we have seen, Saul was going to Damascus "breathing out threatenings and slaughter." Think of the expression! He had to be led by the hand and brought to the place where he had purposed to go. What a humiliating position, to be led by the hand!

When Saul reaches Damascus what does he find? Not retribution; the disciples were a bit afraid of him at first, but Ananias comes to him, and instead of reproaching him sets before him the ministration of "bread and water." Saul became acquainted with two things in Damascus, the *grace of God* in forgiveness of sins and the *gift of the Holy Ghost*. Bread in scripture is, I think, emblematic of grace, and Saul had grace ministered to him and the refreshment of the Spirit.

Then, as we read in verse 23, "the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel." So we have in Acts, "Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea," &c. The persecution ceased.

Now think for a moment of the Syrians when they went back to their master, do you not think they must have been altered men? Had they not a tale to tell—an experience of grace—the experience of what we might call a converted man? They could have said, We came to the man of God but we were struck blind—made completely weak, and then he led us to Samaria. And when we got to Samaria we did not meet with retribution but were met with a great store of provision. It is a beautiful picture of the grace of God, who has His own purpose in making men weak. He brings them to the very place they would go to, but He brings them

there broken down ; they are “ born again ; ” they have collapsed, and thus are prepared for what God has to give them, and they have “ bread and water ” set before them.

One word more about the grace of God. The grace of God brings salvation, but then there is another thing. When it has brought salvation, it *teaches* you. “ The grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared . . . . *teaching* us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world.” People think when they have got the knowledge of salvation that grace has done its work ; but then there is the teaching of grace, that is, the proper moral effect of grace in the heart, and its effect is, that you deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, &c., and your course is changed. It is not a legal man who does this, but one in the sense of divine grace. That was the effect on Saul ; he did not go back to his master ; I can understand the Syrians being sent back to their master, like the Lord saying to the demoniac, “ Go home to thy friends,” &c. ; but in the case of Saul, the Lord had other work for him to do ; so he did not go back at once to his masters, the Jews, but testified in Damascus what God had done for him—two things, he had a great experience of the grace of God, and he had received the gift of the Holy Ghost.

I have great delight in the incidents of Elisha's life, for I see the same principles reappearing through the scriptures. There is never any alteration in the principles of God's grace; and what has come out now in the gospel was ever in God's heart. What could judgment have done for Israel? Nothing could help them but grace.

The light was a protection for Israel, though as a nation they had not got it; but the shelter of God was around the one who had the light, and so will it ever be. I have confidence that God will not fail to protect those who have the light, even in a providential way. But then you may be sure of this—the more light you have from God, the more sense you have of what is in the heart of God for man; and the more effectual you will thus be in the ministry of grace. Perhaps it may be permitted to us to see what Israel did, namely, those who oppose made weak, and brought to the place they wanted to reach; but not to silence the truth, but to receive “bread and water.”

May God give us to know more of the greatness of His grace ourselves, that thus we may be better fitted as instruments for the communication of it.

F. E. R.

*Calne.*