

THE PRESENT PURPOSE OF GOD.

HEB. ii. 10-15 ; EPHES. ii. 19-22.

BY T. H. R.

I TRUST I shall be able to shew you the connection that is in my mind between these two scriptures which I have read. What I have before me is to seek to lead all our hearts, as the Lord may enable me, into the present purpose of God for His people. Although the fulness of His purpose is undoubtedly future, even the Old Testament saints, as well as Christians, had to look forward to its full accomplishment, yet it is of immense importance for us to understand His present purpose. The future purpose for Christians is here stated in *v.* 10. God is bringing many sons to glory. His present purpose for them is the assembly.

This epistle opens with the great fact that Christ has made purgation of sins. He has done it; and in doing it man's history as a sinner is closed. A man's history is a history of sins, but when he knows the forgiveness of sins through the cross, then he can say, Thank God, that history is closed! It is a wonderful point for

a soul to reach, when it apprehends what has been effected in the cross, and knows that all its dark history is closed there. Here it is stated in a general way that purification of sins has been made; that closes the question of responsibility, and opens the way for purpose.

But further, Christ has taken His place at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Thus we get another sphere revealed—a sphere of glory according to the counsels of God. Christ has sat down at the very centre of that sphere of glory. In chapter ii. this glorious system is characterized as “the world to come.” It is not yet introduced, as it says, “We see not yet all things put under him”; but *we* are in the light of it, for “we see Jesus crowned with glory and honour,” and as we see Him the light of God’s purpose shines upon us.

There are some important points brought before us in the verses I read. I will enumerate them. (1) Many sons are to be brought to glory. (2) They are of the same order as Christ Himself. “Both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one, for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.” It is a most wonderful thing that Christ now brings believers to His own platform. We were on another platform as sinners. In His great grace Christ came to us there, and He has closed our history in that connection by death; and now

He is declared to be Son of God in resurrection power, and there is the marvellous fact that He brings us to His own platform as Man, and yet Son, in resurrection life and power. I do not like to use the word level lest it should be mistaken, and yet we are on that elevation as those whom He is not ashamed to call His brethren, though He is always the First-born among the many brethren. Do think over it—What is in the heart of God? Many sons brought to glory; and think also on the place Christ has taken in resurrection, in order that it might be effected. If I glance for a moment at the first epistle of John, it is to shew how Christ is the measure of everything for us. Take those two words, “He is,” and follow them with your mind as I allude to a few places where they are found, and you will see how we are brought to His platform. Begin with chapter ii. 29—“If ye know that *he is* righteous.” What then? “Ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.” Again, iii. 2—“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as *he is*.” So in v. 3—“purifieth himself as *he is* pure”; and again in v. 7—“he that doeth righteousness is righteous even as *he is* righteous.” It culminates in chapter iv.—“As *he is* so are we in this world.” How everything

is determined for us by Christ Himself, all is on the ground of "as he is." There is nothing less for us, even the youngest, than to know that by death and resurrection Christ has occupied a platform on to which He lifts the believer, outside of the sphere of responsibility. This leads to (3): It is what I have spoken of as God's present purpose for us. "I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee." His purpose for us is the assembly. Having brought believers to His own elevation as those whom He has sanctified, and whom He is not ashamed to call His brethren, they are the company, the assembly, who are so attuned to His mind, that He can sing praise in their midst. Can you conceive anything more wonderful? A company sanctified through His one offering, and brought in life, righteousness, and relationship to His own elevation as those of His order. There He declares the Father's name. Where am I as I read the words of John xvii.? I am listening to the Son speaking to the Father. What a wonderful company was that who actually heard, as the apostles did, the Son speak to the Father! but according to His desire (*v.* 20) we are now of that company. They heard Him say also, "I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me, and they have received them." Thus the communications made by the Father to Him were told to them.

It is the company of whom the Lord here speaks —“I will declare thy name unto my brethren.” Withdrawn from the outside scene, we bow and listen.

(4) Another proof is given to us that He who sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one. It is the substance of Psalm xvi.—“I will put my trust in him.” And (5) “Behold I and the children which God hath given me.” While necessarily God must present the truth to us from His own side, we do not learn it so. I believe we have in our experience to begin at the last quotation, in order to reach the present purpose of God, and therefore I take up the passage here quoted from Isaiah viii. It prophetically speaks of Israel refusing the waters of Shiloah that went softly; they would not have the seed of David, but sought refuge in a confederacy. Christ is thus viewed as a stone of stumbling and rock of offence to both the houses of Israel. Israel was lost to Him—they were not gathered, and God hid His face from them; but at that moment God gave Him children, and they were for signs. It is an exceedingly blessed thing that when Christ was rejected from the earth, that then God gave Him children. This is seen in John x. He gathers round Himself the sheep given Him of His Father. And we, as the other sheep not of that fold, have been drawn to Him in this time of His rejection. Matt. xi.

speaks of this same moment of rejection, when He became the stone of stumbling to Israel. These things were hidden from the wise and prudent and revealed by the Father to babes. The word used for "children" in Heb. ii. 13 signifies "little children." It is the same word as used in Matt. xviii. 2, and again in Mark ix. 36. In this latter passage it is beautiful to see the Lord set a little child in the midst of His disciples. He does not say a word. It had its own lesson *for them*. Then what a lovely picture it is, to see Him take the little child into His own arms. None of us reach Christ except as little children. We may have reached His work, but it was a little child He took in His arms. A little child is nothing in this world, it has no knowledge of it, and plays no part in it, but it is a great deal to those who love it. The first step morally to reaching Christ's platform is that we take the place of a little child. There is the setting aside of what man is, for there was nothing in Christ that man cared for, and we must come down to our own nothingness. When Israel refused Him, a few poor souls were drawn to Him; they were the little children given to Him of the Father, and as such they were embraced, so to speak, in the arms of the Lord. We all have to begin there. You must come down to the place of the little child, and then you will find what you are to the Lord, and what He is

to you. Nothing can be more beautiful than to see the Lord take the little child in His arms. He could be everything to it, though it was nothing here.

The next point is that you learn Christ's path. Two great things come out as characterizing it in Ps. xvi. First, Jehovah was everything to Him. "I will say unto Jehovah, Thou art my Lord"; and again, "I have set Jehovah always before me." Secondly, all His delight was in the saints. We are going through the world, but these two things which shone in the Lord are the light of our path; so Paul speaks in Ephes. i. 15 "of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints," and again in Col. i. 4. Two simple things come out for the one who has been received in the arms of Christ. You say, He is not here, but I know Him in heaven; and, I have the company of the saints here; we walk in the heavenly light of the One who loved us and gave Himself for us, and that places us in association with a new company who become down here the object of our hearts. In the end of the Psalm we see where His path ended—"In thy presence is fulness of joy, and at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore." But then He had found His delight in the saints, and hence He says to this new company in John xiv., "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told

you. I go to prepare a place *for you.*" At the present moment faith sees Him as Lord in heaven, and in the sphere of his administration I would notice three things which are connected with our path. (1) As Lord He commands us for blessing. (2) It is possible that we may have to go through death actually, as Stephen did; he was the first one thus to go by the same path that the Lord had taken, and what came out was, that part of the Lord's administration is to receive the spirits of those who depart to be with Him; they are "present with the Lord." (3) In due time "*The Lord* will descend from heaven with a shout, etc." Then we shall be caught up in the clouds to meet *the Lord* in the air. Tell me, is it nothing to walk in the light of the Lord, having confidence in Him, and having the company of the saints here? I commend it to the youngest; let the assembly be your place, that is God's present purpose for you. His purpose is that you should find the new company now.

I turn aside for a moment, because I feel what distractions are put forward to turn saints aside from God's present purpose—the assembly. You find people wonderfully interested in the return, *at the present time*, of the Jews to their land; but do you think the Lord, who now hides His face from the house of Israel, has anything to do with putting the ungodly nation back,

whom He turned out of the land for their sins and the murder of Christ? His heart is set on the little children the Father has given Him, as the present purpose of the Father down here. Many of us can say that we have proved the value of the company of the saints. The Lord chose it, in them was all His delight, and we choose the assembly because it is His place. We may be very poor, but it is a question of what He can be to us.

I now revert to the third point. "I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the assembly will I sing praise unto thee." It is what I have called God's present purpose for us. Christ has, through death and resurrection, brought us to His own platform. The character of the company on this platform, as we have seen, is this—"As he is, so are we in this world." Let me say this is not standing, but a divinely wrought state. The opening of John's epistle shews that the believer is in the light of *God's* estimate of the blood of His Son, and also in the light of Jesus Christ the righteous in the presence of God. All is measured by what Christ is. It is impossible to realize the truth that Christ is not ashamed to call us brethren, if there is any thought of connection with Christ after the flesh. No, the corn of wheat has fallen into the ground and died, so as to bear fruit after its own wonderful

order. Thus He has a company, those whom He can call His brethren, whose voices are attuned so that He can sing praises in their midst, those to whom He declares the Father's name. That is His present purpose for us. If we have touched His presence in the assembly it would greatly help us to pass through this world in the spirit of the hymn we often sing:—

And stayed by joy divine,
As hireling fills his day,
Through scenes of strife and desert life,
We tread in peace our way.

We may be doing our daily work, but we have been brought to Christ's place now He is rejected here, the assembly of the saints, in whose midst He sings praises.

It was in connection with the character and privilege of the assembly that I read the verses in Ephes. ii. In chapter i. the apostle opens out the counsels of God, outside of all the failure of that which He had set up in responsibility. In Ephesians, according to these counsels, there is nothing seen but what is of God, there is no place for the first man, he is only regarded as dead in trespasses and sins, whether Jew or Gentile. "If one died for all, then were all dead." There was nothing living for God when Christ died. But Christ is here seen as raised from the dead by the mighty power of God, and in Him the counsels of God are made good.

In the end of chapter ii. you find that the Gentile had no place or privilege upon the earth. Israel had been in the place of privilege, theirs was the kingdom, the sanctuary, the city of God, and His temple. According to the flesh they had a place of nearness while the Gentile was far off, "without Christ, having no hope, and without God in the world." "But now," says the apostle, "in Christ Jesus ye who sometime were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." Again, the Gentile had not the privilege of the Jew in approaching Jehovah, but through Him both Jew and Gentile have access by one Spirit to the Father. The apostle then enumerates the privileges they had reached—they were of the household of God, they had, so to speak, the freedom of the city of God. They were being built up a holy temple in the Lord, and were builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit. I only want to touch upon one or two points of special privilege, in order that our souls may be in the light of it, and respond to it. It has pleased God to bring the Gentile, as well as the Jew, on to the new platform of which we have been speaking; thus the Gentile who had nothing could belong to the holy priesthood and the spiritual house; while in view of God's purpose for the coming age all is growing to a holy temple in the Lord. So it is looked at in the Ephesians. With regard

to the spiritual house, "In whom," says the apostle, "ye are builded together for a habitation of God by the Spirit," that is not merely a dwelling-place of the Spirit, but that the whole structure is characterized by the Spirit; it is a spiritual house,—there is no flesh there—a habitation of God in Spirit. Flesh has no place, nothing but the Spirit and what the Spirit forms.

Another point: though the temple is doubtless looked at here in connection with its place according to God's purpose in the coming age, yet its characteristics are light for us. In Solomon's temple of old we learn in type some of these characteristics. It was the resting-place of the ark and of the glory. It was where God dwelt and where He put His name. Solomon said, "I have surely built thee a house to dwell in." How much more will the Son be able to say to the Father when the house is completed, "I have built thee a house." Even now we are looked at in Corinthians as God's temple. But I would ask every believer to think of what it is to be part of the spiritual material, of which Christ is building the holy temple; it ought to affect us. In the temple of old Jehovah's name was enshrined, but the holy temple now is the shrine of the Father's name. "We have access by one Spirit to the Father." The Father's name is known by the holy priesthood, as we have seen

in Hebrews ii.—“I will declare thy name unto my brethren”; and again in John xvii. 26—“I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it.” To my mind it is the crowning point of the temple that it is the shrine of the Father’s name, and it will be the place where the saints in the Millennium will learn the Father’s name, though they form no part of the temple. I only wish I could speak of it better, that each might have a better sense of the privilege of the assembly. We have each to take the place of the little child, then to realize where His love brings us, where flesh has no place; there is the utter collapse of man, but Christ is everything—our righteousness and life. No voice of man is heard in the holy temple—high or low, rich or poor, all is excluded but Christ. I may say, the vital point in the truth of the temple is that Christ is formed in the saints; thus it is the dwelling-place of God, that is, of love; so it is added in John xvii. 26, “That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be *in them*, and I in them.” Such is the new company.

I know I can get hold of your hearts if I present Christ to them. I am sure in the soul of every Christian here there will be a response to Christ. And yet I am conscious of the delay there often is in reaching the place of a little child, with its accompanying blessed thought of being given to Christ, but it is as little children

that we learn that Christ is everything to us. The Spirit forms the material of the holy temple by forming Christ in us, and there the Father's name is known. It is wonderful to be brought to Christ's own place, where He declares the Father's name; there love rests—"That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." Do you want to keep anything that is not Christ? The Spirit forms Christ in the saints and the saints in Christ; thus is also formed the holy priesthood that has access to the Father.

Another thing as to the temple is that it is the resting-place of glory. You may say, It is not so yet; but in the holiest was the ark, and there was the resting-place of glory. I would suggest the thought, that when gathered together how far are we conscious of being in the presence of that glorious Person, the Son of God? What is the Son to the Father? and what are the communications of the Father to the Son, which He makes known to those given Him of the Father? We have to be silent in the presence of such communications. He is the Son who glorifies the Father, and yet He says, "I am glorified in them." He is not there speaking of the future; and though it may appear to us almost overwhelming, the blessed thought for our souls is—though we cannot fathom it—that as His glory is known to our hearts, this new

company becomes expressive of Him. That is the privilege of the assembly.

Is it not wonderful that Christ can gather round Himself those who have learnt their own nothingness, to take them up in His own fulness? May the Lord enable us to enter into His own purpose for us in the assembly, setting us free as little children, that He may bring us to His own platform, to know the love of His heart towards us in the communications He makes to us, that, knit together in love, we may be expressive of Himself.

GOD'S TESTIMONY AS LIGHT IN THE SOUL OF MAN.

HEB. xi. 39 ; xii. 1-3.

BY F. E. R.

I DO not think that I need make any apology for turning to this well-known scripture, in order to introduce to you the subject about which I desire to speak. There is a kind of fascination about the passage which makes it difficult to me to leave the chapter alone; and what interests me is that the testimony of God exhibits the true character of the world to come. And we are allowed to see the witnesses through which the testimony of God has shone out in this world from the time that sin came into it. The testimony of God came out both before and after the flood. In considering the passage before us, I desire that we should see also how the testimony of God affected those who are brought before us.

And further, I want to refer to what the testimony of God is now that it has reached its height, as we have come to it. It gives me the idea of a vast arch built up piece by piece, and now

complete. We have come to the crown of the arch—to the keystone; we have it in its completeness; we are in the full blessedness of God's testimony, which shines out through faith.

I may remark that what is presented in the epistle to the Hebrews is confirmatory of what is presented elsewhere. We may see there what is to be seen in other parts of the scriptures. # When the Spirit of God addresses Himself to the Hebrews, He presents things in one light, and in addressing Gentiles He presents substantially the same things in another light.

John presents Christianity as do also Paul or Peter, but in a different light to that in which they present it. God's word is one—the work of one blessed Spirit. The part of the apostles was to present the truth in the light in which the Spirit of God gave it to each. We have great gain in this, and though we learn in detail, yet all the teaching becomes one in the soul of the Christian, in the power of the Spirit of God.

I pass on now to the two points that I wish to bring before you; *i.e.* the testimony of God, and the way in which the witnesses were affected by that testimony. No one could have the testimony without being affected by it. We see how it shone out thus in Abel, Enoch, Noah, and others named.

The interest of the eleventh chapter is in seeing the testimony of God shining out, faith

discerning the foundations of the world to come ; for God gave expression in detail to what was in His thought.

In the attempt to build the tower of Babel we have man's will coming out. They set to work to build a city for man's glory—that was man's will and purpose ; but at the same time God had His own will, and that shines out from time to time through faith.

I will touch on two or three salient points in the eleventh chapter to show what the testimony of God was in detail ; then I will endeavour to open out a little what the better thing was that God foresaw for us. We read that the patriarchs died in faith, not having received the promise. God had in this a purpose—viz., that they were not to be made perfect without us for whom He had prepared some better thing. I should like that we might see a little more clearly what the better thing is, and how saints are properly affected by it. How far we have been *actually* affected by it may be another question, but it is well to see what is its proper effect.

In reverting to the patriarchs, the testimony of God to Abraham was, that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed. There was here the light of a distinct purpose on God's part of blessing to all the nations of the earth. The promise was given to Abraham, but I take it up in connection with the seed, because that is

really the important point, for my impression is that God intended to intimate how blessing would be secured to all the families of the earth in a risen Christ. That was His testimony, and faith apprehended it. The true idea of faith is of divine light in the soul. God gave to Abraham His testimony, and Abraham believed it, and thus had light in his soul and was affected by the light. God does not intend light to be ineffective. Abel and Enoch had light, and they were affected by the light. As to the latter "he was not," for God took him. The Church is now in the light of translation, and if saints were in the power of it, man as such would not be seen in it. That was the practical bearing of the testimony which Enoch had. Noah had the testimony of the way of salvation through impending judgment; he had light from God that judgment was coming, but that there was a way of salvation. In Abraham, as I have said, the point was "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed"; and this was confirmed when in figure Isaac was raised from the dead. Every attribute of God had been met, typically, in the sacrifice, and then the promise that all the families of the earth should be blessed, was confirmed to Abraham's seed.

The effect on Abraham was, that his aspirations went beyond the testimony, *i.e.* he sought two things—one was a city, and the other a country. And on the other side, he became a stranger and

a pilgrim here. "He looked for a city," and he sought a country; he saw that God was even greater than His testimony, *i.e.* God was not limited by His testimony; and in fact a city and a country were necessary to His promise. A city is the symbol of rule, and a country I might speak of as an expanse for liberty and enjoyment. That was what Abraham foresaw. The city that he looked for was one that "hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God"; and the country he sought was heavenly. He looked for a city and country having these characteristics, and in that way he traded, so to speak, on the goodness of God; and it is added, "Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city." It is our privilege to know that we shall have our part in that heavenly country where there will be full expanse and liberty, and we shall form part of the city, of which Abraham does not form part, though he will have the good of it.

I pass on now to Moses. The testimony of God which Moses apprehended was, that God had a people here. The first principle of God's purpose which we have seen was that all the families of the earth should be blessed in a risen Christ, and then we have the fact that there is a people of God here on this earth. Moses "was a proper child" himself, his parents "were not afraid of the king's commandment"; and when

he came to years he discerned and was affected by the testimony of God. This so touched Moses that, seeing God's people in reproach, he chose to be identified and to suffer affliction with them rather than to be separated from them for the pleasures of sin. I understand from the fact of God's people being in reproach that they were not favoured by the providence of God; had they been thus favoured, they would not have been under the oppression of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. The resolve of Moses was to share in their reproach and not to be countenanced by the world. I need not say that when Christ was here He too was in the place of reproach. There was no reproach for Moses in the house of Pharaoh; but he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter because he would not disown his people for the kindness of the world, and "he had respect unto the recompense of the reward." That was the way in which things worked with Moses.

But there came a crucial moment in Egypt, a night to be much observed, when the destroying angel passed through the land. God's people had been in reproach, and now the judgment of God was to fall upon the oppressor, while those under the shelter of the blood were secured from the judgment. And a further moment of the same kind occurred at the Red Sea, when the people of God passed safely through as on dry land, and the waters overwhelmed the Egyptians.

In our case, we have seen God's testimony in Christ's going into death; God's love has reached us in the place of death, and we have passed through in triumph to receive assurance of that love by the Holy Ghost. Thus the people who had been in reproach were completely vindicated.

The next point that I notice in the testimony of God is the falling down of the walls of Jericho, after they had been compassed about for seven days. Those who went round them became pretty well acquainted with the walls by the seven days' survey. The truth is that the foundations on which the power of the enemy rests are rotten. Satan trades on man's ignorance of God. When the strongholds of the foe are reached, they need only to be compassed about, like the walls of Jericho, and they will fall down flat. The heart of Rahab did not fail, her faith was firm; she took in the situation, and could say, "I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you"; and thus we have in result the intervention of God in the salvation of a Gentile and her family.

We pass over a long period until the times of the Judges, and then we get some striking examples of the energy and patience of faith. There was a testimony of God still bound up with Israel; God had not ceased to regard or

care for His people, although a point in their history is reached when their state was at the very lowest—"every man did that which was right in his own eyes."

In Samuel's time the links of relationship with God were broken, for the ark of God was taken by the Philistines, and Israel's glory was departed; but the ark was recovered in God's mercy, and under David was brought to Mount Zion.

A point I would notice is this: that no testimony of God is lost in a subsequent testimony—no succeeding testimony swallows up a previous one. Can we suppose that God will give up any part of His purpose—for instance, that in the seed of Abraham all the nations of the earth are to be blessed? Nothing can set that aside. Again, have not the walls of Jericho fallen down? Depend upon it that the one who attempts to build them again will bring on himself destruction. The word of the Lord abides for ever.

What we come to now is this: that all the detail of the past converges in the testimony of this moment, and it is that which I wish here to bring before you. The testimony of God in our day is of a glorified Christ; and that, I think, is the better thing which God has foreseen for us. It is the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ that is now presented.

All will probably remember the word of the

apostle in 2 Corinthians, at the end of chap. iii. and the beginning of chap. iv., where we read: "But if also our gospel is veiled, it is veiled in those that are lost: in whom the god of this world has blinded the thoughts of the unbelieving, so that the radiancy of the glad tidings of the glory of the Christ, who is the image of God, should not shine forth for them. For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus Lord, and ourselves your bondmen for Jesus' sake. Because it is the God who spoke that out of darkness light should shine, who has shone in our hearts, for the shining forth of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

I understand that to be the light of God's testimony at this moment. The apostle speaks of it in 1 Timothy as "the glad tidings of the glory of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted." It was not entrusted to him merely for himself, but to make known to the saints; it shone out in Paul, and the apostle preached the gospel not merely to sinners, he preached it for the building up of saints. If you approach unconverted men, you must approach them with the light of the gospel; but the saints have also to be built up in the gospel of the glory of God. It is a purpose that is served to a large extent by the faithful evangelist.

What I understand by the gospel of the glory is, God's satisfaction in the complete bringing to

pass of His will and purpose of blessing in the hands of One in whom He is perfectly revealed. The will of God is all that which is in His heart to bring to pass; all is centred in the One in whom God is effulgent, and there only is God fully revealed. Where did God shine out in all His fulness? I believe it was in the death of Christ. He went into death to bring into it the testimony of God's love. God is effulgent in Christ; the glory of God shines in the face of the One to whom is committed the full accomplishment of God's purpose.

I wish I could say a little more about the glory of God. I feel for myself how little I am affected by it. God has been revealed, and every attribute of God magnified. The love of God was revealed in Christ, but it was made effulgent at the cross. The Son of God came here to make God known, and He did this; and as the Man who glorified God, He has now gone up to God. He came out that God might be effulgent; and, on the other hand, as the Man who has glorified God, has gone in to God—one and the same blessed Person, but viewed in two distinct lights. That is what faith apprehends. Faith is now the light of the glory of God in the soul, and if we are rightly affected by it the result will be most marked. Where the word has entered the soul, and brought in the light of the love of God, that man is completely

subdued to God—he loves God; and the moment a person loves God a most wonderful and complete revolution is produced in him.

Many have been affected by the grace of God, but I do not think we have been so much affected by the love of God. God has come out in love that He may secure man's heart for Himself. He will have the love of man, He has set Himself to gain the heart of man—but how? By making known His love. “God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” The believer is in the light of the glory, and he rejoices “in hope of the glory of God.”

I ask, is your heart in the light of this glory? The testimony of God now is the light of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ.

Now I want to say a little about the way in which we are affected by this. I judge there are two special ways set forth—one in Hebrews x., and the other in chap. xii.

As far as I understand it, Hebrews x. runs parallel with the epistle to the Ephesians, and chap. xii. with that to the Philippians. They bring before us the ways in which we are properly affected by the light of the glory of God.

The first way in which, as seen in chap. x., we answer to the light of the glory of God is in our acceptance of the calling which God has

given us. As sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, we have, as sons, boldness to enter the holiest by His blood—the new and living way which He hath dedicated through the veil, that is to say His flesh.

I will say a word about the “new and living way.” Christ made that way by coming out from the heart of God to the cross, to bring the light of God’s love. We travel the same way in our souls, only in the opposite direction, *i.e.* from the cross to the heart of God.

We enter the holiest; but let us remember that we go in as priests, not as common people, nor even as Levites, but as risen together with Christ. We are sanctified—but how? By our extinction; by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all—that involves your extinction after the flesh. You go into “the holiest” as priests, *i.e.* as formed by the love of God. It does not follow that because you go to the meeting, you go into “the holiest.” You must not think that “the holiest” is synonymous with the meeting. True, it is the privilege of every Christian to enter “the holiest,” but you must enter as priests, in conscious association with Christ.

I very much doubt whether anyone who fails to apprehend the calling of God enters “the holiest.” I do not say that such have not a title, but as priests you must of necessity be

on common ground with Christ; you are risen with Him—delivered from the rudiments of the world; and not only that, but you are formed in the divine nature by the Holy Ghost, so as to be fit companions for Christ.

In Ephesians you apprehend the calling of God. We are said to be raised up together, and made to sit down together in the heavenlies in Christ; but the “heavenly places” are not exactly the idea of “the holiest.”

God has been pleased to give us a place in the scene where Christ is for the satisfaction of His love. If you enter “the holiest,” you enter the scene where everything is in perfect correspondence with God.

In chapter xii. there is another effect of the light, viz., you are running a race—you run to the place where Christ is; and that is the idea which we find in chapter iii. of Philippians. And in running the race you get more distant at every step from all that man esteems here; at the same time you get nearer and nearer in soul to where Christ is. It indicates not exactly the entering into the calling, but a man getting more and more apart from all that is of account in this world, and becoming consciously nearer to Christ in glory. There is a goal before him, and that is the idea presented in the race.

And let me draw attention to what appears so strikingly in chapter iii. of Philippians, viz.,

purpose. This is a point of very great importance with saints, and one in which I doubt not we are defective. The apostle writing to Timothy says, "Thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, *purpose*, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience." Many a saint is lacking in purpose, though at the same time wishing to go right; and the purpose of the heart does not come out so much in the acceptation of the calling as in running the race. There are certain things here in which one may have been glorified as a man, but there is a goal now presented to the saint, and that is Christ in glory; He is the end before us, and to reach Him means complete and eternal happiness. When we reach Him we shall have left all that is earthly behind us, and it will be un-failing satisfaction to the soul.

God has come to us in grace to make known His love to our hearts, that they may be full of confidence in Him; and one effect is, that, severed in spirit from all here, we run to where Christ is, and with the object of finding what God has found, viz., His glory—complete satisfaction for our hearts.

Another thing is that you have to run the race "with patience." There is this admonition connected with it, to which we need to give heed—we are called to lay aside every weight, and sin which doth so easily beset us, and to run with patience the race set before us, looking unto Jesus.

I think that what we have of this world's goods, though ours providentially, may like many other things be possibly a weight. A rich man's wealth may be a weight. If a man is running a race, every weight would be an encumbrance. To a man who is settling down in this world things here are not weights; but when you start in the christian path, then they become weights. I can understand a Christian being a rich man—the scriptures contemplate such a thing; but in such a case it needs much grace and wisdom to know how to use riches, so that they may not be weights.

And besides this there is "sin which doth so easily beset us." I understand sin to be the activity of the human will; and all that has to be firmly put aside—it is so close at hand, that it soon gets hold of us. Every working of your own will must be unsparingly refused; if you allow it you will be greatly hindered in running the race, and the race has to be run with patience.

What makes a man impatient is that he cannot compass his will. If I see impatience in a man, I know it springs from his inability to give immediate effect to his will, and impatience is a sure sign of moral weakness.

The two great principles seen in the epistle of James are, patience and no will. "Let us run with patience," and then there will be the

acceptance of God's will—"Looking unto Jesus." He accepted the will of God here in the fullest possible way, and He is now "set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

It is a blessed thought that we are running to the place where Christ is; He has reached the goal, and our happiness will be found in reaching in spirit the place where Christ has gone.

May God give us each to see what the testimony is, and its effect in accepting the calling, so that we may be worshippers; at the same time running with patience the race, so that things in this world become more distant, while we ourselves come morally nearer to the place where Christ now is—at the right hand of God.

THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST.

HEBREWS ii. 10-18.

BY F. E. R.

WHAT is on my mind, is to seek to open out what is found in the early part of this epistle on the subject of Priesthood; both as to the fact of it, and its character.

There were two parts in the provision of God for His people in the wilderness—one was Priesthood, the other the water of purification.

My desire is to speak on the subject of Priesthood and the bearing of it, so that we may have a better and truer sense of its application to ourselves—that is, of what Christ is to us as High Priest. The fact of Christ being connected with us as High Priest is so practical, that it is most important that we should have a true intelligence as to it.

There are two sides on which we can regard Christ in relation to man, viz., as Mediator and as Priest; the one is a contrast to the other.

Mediator covers all that He is on God's side towards men; Priest, on the other hand, covers

all on man's side towards God—a very simple thought to take in. It is in the Mediator that God has approached man. It is not a question here of man approaching God, for it would be impossible for man to approach God unless he has first learned how God has approached man. The Mediator is brought in in this connection—“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all.” (1 Tim. ii. 5, 6.) We have here God approaching man in grace.

On the other hand, Priesthood is connected entirely with man's approach to God. The one is the consequence of the other; the Priest could not be without the Mediator—the Mediator and the Priest are combined in one divine Person.

Christ, having completed His work as Mediator in giving “himself a ransom for all,” goes back to God and takes up the position of Priest on the behalf of those who are the objects of God's purpose.

With a view of making the subject plain, I will just touch upon the Psalms, and open out a little their scope.

They begin with a rejected Christ, and end with the establishment of the Kingdom; anyone may readily see this. Psalm ii. brings before us a rejected Christ, who is declared to be the Son of God; and in the closing Psalms we have the hallelujahs consequent on the establishment of

the Kingdom: this was all prophetically recorded long before Christ came.

Another point of moment in the Psalms, and to which others have called attention, is, that they bring in (and they are the first part of Scripture which does distinctly bring in) the idea of "a remnant."

It may be a Church remnant, or that which is the nucleus of the Church, or the remnant of Israel in the future. But the thought of a remnant is a very important one in the Psalms, and in connection with Priesthood. In Psalm xxii. we have a very distinct reference to a remnant in "I will declare thy name unto my brethren"; and also that which will eventually become "the great congregation" is first a remnant; it becomes that, but is a remnant. In Isaiah we read, "Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah."

In connection with the thought of a remnant an interesting question suggests itself—*i.e.* how could the Gentiles come in in the character of a remnant? The answer is that an election from the Gentiles is identified with a remnant saved out of Israel. There was a remnant of Israel who received Christ, and the Gentiles became fellow citizens with the saints and of God's household. The thought of a remnant brings in the purpose of God; God reserves a remnant to Himself; the

apostasy of Israel is foretold, and a remnant is left, and an election from among the Gentiles joined with them.

The High Priest is identified according to the thought of God with the remnant. I do not here refer to the priesthood in Israel, because the high priest there and the whole order of things was after the flesh; but speaking of Priesthood as in the mind of God, it is identified with a remnant, it is on their behalf.

As far as I can see there are two ideas taken from the Psalms on which Priesthood is built up in Hebrews, viz., Sonship and a place at the right hand of God.

In Psalm ii., verse 7, we read, "I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee." And Psalm cx. opens with the words—"The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool"; and in v. 4—"Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." In Psalm ii. we have the Christ rejected by man, and the same thought appears also in Psalm cx. Now I will ask you to look for a moment at Hebrews v. 4-6—and I refer to this passage because that in it the passages I have quoted from the two Psalms are brought into conjunction, and we see that the truth of Priesthood in Hebrews lies in the identification of

Sonship with Priesthood, a point of the last moment.

The truth holds good also in our case, that we are priests because we are sons—the priests are now the many sons whom God is bringing to glory. The truths of Sonship and Priesthood are thus very closely connected, both with regard to Christ and to us.

The value of being a priest is, that you have access to God; and how could you have such access if you did not know His love? It is the knowledge of God's love that gives you that freedom. Confidence is a most essential element of Christianity, and what do you think that it springs from in the Christian? I should say confidence is rather the effect of love than of faith. That is brought out in John's first epistle. Perfect love casteth out fear, and then we have confidence. It is in the apprehension of the love of God that we have access to Him.

I have already said that Priesthood is closely connected in the divine mind with the idea of a remnant, and that thought is very important in connection with the Psalms. We have the same principle in Hebrews vi. 17–20, in which we read, "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation,

who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec."

We have here the thought of a remnant of Jews, who, in the general defection of the nation, had fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them. And that remnant was secured for God Himself. I think that passage is amply sufficient to identify the Priesthood with the thought of a remnant, who are "the heirs of promise," and who are identified by faith with a rejected Christ. Christ could not be a Priest on earth, though there were in Him all the moral qualifications for a Priest. He could not be a Priest on earth, He was made perfect for such an office through sufferings; and it is when He is exalted to the right hand of God that He enters properly upon His priestly function.

I will enter into some detail connected with Priesthood as referred to in the earlier part of the epistle. In chapter ii. 17, 18 we have—
"Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people."

The important point to remark in connection with this passage is, that the work of offering is no proper part of Christ's High Priesthood. It is true that in the work of offering He fulfilled the type of an offering priest, but in His work He was properly the victim—He offered *Himself* by the Eternal Spirit. The basis on which Priesthood rests is righteousness. The righteousness of God was fully vindicated and established as a basis for acting, before Christ entered on the office of High Priest. You find in this passage the qualification of Christ as High Priest—"For in that himself has suffered, being tempted, he is able to help those that are being tempted."

I will endeavour to give you an illustration of this succour in the history of Paul. He was placed in a great variety of circumstances, and now and again you will even find him brought into such as the Lord would have spared him from: an instance of this is when he went up to Jerusalem and was seized by the people, and afterwards taken out of their hands by the Romans. He put himself into those circumstances in his affection for, and desire to reach in testimony his own people, the Jews. Still, at the critical moment the Lord appears to Paul to succour him. If a man gets into a false position he is in danger, and very liable to depression, and no one but the Lord can help him. So in the case of Peter: he had not faith to go into

the palace of the high priest. He did not go there in the way of testimony as Christ did; and having signally failed, what he needed at that moment was succour; and the Lord had prayed for him, and his spirit is saved from being overwhelmed within him—"I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." The care of the Lord is *seen* in His looking on Peter; and further, in John xxi. the Lord takes the priestly place in restoring him.

These examples I think shew how graciously and effectually the Lord can succour His saints, even when through want of watchfulness they are brought into unhappy circumstances. We may be allowed to be greatly tried, but then it is that the Lord is able to come in in priestly service to succour, lest the spirit of His saints should be overwhelmed. And He comes in that there may be restoration, though the circumstances of trial may be unchanged. Paul had still to suffer in the circumstances, but his spirit was succoured.

If we pass on to the last three verses of chapter iv., we get a little further light; we have here not simply the qualification of the Priest, but that He has passed through the heavens, and that, I think, confirms what I have said with regard to the contrast of Priest and Mediator; you would not speak of a Mediator passing through the heavens. The point is, that Christ

has gone up from the lowest place of humiliation here, through the heavens, to the throne of God. It is not a question of His having come out to present God to man, but going from the lowest place here to the highest place in heaven; and one result of that is the establishment of the throne of grace. Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord came down from heaven and was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death; descended into the lowest depths of shame, but He has now passed through the heavens to the throne of God; He has travelled that course in the interests of man; there is righteous ground for the inauguration of the reign of grace. We have consequently a High Priest who can sympathize with our infirmities, and we have the encouragement now to come "boldly unto the throne of grace."

I should like to shew the working of this. There are three things that at one time or another press upon us all down here; three kinds of pressure that are incidental to human life; one is bereavement; another, bodily weakness; and the third is trial in circumstances.

Let me ask if every one has not more or less been touched by one and perhaps all of these three things: it is hardly possible to pass through life here without experiencing something of all three. Well, it is a great thing to know that in

all three we have the sympathy of Christ, and that sympathy encourages us to go to the throne of grace to find help and mercy.

The One who is now as man at the right hand of God is the same blessed Person that stood with Martha and Mary at the grave of Lazarus; He came into full contact with human sorrow, so as to sympathize. He has not lost ability for that, now that He is at the right hand of God; there were qualities displayed in Him when here in the flesh which belong to Him still. Could we suppose that the heart of Christ is changed?

We are permitted, too, to see Him on earth in resurrection, in order that we may appreciate the fact that He is not changed, and we have the very same Christ at the right hand of God. The pressure of bodily weakness is understood by Him; and we have a throne of grace where we can obtain mercy, everything connected with us in our path here being taken into account. These are the effects of having a High Priest who has passed through the heavens.

I will now go on to chapter v. 7-9: "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto

all them that obey him." I desire to say a word as to two thoughts in this passage. One is, He learned obedience. We must not confound that with the idea of learning to obey; we have to learn to obey because we have wills. Such could not be supposed of Christ; His meat was to do the will of His Father; but in His path down here He learned everything which obedience involved. The other point is, "being made perfect." This must be limited to His qualification for entering upon priestly functions. We have the same thought in chapter ii.; there He is made perfect as leader of our salvation.

When you come to the application of the passage, "He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him," I understand eternal salvation to be in contrast with temporal deliverance. God effected temporal deliverances for Israel, but now Christ has secured "eternal" salvation. In their case deliverance was material; for us salvation is in a sense moral,—the emancipation of the soul from all that would hold it from God.

I believe that the Lord was bent upon this in His dealing with the woman of Samaria at the well of Sychar. He says, "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 everlasting life." My thought is, that what the Lord effects

for the soul of the Christian, is the communication to him of an entirely new spring, which shall in result emancipate him from the power of all that is of sin in him. This I think is seen in His words to the Samaritan woman.

The effect and evidence of sin in man is largely in that the affections go out in all sorts of irregular directions. Christ gives that which shall form and regulate the affections of the soul, in order that they may take the channels of God's appointment. It is in that way that a person is truly emancipated from the law of sin; the secret of liberty lies in the affections.

The Spirit of God in the believer directs the affections into their proper channels, and they flow out first to Christ and then to saints. Christ has thus become "the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him." The well of water in the believer springs up into eternal life; and the believer is thus not only in the power and result of what Christ has given him, but free of the law of sin and of death.

I would now ask you to pass on to chapter vi. 17. And here it is very interesting to see that the Priest is "the forerunner," who has entered into that which is within the veil. The idea I have of a veil as a figure employed in Scripture is, that it is anything that conceals God. When Christ was here, the fulness of the Godhead was here, but hidden behind the veil of flesh. My impres-

sion is that in chapter vi. God's providence is the veil. God is hidden behind His providences. If you attempt to judge of God by His providences you will not have a true idea of Him. I do not doubt for one moment the wisdom of God in His providences; but the providence of God stands in the strongest contrast with the revelation of God; and it would be a great mistake to confound the two thoughts. Now Christ has entered as Forerunner; He has gone within the veil of providences, and we go in, while we accept God's providences: for He can turn these to account in the way of discipline.

I might add this in regard to providences, that they may misguide, if by them you judge of God's thoughts of His people. If you recall the voyage of Paul as narrated in chapter xxvii. of the Acts, you must see how the providences of God appeared to be all against him. We cannot think for a moment that he was bound in spirit by the providence of God. No; he knew he had access to where the Forerunner had gone, and so he got the mind of God as to the shipwreck and the preservation of all.

I pass on now to chapter vii. 12 and following verses, where we have, that "after the order of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest, who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life,"

and again, "And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made priest." And in connection with that I will read verse 4 of Romans vii.: "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God."

If you have followed me, you will see the progress we have made in opening up the subject. Christ has become the Author of eternal salvation. Then, as our Forerunner, He has entered within the veil, and so has opened a way for us to go in. Now I would suggest that two further thoughts are brought before us here—the one is, attachment to the Priest, and the other, that we draw nigh to God by Him. If you have not attachment to the Priest, I doubt if you will have much liberty to draw near to God; and I think that not only is this brought out in Hebrews vii., but that you will find the same idea in Romans vii. The point in both passages is that one system of things has been set aside in the death of Christ: "There is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before," as stated in this chapter, while in Romans vii. you are said to have become dead to the law, by the body of Christ, that you should be married to Another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. Of old

we have the principle that the death of the high priest ended one order of things; and thus the legal order of things has been ended in the death of Christ, with the intent that you might be attached to Him as risen, to bring forth fruit to God.

He has become Author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him, and is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him, seeing that He ever liveth to make intercession for them. The secret of drawing nigh to God is, that we draw nigh by Him, and He ever liveth to make intercession for us that thus we may be freed from anxiety as to the pressure of things here. Christ is attached to me, and I can say that I am attached to the High Priest. I know His ability to sympathize, and that He is the Forerunner, and so I am able to go to God by Him. And being attached to Him, I get support from Him. He concerns Himself about me as a tree of God's planting; and He ever lives to make intercession for us. Thus we see on the one hand the ceaseless interest of Christ in His saints, and on the other hand their attachment of heart to Himself, so that they draw nigh by Him.

Before closing I would like to touch on what I regard as the *proper* function of the Priest—
“For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and

made higher than the heavens. . . . We have such an high priest . . . A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.”

When you have come to chapter vii. you have reached the limit of the relations of the Priest to, what I might term, our individual experience here.

Henceforward it is no longer a High Priest having regard to our infirmity; that subject is left, and we are called upon to apprehend the Priest in another light—*i.e.* in His *proper* function.

What are we, that it should be said, “Such an high priest became us”? It is, I judge, that the saints are viewed in the light and height of God’s calling, and He alone who is “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens,” could properly be High Priest for such, all the offering work having been done. “The law constitutes men high priests having infirmity, but the word of the swearing of the oath, which is after the law, a Son perfected for ever.”

In chapter viii. we appropriate Him—“We have such a one high priest.” It is not here a question of intercession, nor of sympathizing. The High Priest is here charged with the service of God; He conducts the company of God’s sons, and leads them into the consciousness of the

scene where He is. He is the Minister of the holy places, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man. My conviction is that all the service of Christ to us individually as our High Priest is with a view to attach our hearts to Himself. He comes to us in sympathy with us in our circumstances down here, and He thus attaches our hearts to Himself where He is; and having done that He leads us into the sanctuary, and we apprehend Him in His proper priestly function — Minister of the holy places.

This brings us back to the verses that I read in chapter ii. of the epistle, where He has a worshipping company, in the midst of which He sings praises to God.

May the Lord give us to realize practically what the service of the High Priest is. I would wish that each one might look into the subject prayerfully for himself, so that we might rightly value all the good of the present priestly service of Christ which God has appointed for us. Thus you will get attachment of heart to Himself, and so bring forth fruit to God. It is a great thing to know Him as the Minister of the holy places; it is not only that He serves, but He has put Himself in the midst of the worshipping company. The Sanctifier and the sanctified are all of one, for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren. I feel how

imperfectly I have brought the subject before you, but I hope that you will look at the Scriptures we have read, and that God in His grace will give you to understand the great work that He has set Christ apart as Priest to carry out.

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